

Zamakhsharī. *Asās*.

——. *Kashshāf*.

See also: ADULTERY AND FORNICATION, BOUNDARIES OF ALLAH, BUYING AND SELLING, CHEATING, COERCION, COMMANDING GOOD AND FORBIDDING WRONG, CORRUPTION, DECEIT AND DELUSION, ENORMITIES, ETHICS, FALSEHOOD, FASTING, FOOD AND DRINK, HELL, HEREAFTER, JĀHILIYYA, JUDGMENT, LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL, LEGAL PUNISHMENTS, PARADISE, RARE WORDS OF THE QUR’ĀN, RIGHTS AND CLAIMS, THEFT AND ROBBERY, USURY.

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BROTHER(S), BROTHERHOOD

AKH, UKHUWWA

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage; (ii) Siblings; (iii) Brotherhood in Islam; (iv) Prophets as Brothers to their Nations; (v) Brotherhood in Love and Affection; (vi) Brotherhood in Companionship; (vii) Use of *ukht* as Simile; (viii) Brotherhood in Unbelief; (ix) Devils as Brothers to One Another and to Impious Humans; (x) Formal Fraternal Bonds in Early Islam; (xii) Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

The Qur’ānic terms for “brother” and “sister”, *akh* and *ukht*, both from the root ²-*kh-w*, are lineal terms (*min al-nasab*) respectively denoting the son and daughter of one’s father and mother—or one of them—including the one who has suckled from the same mother (Samīn, *Umda*, *sub* ²-*kh-w*). Both *akh* (dual: *akhawān*, plural: *ikhwatun* and *ikhwānun*) and *ukht* (dual: *ukhtān*, plural: *akhawāt*, Farāhīdī; Azharī, *sub* ²-*kh-w*) are also used in the Qur’ān metaphorically (see below).

Lexically, metaphorical usage of *akh* denotes a friend (*ṣadīq*), companion (*ṣāhib*), associate, or fellow (Ibn Manẓūr, *sub* ²-*kh-w*) as well as tribal ascription (*akhū Tamīm*, *lit.* “he is the brother of Tamīm”), and affiliation through religion (*fil-dīn*), occupational trade (*fī ṣan’a*), mutual transaction (*fī mu’amala*), and shared love (*fī mawadda*). It is also used in the sense of possessor (*dhū*, e.g., *huwa akhū-l-ghinā*, “he is the possessor of wealth”; or *akhū-l-khayr*, “the possessor of good), or any character trait (e.g., *huwa akhū-l-ṣidq*, *lit.* “he is the brother of truth”, meaning, “he cleaves to truthfulness”) (Rāghib; Fayyūmī, *sub a-k-h*)—whence the usage in the hadith, “Sleep is the brother of death”

(*al-nawm akhū al-mawt*) (Ṭabarānī, *Awṣaṭ*, man ismulu Aḥmad).

In the dialect of Banū Ṭay’, *akh* is considered to be a derivative of *wakhā*, from the root *w-kh-y*, meaning aim, goal, desire (*qaṣd*), because a brother (*akh*) has the same aim, goal, endeavor, or desire, as his *akh* (Farāhīdī, Azharī, Zabīdī). The noun *akh* is also said to be derived from *akhiyya* or *ākhiyya* (pl. *awākhin/awākhi*) “tether” (Farāhīdī)—a rope with two ends buried in the ground, with an exposed loop to which animals are tied (Azharī, *sub* ²-*kh-w*)—as though brothers were attached to one another the way a horse is tied to its post (Zabīdī). This form appears in a Prophetic hadith narrated by the Anṣārī Companion Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī (10 BH–74/612–693), Allah be well-pleased with him: “The likeness of the believer and belief is that of a horse which roams with its [loose] tether (*ākhiyya*); the believer may become inattentive and preoccupied, but finally he returns to faith” (Aḥmad, 17:435 §11335 Bāqī al-Musnad al-Mukthirīn, musnad Abī Sa’īd al-Khudrī; Ibn Sīda; Zabīdī).

Three forms of the root ²-*kh-w* occur 96 times in the Qur’ān: *akh* (“brother”), along with its dual *akhawayn* and plurals *ikhwān* and *ikhwa* (x75); *ukht* (“sister”), along with its dual *ukhtayn* and plural *akhawāt* (x14); and *ikhwatun* (x7) (“brothers, brothers and sisters”) (for complete list, see ‘Abd al-Bāqī, *Mu’jam*).

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767), one of the earliest scholars to compose a work on Qur’ānic polysemy and collocation (*al-wujūh wal-naẓā’ir*), identified six semantic facets of the term *akh*. His younger contemporary, Hārūn b. Mūsā (d. 170/786), omitted brotherhood “in love and affection” from Muqātil’s list; two centuries later, Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan al-‘Askarī (ca.308–395/920–1004) retained the six-fold typology, but Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-Ḥammūya al-Dāmaghānī (398–478/1007–1085) added a seventh aspect, “brotherhood “in similitude” to Muqātil’s list; later yet, Abū al-Faraj Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Jawzī (510–597/ca.1116–1200) reduced the seven-fold typology to five by not including brotherhood “in similitude” and combining brotherhood “in Islam” and other religions into a single category. Taken together, these scholars provide a seven-fold typology for the two terms:

- i. siblings: the son or daughter of one’s father, mother, or both;
- ii. in Islam (considered as type iii below by Ibn al-Jawzī);
- iii. religion;