

Qurʾān. 2nd ed. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1406/1986.

Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr*.

ʿUmar, Aḥmad Mukhtār and ʿAbd al-ʿAlī Sālim. *Muʿjam al-qirāʾāt al-Qurʾāniyya*. 8 vols. 2nd ed. Kuwait: Maṭbūʿāt Jāmiʿa, 1408/1988.

Wāḥidī. *Wajīz*

Zamakhsharī. *Kashshāf*.

See also: ANGELS; BADR; BELIEVERS; CHILDREN OF ISRĀʿĪL; DESCENT OF THE QURʾĀN; DISBELIEVERS; FIRʾAWN; HĀRŪN, PEACE BE UPON HIM; HEREAFTER; INJĪL; JIBRĪL; LAW; MŪSĀ, UPON HIM PEACE; READINGS OF THE QURʾĀN; SATAN; SŪRA; TORAH.

CSABA OKVATH AND MUZAFFAR IQBAL

CRUCIFIXION

ṢALB

Definitions and Usage

Crucifixion (*al-ṣalb*) is a form of execution in which the accused is tied or nailed to a large wooden beam or cross and left to hang until death. The Qurʾān mentions crucifixion six times in four different contexts using two verbal forms of the root *ṣ-l-b*. The primary meaning of *al-ṣalb* is rigid, stiff, hard, firm; the back is called *al-ṣalb* because of its rigidity and stiffness (Farāhīdī; Jawhrī; Zabīdī). Abū al-Ḥusayn al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. al-Mufaḍḍal al-Rāghīb al-Aṣfahānī (d. ca. 502/1108) says “*al-ṣalb* refers to the hanging of a person for execution, as it involves binding of his back to wood; another view is that it is from the phrase *ṣalb al-wadak* [extraction of marrow from the bones]... *al-ṣalīb* is the piece of wood to which one being crucified is tied; it also refers to the cross Christians wear around their neck because of their belief that ʿĪsā, upon him peace, was crucified upon the cross.”

Form I verb (*ṣalaba*) is used twice (Q 4:157 and 12:41) and Form II verb (*ṣallaba*) four times (Q 5:33; 7:124; 20:71; 26:49) in the following four contexts:

- i. Denial of the alleged crucifixion of Prophet ʿĪsā, upon him peace: *They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him* (wa mā ṣalabūhu) (Q 4:157);
- ii. Prophet Yūsuf, upon him peace (*q.v.*), tells his fellow inmate that his dream meant *he will be crucified* (fa-yuṣlabu) *and birds will eat from his head* (Q 12:41). The one to be crucified was

the king’s baker, who was accused of planning to assassinate the king by poisoning his food (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 12:36; see YŪSUF, UPON HIM PEACE);

- iii. As one of the legal punishments (Q 5:33) for *those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and spread mischief in the land*, where the phrase *those who wage war against Allah* (yuḥāribūn) *and His Messenger* is used metaphorically (since it is impossible to wage war against Allah); they include those who publicly brandish weapons, attack and disrupt travelers, armed robbers, and other violent criminals (Jaṣṣā; Qurṭubī; see LEGAL PUNISHMENTS); and
- iv. The punishment announced by Pharaoh for his magicians for believing in God without his [Pharaoh’s] permission (Q 7:124; 20:71; 26:49) (see FIRʾAWN; MAGIC).

Denial of the Alleged Crucifixion of ʿĪsā, upon him peace

The plot to kill ʿĪsā, upon him peace, is first mentioned in an eleven-verse passage (Q 3:45-55) that presents the most condensed Qurʾānic account of his life. It begins with the glad tidings of his miraculous birth to his mother and ends with the mention of the scheming of the disbelieving Children of Isrāʿīl (*q.v.*), assuring him of his safe ascension: *And they plotted, and Allah plotted. And Allah is the best of plotters. And when Allah said, ‘O ʿĪsā, indeed I will take you (immī mutawaffika) and raise you to Myself (rāfiʿuka ilayya), purify you from those who disbelieve and elevate your followers above the disbelievers until the Day of Judgment. Then to Me you will return, and I will judge between you concerning that over which you used to differ.* (Q 3:54-55)

The plot of the Israelites was to kill ʿĪsā, upon him peace, and the Divine plot was to make it appear to them that they have crucified him, although they had not (Ṭabarī; Zajjāj; Ibn Abī Ḥātim; Ibn al-Mundhir; Māturīdī; Samarqandī; Ibn Abī Zammīn; Māwardī; Zamakhsharī; Bayḍāwī; *sub* Q 3:54). This refutation appears in a more direct and emphatic form in another passage (Q 4:155-158) which also lists five other wrongdoings of the Children of Isrāʿīl—breaking of the Covenant (*q.v.*), rejecting the Signs of Allah, slaying the Prophets, defiantly declaring “*our hearts are enshrouded*”, and their “*tremendous calumny*” against Maryam, upon her peace:

And for their saying, “We slew the Messiah, ʿĪsā, son of Maryam, the Messenger of Allah”—though they did not kill him; nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear so unto them. Those who differ