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Samīn. *Durr*.

Saraqustī. *Af‘āl*.

Ṣāwī. *Hāshiyā*.

Shinqīṭī. *Aḍwā‘*?

Suyūṭī. *Durr*.

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See also: ĀDAM; ANGELS; APPORTIONMENT; ‘ARAFĀ; BARZAKH; BURIAL; CHILDREN; CLAY; DAY OF RESURRECTION; DIVINE DECREE; EXPIATION; ‘ĪSĀ; ISHĀQ; JĀHILIYYA; JINNS; MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE; MARYAM BINT ‘IMRĀN; OATH; POLYTHEISM AND POLYTHEISTS;

PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS; RESURRECTION; SATAN(S); SPENDING; TIME OF IGNORANCE; TRINITY; YAḤYĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; UNBELIEVERS

GIBRIL FOUAD HADDAD

BLESSINGS OF ALLAH

ĀLĀ’, BARAKA, FADL, MANN, NI‘MA, RAḤMA, TAWL

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage: *Ni‘ma*; *Fadl*; *Mann*; *Raḥma*; *Ālā’*; *Baraka*; *Tawl*; (ii) Spiritual Blessings; (iii) Worldly Blessings; (iv) Typology of All Divine Blessings (v) Blessings on the Just and the Unjust; (vi) Human Responses to Blessings: Gratitude; (vii) Proclamation; (viii) Concealment and Turning Away; (ix) The Obligation of Gratitude for Blessings; (x) The Pursuit of Blessings by Various Means (*tawassul*, *ṣalawāt*, *tabarruk*); (xi) Seeking Blessings in Trade, Food, and Righteous Conduct; (xii) Bibliography.

The broad connotation of the word “blessing” includes all that is beneficial and facilitates well-being. Its primary Qur’ānic usage is with reference to what is conferred by Allah Most High, Who, as *Lord of the worlds, the Source of Mercy and Bestower of Mercy* (Q 1:2-3), and the One Who alone can control good and adversity (e.g. Q 6:17), is ultimately the granter of all blessings (Q 16:53). Numerous Qur’ānic verses (as elaborated below) convey that Allah bestows countless blessings on human individuals and communities in general, and special blessings on specific individuals (most prominently His Messengers), places and times. Receipt of Allah’s blessings should lead to gratitude, a concept that Muslim theologians agree to be central to monotheism (see TAWHĪD) and worship (*q.v.*), although they differ on whether its obligation is scriptural or innate in human nature (*fiṭra*, see INNATE NATURE). The Qur’ānic concept of blessings is not limited to material constituents of worldly sufficiency and comfort, for the blessings of revealed wisdom and guidance (Q 4:113; 17:87) are *better than whatever [worldly things people] accumulate* (Q 10:58). Worldly blessings are to be used to seek blessings in the Hereafter (Ibn ‘Āshūr, *sub* Q 28:77), and the unceasing blessing of Paradise is *the supreme triumph and great bounty* (Q 44:57; 35:35).

Definitions and Usage

Seven Qur’ānic nouns that can be rendered as “blessing” are scrutinized here: *ni‘ma*, *ālā’*, *baraka* (the last two sometimes each translated as “favor”), *faḍl*

(sometimes rendered “bounty”), *ṭawl* (abundance), *manna* (to bless in a way that obliges thanks from the recipient), found only in verbal form, and *raḥma* (tenderness), a broader term (see MERCY) that overlaps with the sense of blessing. All share a common meaning of something desirable and pleasing, some implying increase as well as conferral, as discussed below. The verb *yusallī* in Q 33:53 is typically glossed as *raḥma*, and is therefore relevant here. *Iḥsān* (kindness) and *‘aṭā’* (gift) are also relevant, but due to their broader scope are not explicitly discussed in this article (see EXCELLENCE). The word *rīsh* in Q 7:26 has also been glossed as “blessing” by some commentators (Abū Ḥayyān, *sub* 7:26), but the major lexicons do not list this meaning. Ṭabarī glossed it with the more specific meaning of “provisions and wealth,” which are a specific type of blessings, while most commentators understood the word even more specifically as “garments of adornment.”

Ni‘ma

The root *n-‘-m* has fundamental meanings of ease (*taraffuh*), pleasant life (*ṭib ‘aysh*), and wellness (*ṣalāh*). The ostrich is called *na‘āma* because of the softness of its feathers, and the camel is referred to as *na‘am* (pl. *an‘ām*, generically livestock: see ANIMALS) because it is a source of good and blessing (Ibn Fāris). *Na‘ma* denotes a soft, easy life in this world (Q 73:11), such as that enjoyed by Pharaoh (see FIR‘AWN) and his people (Q 44:27). *Na‘im* refers to delight that is not intrinsic to a person, thus excluding, for example, the blessings of sound sleep and the senses (Ibn ‘Ashūr, *sub* Q 102:8). *Ni‘ma* denotes ease (*taraffuh*) more broadly, in the sense of a gift or favor that is conferred and that gives happiness (Fayrūzābādī); hence its meaning has extended to wealth (Ibn Manzūr). In the meaning of a gift or favor, *ni‘ma* is essentially synonymous with one of the meanings of the Qur’ānic cognate *mann* which is further investigated below.

The noun *ni‘ma* occurs in the Qur’ān 46 times in the singular and once in the plural *ni‘am* (Q 31:20, although recited here too in the singular in the canonical reading of the Kufan reciter Ḥamza b. Zayyāt, see READINGS OF THE QUR’ĀN); twice in the plural *an‘um* (Q 16:112, 121), and once in the feminine noun *na‘mā’* (Q 11:10). The more specific *na‘im* (delight) occurs 17 times. The active participle *na‘im* is used to describe other-worldly delight (which is of course itself a blessing) on the faces of the righteous on the Day of Judgment (Q 88:8). The verb *an‘ama* (“to bestow

blessings”, occurring with the preposition *‘alā*) occurs 17 times, and the synonymous (but directly transitive) verb *na‘ama* once (Q 89:15).

According to the vast majority of exegetes, *ni‘ma* (as gift) is also synonymous with *ilā* (alternative vocalizations: [plural] *ālā’*; sing.: *ily*, *ilan*, *alw*; cf. Ibn Manzūr, *faṣl al-alif, wāw-yā’*). Only the plural of *ilan*, namely *ālā’*, occurs in the Qur’ān—although “one of the Mu‘tazilis” construed the word *ilā* in Q 75:23 to be the singular of *ālā’* (which has three more forms: *ily*, *aly*, and *alā*, see Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 53:55), rather than a preposition, in support of the Mu‘tazilite doctrine that Allah cannot be seen (see ALLAH; FACE OF ALLAH) (Jawharī, Ibn Manzūr, Rāghib). *Ni‘ma* and *ālā’*, however, differ as the latter refers to internal, spiritual blessings and is thus more specific than the former (Qushayrī, *sub* Q 7:69). This might draw some lexical support from the view that holds *ilā* to derive from the root *w-l-y* (denoting closeness) (Fayrūzābādī). An alternate etymology (its lexicological relevance not explored by exegetes) identifies the root of *ilā* as *‘-l-w*, which has two opposite meanings: incapacity / weakness and ability / effort (Ibn Manzūr).

Faḍl

Faḍl also has the sense of increase (*ziyāda*), and hence of good (*khayr*), but it does not necessarily connote growth, and so is narrower in scope than *baraka*. *Faḍl* is usually associated with a sense of comparison, because increase is comprehended with reference to something lesser, and this elative aspect is especially prominent in the derived verb *faḍḍala* (to confer distinction upon, and hence to favor) (Ibn Manzūr, Ibn Fāris). The noun *faḍl* as blessing occurs 82 times. In Q 2:237 it refers to the graciousness enjoined between a divorced couple rather than the normal sense of a blessing. The verb *faḍḍala* (to prefer, in the sense of granting special blessings) occurs 18 times, and its verbal noun *tafḍīl* twice (Q 17:21, 71). *Faḍl* is sometimes coupled with *raḥma* (Q 2:105; 3:74; 4:175; 10:58; 17:87; 24:10, 14, 20, 21). In keeping with the lexical overlap discussed above, *ni‘ma* and *faḍl* (or their cognates) occur together in seven verses (Q 2:47, 122; 3:171; 4:70, 73; 7:140; 45:16).

Mann

The trilateral root *m-n-n* signifies cutting, reducing, or weakening (*manīn* being a rope that is weak or truncated), or a deed of goodness and hence conferring favor. (Ibn Fāris, Ibn Manzūr) The second meaning might be a derivative of the first, because the patron