

Rāzī. *Tafsīr*.
 Sam‘ānī. *Tafsīr*.
 Samarqandī. *Baḥr*.
 Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr*.
 Tirmidhī. *Sunan*.
 Zabīdī. *Tāj*.
 Zamakhsharī. *Kashshāf*.

See also: ABROGATION; ALMSGIVING; BUYING AND SELLING;
 CALIPH; CHILDREN; CHILDREN OF ISRĀ’ĪL;
 EARTH; FIR‘AWN; FRUITS; GENDER RELATIONS;
 HEREAFTER; JĀHILIYYA; KHALĪFA; LIFE OF THIS
 WORLD; MANIFEST AND HIDDEN; PARABLES OF
 THE QUR’ĀN; PARADISE; PLANTS AND VEGETATION;
 RESURRECTION; REWARD AND PUNISHMENT;
 TAWHĪD; WATER; WEIGHTS AND MEASURES; WOMEN.

NASEER AHMAD
 MUZAFFAR IQBAL

Aḥbār

See DOCTORS OF THE JEWISH LAW

Ahl al-Bayt

See FAMILY OF THE PROPHET, PEACE UPON THEM ALL

Ahl al-Dhikr

See PEOPLE OF REMEMBRANCE

Ahl al-Kitāb

See PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Aḥmad, upon him blessings and peace

See second entry in this volume

Aḥqāf

See ‘ĀD; GEOGRAPHY OF AND IN THE QUR’ĀN

Aḥzāb

See TRIBES AND CONFEDERATES

Air

See WINDS

‘Ā’isha bint Abī Bakr

See ABŪ BAKR; ANONYMOUS MENTIONS; COMPANIONS OF
 THE PROPHET; WIVES OF THE PROPHET

Āl ‘Imrān

See HOUSE OF ‘IMRĀN

Alcohol

See INTOXICANTS; FOOD AND DRINK

Alif Lām Mīm

See OPENING LETTERS

Al-Lāt

See IDOLS AND IDOLATRY

Allegiance

See ALLIANCE AND TREATY; OATHS

Allegory

See INTERPRETATION; LANGUAGE OF THE QUR’ĀN;
 PARABLES OF THE QUR’ĀN; RHETORIC AND
 ELOQUENCE

‘ALAQA

‘Alaqa, literally “a thing that clings”, a derivative of the root ‘-l-q, mentioned six times in the Qur’ān as a stage during embryogenesis. It occurs once as the collective noun ‘*alaqa* (Q 96:2) and five times in its singular form, ‘*alaqa* (Q 22:5; 23:14 twice; 40:67; 75:38). The feminine passive participle of its second form, *mu‘allaqa*, not dealt with in this entry, occurs once in Q 4:129 where it refers to a wife unjustly treated by her husband, treatment that *leaves her, as it were, in suspense* (*ka’l-mu‘allaqa*; see MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE).

The collective plural of ‘*alaqa*, *al-‘alaqa*, is also the title of the ninety-sixth sura of the Qur’ān (also known as *Sūrat Iqra’* after its first word) where the word ‘*alaqa* appears in the second verse. According to the most common opinion (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 65:1; Bukhārī, *Tafsīr*, *Sūrat al-‘Alaqa*), the first five verses of this sura constitute the first revelation that came to the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, while he was in the Cave of Ḥirā’ (see CAVE), at the top of Jabal al-Nūr (the Mountain of Light) some ten kilometers northeast of Makka (see REVELATION).

Other meanings of ‘-l-q cognates include: to cling; to adhere; to love; to be suspended; to be attached; leech; anything hung or suspended; individual parts of a well’s pulley as well as the apparatus in its entirety (Farāhīdī; Ibn Fāris; Fayrūzābādī; Zabīdī; Rāghib). According to Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), the basic meaning of this root, common to all derivatives, is to attach or link one thing to another that is superior to it (*Maqāyīs*). According to Ibn Manẓūr (630-711/1233-1312), ‘*alaqa* is blood (*q.v.*) generically and specifically dark red blood that has not yet dried (*Iṣān*).

Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502/ca.1108) lists the

following meanings of the root 'l-q, and clarifies which one is intended in the Qur'anic description of the creation of human beings:

to be trapped in something, as it is said 'the prey is caught in the net' (*'aliq al-ṣayd fī-l-ḥubāla*); coagulated or congealed blood (*al-dam al-jāmid*) from which is *al-'alaqa*—congealed blood from which a child is created, as Allah Most High said: *He created human being from an aggregate of congealed blood* (Q 65:2); and He said: *And indeed We created man out of an extract of clay; then We made him into a drop of sperm (nuṭfa) in a safe depository; then We made this drop into congealed blood ('alaqa), then We made this congealed blood into an embryonic lump (mudgha, lit. "a thing like chewed flesh"), then We made the embryonic lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, and then We made him into another kind of creation; so Most Blessed is Allah, the Best of all those who create* (Q 23:12-14).

Mufradāt

In classical exegetical literature, all six Qur'anic references to *'alaqa* have been understood as referring to a form of blood that comes into existence as the second stage in embryogenesis. The early commentator Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) called *'alaqa* "blood which forms from the transformation of water" (that is, of *nuṭfa*); al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) called it "a clot of blood" (*qit'at al-dam*); al-Rāzī (543-606/1148-1209) and al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286) both said it is "a clot of congealed blood" (*qit'at al-dam al-jāmid*); al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273), referred to it as "congealed blood" (*al-dam al-jāmid*), further explaining it as "fresh blood (*al-dam al-'abiṭ*), intense red in color"; Ibn Kathīr (700-774/1300-1373) similarly stated that it is red in color and is formed when the *nuṭfa* develops for forty days (see their *Tafsīrs*, sub Q 22:5). These exegetes contextualized stages of creation mentioned in Q 22:5 and Q 23:12-14 by referring to the creation of the first human being, Ādam (*q.v.*), upon him peace. Thus dust (*turāb*) in Q 22:5 and extract or essence of clay (*sulālatin min ṭīn*) in Q 23:12 are taken as specific to the creation of the first human being, whose progeny thereafter are created through the biological process in which the appearance of *'alaqa*, glossed by them as congealed blood, is preceded by a drop of sperm mixed with an ovum, and followed by the formation of an embryonic lump (*mudgha*), which develops bones (*'iẓām* (*q.v.*) that are then covered with flesh (*lahm*) (*cf. Tafsīrs* of Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, and Ibn Kathīr, sub Q 22:5 and Q 23:12-14).

In Q 22:5, *'alaqa* appears in an embryological

sequence similar to Q 23:14, but the context here is resurrection, which the disbelievers doubt. *'Alaqa* is mentioned in Q 75:38 in a similar manner, where

the purpose is to affirm resurrection (*iḥbāt al-ma'ād*) and refute those from among the ignorant, obstinate, and misguided who deny it; that is why it is said as an argument: *was he (man) not once a [mere] drop of fluid which gushed forth?* That is, man was a weak drop of sperm in a lowly fluid, which was dropped from the loins into the womb, then he became congealed blood which [Allah] shaped and fashioned. That is, it became *'alaqa*, then a lump of flesh (*mudgha*); then it was given a shape and spirit was infused into it, and it became another kind of creation, with sound organs, man or woman, by the decree of Allah and [according to] its destiny; and that is why it is said, *And made of him a pair, the male and female.* [The next verse states:] *Is not He able of bringing the dead [back] to life?*—that is to say, is the One who began this perfect creation from this weak drop of sperm not capable of recreating as He began [creation]? Indeed, it is easier to re-create than to create for the first time.

Ibn Kathīr, sub Q 75:37-40

A similar ontogenetic sequence is repeated in Q 40:67 as a reminder of the Omnipotence, Grandeur, Oneness, Majesty, and Might of the Creator Who grants life and death and Who, *when He wills to bring a thing into existence, merely says "Be"*—and it is (Q 40:67-68).

Taken together, all references to *'alaqa* are thematically linked to two fundamental themes of the Qur'an:

- I. Allah's creative power, for He is the *Best of Creators* (*aḥsan al-khāliqīm*) (Q 23:14), Who brings human beings into existence from seemingly worthless fluids;
- II. human arrogance and heedlessness, arising from forgetting one's lowly origins and expressed in rejecting the Creator's guidance and denying the essential realities of life and the afterlife (see [HERE-AFTER; RESURRECTION](#)).

In Sūrat al-'Alaq, mention of *'alaqa* is preceded by the command to *Recite, in the name of thy Lord*, and followed by a verse stating that Allah *taught mankind by the pen*. Ibn Kathīr regarded these verses, constituting the first revelation, the first of the countless blessings of Allah Most High upon humanity, and "in this is a point for reflection: the beginning of human creation is merely from a drop of congealed blood,