

## ISTIDRAJ AS A METAPHOR (STUDY OF HERMENEUTIC INTERPRETATION)

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### ABSTRACT

This study discusses the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* in the Qur'an, which is known in society as *istidraj*. The purpose of this study is to reveal the meaning of *istidraj* according to the exegetes in a metaphorical and hermeneutic perspective. This study is qualitative and descriptive and uses a literature review method. The data collection technique used is the *Mauḍu'i* method (thematic analysis), while data analysis is carried out using a hermeneutic approach. The main source of this study is the Qur'an al-Karim, with supporting references from various tafsir books that are relevant to the theme. The study results show that, first, according to the exegetes, *sanastadrijuhum* is interpreted as a fall that occurs gradually and is almost imperceptible because it happens little by little. Allah SWT provides an opportunity to achieve a high position before being suddenly dropped. Second, metaphorically, *istidraj* has a satirical meaning, namely the postponement of punishment which is then given at once, both in the context of sin and goodness. Third, from a hermeneutic perspective, *istidraj* is a form of retribution that occurs through a certain process, either at a fast or slow tempo. This retribution is conveyed through various systematically arranged instruments, such as angels, humans, natural phenomena, or other events that appear natural.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Istidraj* is a concept in the Quran referring to Allah's gradual punishment of sinners through worldly pleasures that lead to negligence.<sup>1</sup> Scholars interpret *istidraj* in various ways: al-Qurthubi views it as a process of gradual punishment, while al-Zuhaili considers it a divine test delivered through favors.<sup>2</sup> Quraish Shihab describes *istidraj* as Allah granting ease and abundance to those who reject His verses, opening doors of pleasure to the negligent.<sup>3</sup> The concept is closely related to terms like *al-makr*, *al-khid'ah*, and *al-impla*.<sup>4</sup> Mufasirs have two main interpretations of *istidraj*: some interpreted it as a delay of punishment occurring only in the afterlife, while others see it as partial punishment in this world and the hereafter.<sup>5</sup> Understanding *istidraj* is crucial for Muslims Cautionary reminder <sup>6</sup>

*Istidraj* is described as a divine strategy in which individuals who deny the signs of God are gradually led to destruction through continued blessings, despite their transgressions<sup>7</sup>. Hermeneutics is presented as a method for understanding texts, particularly in works of art and literature, that emphasizes objective interpretation before symbolization.<sup>8</sup> In Islamic studies, hermeneutics has been applied to various texts, including the analysis of misogynistic hadith, as demonstrated by the work of Khaled Abou El Fadl. His approach, called "negotiated hermeneutics," balances the competence of the text, the author, and the reader, using five criteria: honesty, diligence, completeness, rationality, and self-control.<sup>9</sup>

It is common for humans to consider what rewards they will get when they do something. Especially for Muslims, the doctrine has been taught since childhood. This doctrine is not merely a form of local wisdom but is rooted in the Qur'anic teachings. It is a fundamental belief that all good and bad deeds will be rewarded appropriately. The reward can be manifested in the form of heaven and hell in the afterlife or favors and calamities in the world. Specifically, the Qur'an categorizes humans who are prone to forgetfulness and error into two groups: those who show gratitude and those who commit kufr (disbelief). As translated In the Qur'an Surah Ibrahim [14]: 7, Allah SWT says: "Indeed, if you are grateful, I will increase (blessings) to you, but if you disbelieve (deny My blessings), then surely My punishment is very severe."

<sup>1</sup> Fauzi Fathur Rosi and Pajar Amirul Mu'ti, "The Concept of Istidraj in the Qur'an," *World Journal of Islamic Learning and Teaching* 1, no. 3 (7 September 2024): 64–79, <https://doi.org/10.61132/wjilt.v1i3.69>.

<sup>2</sup> Rosi and Mu'ti, "The Concept of Istidraj in the Qur'an."

<sup>3</sup> Ali Muzamil, John Supriyanto, and Apriyanti Apriyanti, "ISTIDRAJ DALAM AL-QUR'AN MENURUT PENAFSIRAN M. QURAIISH SHIHAB DALAM TAFSIR AL-MISBAH," *Al-Misykah: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 2 (30 June 2021): 101–14, <https://doi.org/10.19109/almisykah.v1i2.9031>.

<sup>4</sup> Dina Fitri Febriani and Muhammad Zubir, "Istidraj Dalam Al-Quran Perspektif Imam al-Qurthubi," *Istinarah: Riset Keagamaan, Sosial Dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (17 June 2020): 76, <https://doi.org/10.31958/istinarah.v2i1.2101>.

<sup>5</sup> Furqan Furqan and Diana Nabilah, "Istidraj Menurut Pemahaman Mufasir," *TAFSE: Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 6, no. 1 (30 June 2021): 77, <https://doi.org/10.22373/tafse.v6i1.9203>.

<sup>6</sup> Rosi and Mu'ti, "The Concept of Istidraj in the Qur'an."

<sup>7</sup> Fitri Hayati Nasution, "Memahami Istidraj Di Era Kontemporer (Studi Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Qur'an Karya Sayyid Quthb)," *Cendekiawan : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Keislaman* 1, no. 3 (26 December 2022): 114–22, <https://doi.org/10.61253/cendekiawan.v1i3.62>; Febriani and Zubir, "Istidraj Dalam Al-Quran Perspektif Imam al-Qurthubi."

<sup>8</sup> Acep Iwan Saidi, "HERMENEUTIKA, SEBUAH CARA UNTUK MEMAHAMI TEKS," *Jurnal Sosioteknologi* 7, no. 13 (2008): 376–382, <https://journals.itb.ac.id/index.php/sostek/article/view/996>.

<sup>9</sup> Iis Yulianti Syafrida Siregar, "KONSTRUKSI HERMENEUTIKA DALAM STUDI ISLAM TENTANG HADIS-HADIS MISOGINIS (Studi Pemikiran Khaled Abou El Fadl)," *TAZKIR: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman* 2, no. 2 (31 December 2016): 123, <https://doi.org/10.24952/tazkir.v2i2.514>.

It is clear in the translation that if you are grateful you will get what and if you disbelieve you will get what. This is certainly an understanding that continues to be used as a guideline in human life, especially Muslims. However, there is an anomaly felt by some attentive eyes that makes it a phenomenon. There are a handful of humans who are given abundant favors and fortune by Allah SWT, while their lives, in plain view, can be categorized into the type of human kufr. The human being becomes accustomed to the things that are obtained or attempted are the rights that deserve to be obtained, thus making him neglect that the blessing is actually a gift from Allah SWT.<sup>10</sup> A luxurious life and abundant fortune do not necessarily make someone close to sharia. Legalizing everything that is forbidden by Allah SWT, legalizing various forms of immorality.<sup>11</sup> These taboos seem to run smoothly without a hitch with a simple principle halal, haram and hit. Not practicing the pillars of Islam except the first. But at first glance, Allah SWT blessed his life with extraordinary favors. Apart from Allah SWT has the properties of *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* which always go side by side. Where the nature of *al-Rahman* can be enjoyed by all creatures, but the nature of *al-Rahim* can only be enjoyed by believers.<sup>12</sup> This is an anomaly in the concept of gratitude and kufr. This category of anomaly in Islam is also known as *istidraj*. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary, the word *istidraj* can be defined as an extraordinary thing or situation given by Allah SWT to the disbelievers as a test so that they are arrogant and forget themselves to God, such as Pharaoh and Karun.<sup>13</sup> The meaning of *istidraj* from the Big Indonesian Dictionary certainly does not necessarily make a comprehensive conclusion on the meaning of *istidraj*.

On the other hand, hermeneutic interpretation, which is relatively new in the field of al-Qur'an literature, in studying the meaning of *istidraj* metaphor will be a very "sexy" research object to be followed up. Therefore, it is necessary to have a broad understanding and insight into the thematic verse of *istidraj*.<sup>14</sup> In writing this research, the author will examine the verses related to *istidraj* by including the interpretations of various Mufassirs and contextualizing the meaning of *istidraj* with today's situation. Then, the author will examine the meaning of the metaphor of *istidraj* hermeneutically. Because it could be, *istidraj* has a broader meaning through hermeneutical studies that will be researched in this scientific work.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are many previous studies and research on *istidraj* as a scientific work that have been published. However, many of these studies focus on the interpretation and interpretation of a mufassir, both classical and contemporary mufassirs. For example, in 2024 the research of Muzammil Ali, et al with the title *Istidraj in the Qur'an According to the Interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah* which examines the interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab as a contemporary mufassir. Quraish Shihab said The purpose of *istidraj* is to make sinners realize and repent. Because humans are given by Allah a lot of ease in all affairs and abundant wealth but they deny or exaggerate in using

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Mutawalli Al-Sya'rawi, *Al-Fatawa: Anta Tas'al Wa al-Islamu Yujib*, Trans. Abu Abdillah Almansyur, Ed. rev., (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> Misbahul Munir and Dinda Listiani, "Istidraj Perspektif Tafsir Al-Tabari," *JADID: Journal of Quranic Studies and Islamic Communication* 1, no. 2 (2021): 220–29, <https://doi.org/10.33754/jadid.v1i2.626>.

<sup>12</sup> Furqan and Nabilah, "Istidraj Menurut Pemahaman Mufassir."

<sup>13</sup> Kemdikbud, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Alfina Rizqi Khoirunnisa and Ulfah Rahmawati, "Insecure in Qur'anic Perspective," *The Ushuluddin International Student Conference* 1, no. 1 (2023): 26.

it.<sup>15</sup> Quraish Shihab sees the phenomenon of *istidraj* in terms of the culture of society. Regarding the discussion of *istidraj*, many people are laymen, *istidraj* is something that still makes a lot of people unaware of the misguidance and punishment given by Allah SWT in the form of the smoothness of affairs in the world for a moment, the abundance of sustenance, and infinite blessings even though the smoothness is only misleading tyrannical humans. Favors that are not only in the form of wealth but also health and so on. Other than this culture of society, the research by Misbahul Munir and Listiani with the title *Istidraj Perspective of Tafsir Al Tabari* examines the interpretation of al-Tabari as a classical *mufasssir*.<sup>16</sup> This paper explains the causes of *istidraj* because of Kufr, and ungratefulness. *Istidraj* according to al-Tabari is a subtle trick to people who are given a grace period (termination of death) so that they feel that the granting of grace is a good deed given by Allah to them, so that in the end they fall into what they like. Meanwhile, according to Buya Hamka, *istidraj* is rising gradually little by little, like rising to the top, which reaches a climax. However, in essence, the rise is down, but they do not realize this, so in the end they think that gradually rising is a good deed.

From the research of the phenomenon of *istidraj* in terms of social culture and also the factors and characteristics of *istidraj* have been widely studied by researchers. However hermeneutic studies on the sentence of *istidraj* have not been widely studied by researchers in the field of interpretation. So this attracts researchers to study the sentence of *istidraj* from the hermenutic side. Thus, the meaning of *istidraj* can be understood more. Many similar studies also rely on the interpretations of certain scholars, both classical and contemporary, both Arabic and Indonesian books of interpretation, which are used as the main reference in interpreting the meaning of *istidraj* as a study of interpretation.

## METHODS

This research is a descriptive qualitative type that compiles and explains the results of research through words and sentences, not numbers.<sup>17</sup> This research uses a library research method that refers to research sources from literature materials such as books, magazines, journals, theses, theses, dissertations and everything related to the topic discussed.<sup>18</sup> The main source of information for this research is the Qur'an al-Karim and the supporting information is the books of interpretation from various Mufasssirs that are relevant to the theme. The data collection method used in this research is the *maudhu'i* method (thematic analysis), in which, the object of research is the text of the Qur'an which is compiled from several letters and focused on one topic<sup>19</sup>. The data analysis used in this research is the hermeneutic method. This method can be defined as an effort to explain and or trace the message of a text and the basic understanding of an utterance.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the hermeneutic method also examines unclear, obscure, vague, dim and contradictory writings that can trigger confusion for listeners and readers. The steps are to identify the text and its context, analyze the structure and meaning of the text, compare

<sup>15</sup> Muzamil, Supriyanto, and Apriyanti, "Istidraj Dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Penafsiran M. Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah."

<sup>16</sup> Munir and Listiani, "Istidraj Perspektif Tafsir Al- Tabari."

<sup>17</sup> Sugiono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2011).

<sup>18</sup> Miza Nina Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80, <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.

<sup>19</sup> 'Abd al-hayy al-Farmawi, *Metode Tafsir Maudhu'i Dan Cara Penerapannya*. Trans. Rosihon Anwar (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Hermeneutics And Social Sciences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978).

it with other sources, interpret it and draw conclusions and its relevance.<sup>21</sup> Since this research is based on library research, the technique used in data processing is to analyze the data obtained through data collection techniques, and then classify and group the data according to the problem under study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thematically, sentences referring to *istidraj* were found twice in the Qur'anic index search by word. Both sentences are found in Surat al-A'raf [7]: 182 and Surat al-Qalam/68: 44. The text and translation of the two verses are as follows. Al-Qur'an Surat al-A'raf [7]: 182

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*And those who deny Our verses, We will draw them gradually (towards destruction), from a direction which they do not know.*

Al-Qur'an Surat al-Qalam [68]: 44

فَذَرْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَدِّبْ هَذَا الْخَدِيثِ ۖ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

*So leave (O Muhammad) to Me (the affairs) of those who deny these words (the Qur'an). We will draw them gradually to destruction from a direction they know not of.*

These two verses are interrelated to provide an explanation of arrogance and rewards in the world in the form of *istidraj*. In Quran Surah al-A'raf [7]: 182, Allah mentions a very harsh punishment for those who deny His verses and boast against them. They will not receive mercy and kindness from Allah, and Paradise will remain closed to them. The danger of arrogance and denial of revelation. This verse reminds us that pride in rejecting the truth can close our hearts to the mercy of Allah. This is a warning to everyone not to underestimate Allah's revelation. The danger of arrogance is also emphasized in the Quran Surah Qalam [68]: 44. Allah will reward those who are arrogant and ignorant of Allah's commands with a variety of worldly rewards. Such as punishment in return for kufr or negligent favors such as *istidraj*. And this is often one of the causes or consequences of arrogance.<sup>22</sup> When a person feels that all the pleasures he receives are the result of his own efforts, or he feels that his life is smooth because of his abilities, then this sense of pride can lead him further away from Allah. In fact, when a person is given enjoyment or ease of life *istidraj*, he can misinterpret it and become even more arrogant, thinking that he does not need improvement or repentance.<sup>23</sup>

Etymologically, the phrase *sanastadrijuhum* (سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ) comes from the root daraja-yudraju-darajan (درج-يدرج-درجا) which literally means degrees/steps. (Ali et al.) A.W Munawwir elaborates *istidraj* comes from the word daraja-wadurujan-wadurujanan (درج-ودروجا-ودرجنا) which means to make levels.

<sup>21</sup> Ummi Inayati, "Pendekatan Hermeneutika Dalam Ilmu Tafsir," *Falasifa* 10, no. 2 (2019): 68-90, <https://doi.org/10.36835/falasifa.v10i2.197>.

<sup>22</sup> Tri Wahyudi Ramdhan, "ISTIDRAJ IN THE QUR'AN IN THE TAFSIR MAFATI'H AL-GHAIB BY FAKHR AL-DIN AL-RAZI," *TARBIYA ISLAMIA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Keislaman* 13, no. 1 (2023): 49-56, <https://doi.org/10.36815/tarbiya.v13i1.3406>.

<sup>23</sup> Rosi and Mu'ti, "The Concept of Istidraj in the Qur'an."

The word *daraja* is added with the *harfu ziyadah* of alif (ا), sin (س) and ta (ت) which is based on the *wazn istif'al* (استفعال). Quraish Shihab argues that the phrase *sanastadrijuhum* comes from the word *darajatun* (درجة) which means stairs or steps. The addition of the letters *alif* (ا), *sin* (س) and *ta* (ت) to the sentence in the verse means "asking". Furthermore, the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* can be interpreted as a request to ascend or descend through the steps, so as to reach a level that could not be reached before except by using the ladder. In the verse, the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is preceded by the letter sin (س) which means "will".

According to Abu al-Hasan 'Ali in Tafsir al-Mawardi, *istidraj* is interpreted in two categories; first, referring to destruction, and second, referring to disbelief. Abi Qasim Al-Husaini Ibn Muhammad al-Ma'ruf Ibn al-Raghib al-Aṣfahani in *Mu'jam Mufradat Alfazu al-Qur'an* explains that the meaning of *istidraj* comes from the word *al-darju* (الدرج) which is similar to *al-munazzal* (المنزل) which means place, degree or level. While *sanastadrijuhum* is interpreted as folding like folding a book, torturing step by step, lowering little by little like the process of climbing up and down the stairs. Ibn Manzur in *Lisanu al-'Arab* says that the meaning of *istidraj* is to bring something closer gradually and or to lower something slowly.<sup>24</sup>

Some scholars interpret that *kamilat sanastadrijuhum* means that Allah SWT will pull them in an unexpected direction, opening up pleasures that make them happy so that they are complacent and forget about punishment and death, then Allah SWT will pull them off guard. From the various explanations above, the author concludes that the meaning of *istidraj* from the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* in the two verses above etymologically means to increase step by step.

In terminology, *istidraj* has many meanings from various Mufasssirs. Al-Asfahani in *Mu'jam Mufradat Alfazu al-Qur'an* argues that *istidraj* draws man level by level, in the sense that it is lower and despicable than the most despicable thing.<sup>25</sup> The analogy of human beings is undoubtedly one of dignity and rank. This means that a person with a high position will rise higher and higher. On the other hand, people in low positions will be lowered down.

Meanwhile, Zainuddin Qasim al-Hanafi in *Gharib al-Qur'an* interprets the meaning of *istidraj* through the word (*sanastadrijuhum*) in the two verses above to mean making them confused and secretly experiencing corruption. Also, according to the scholars of *ma'ani* (contextual) science quoted by him, the meaning of *istidraj* is that it increases little by little and no one can match it. The analogy of *istidraj* is that when a baby is nearing the ability to walk, he will not give up until he is able to walk even if he falls many times, and also when folding something, a person will continue to fold according to his wishes and will not stop unless the folding is appropriate.

Al-Qurtubi interprets *istidraj* as an additional favor from Allah SWT when someone commits sin. Simply put, the more sin the more favor. The point of Al-Qurtubi's opinion is that *Istidrajullah al-'abda* means that every time His servant makes a mistake, every time Allah SWT also adds favors to him. It can be seen that Al-Qurtubi interprets *istidraj*

<sup>24</sup> Ibnu Manẓur, *Lisanu Al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dar el Fikr, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Abi Qasim Al-Husaini Ibn Muhammad al-Ma'ruf Ibn al-Raghib Al-Aṣfahani, *Mu'jam Mufradat al-Fazu al-Qur'an*, 4th ed. (Beirut: Dar el Kutb el Ilmiyyah, 2013).

as the favor that Allah SWT gives to those who deny Him, every time the person denies Allah SWT, Allah SWT immediately gives them a favor. Likewise, when they sin again, Allah SWT adds more favors to them. So that the person thinks that Allah SWT loves them, even though this favor is essentially just a trick of Allah SWT against them so that their sin increases. And in the end, Allah SWT will give them a very painful punishment in the afterlife.

Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabari argues that *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is a subtle trick to someone who is given a grace period. It is as if the person feels that the one who gives the grace period has done him a favor so that in the end he falls into something he does not like. According to Abu Bakr Jabir al-Jazairi, *istidraj* in the phrase *sanastadrijuhum* means punishing something for something that is done gradually, level by level. When people commit a new sin, Allah SWT will give favors instead of punishment, it makes them complacent, so that when the punishment in the form of punishment arrives, they do not realize it. Likewise, Sayyid Qutb argues that *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is a force that is not properly taken into account and ignored by those who deny the verses of Allah SWT and the laws of Islam. So, when the suspension of punishment in the form of punishment is inflicted without realizing it beforehand, they will feel very surprised.

Wahbah al-Zuhaili explains that *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is a stage. This means that the stage brings a person down from one level to the next with the aim of entrapment. The point here is that Allah SWT will bring the sinners closer to His punishment gradually in the form of neglect, always being given health, abundant fortune and added enjoyment, when their logic does not recognize that all of this is a form of *istidraj*.<sup>26</sup> Al-Syaukani explains that *istidraj* is that Allah SWT makes them forget to be grateful so that they sink into misguidance and will not be able to get out of this misguidance except after they get a position on the side of Allah SWT.

'Abdurrauf as-Singkili said *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is a trick that deceives a person with a favor given so that they forget about the giver of the favor, namely Allah SWT. A person who sees that the blessing he receives is an advantage, but he is fooled by it, so without realizing they are being tested. As a result, the grace they get is the cause of their falling into the path of falsehood. Furthermore, 'Abdurrauf as-Singkili added that the perpetrators of sin will be given opportunities so that they do not know the time of the arrival of *istidraj*. According to 'Abdurrauf as-Singkili, Allah SWT imposes a lower punishment on sinners, then adds sanctions and suffering, so that they sin more and more. Allah SWT takes little by little from them without giving immediate retribution. Then impose punishment gradually or delay punishment, so that they sin more and more.

According to Tafsir Jalalain, *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is a situation where people ignore the warnings given by Allah SWT in the form of misery and suffering. The suffering and misery given by Allah SWT do not necessarily make them take lessons and advice from it. On this basis, then Allah SWT opens for the perpetrators of sin the doors of pleasure. If they rejoice in what Allah has given them with arrogance and pride, then Allah SWT will repay them with a painful torment.<sup>27</sup> As Ali al-Sabuni stated, Allah SWT gave so many favors to them, then, they thought that these favors showed that Allah

<sup>26</sup> Nasution, "Memahami Istidraj Di Era Kontemporer (Studi Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Qur'an Karya Sayyid Quthb)."

<sup>27</sup> Ilzam Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani and Khoirul Umam Addzaky, "Sebuah Kajian Tematik tentang Sifat Iblis dalam Al-Qur'an dan Relevansinya di Zaman Sekarang," *Lathaif: Literasi Tafsir, Hadis dan Filologi* 3, no. 2 (2024): 110-120, <https://ejournal.uinmybatusangkar.ac.id/ojs/index.php/lathaif/article/view/13449/4454>.

SWT loved them, so they became wicked, negligent, arrogant and immersed in misguidance, so that Allah SWT bestowed His punishment on them. Al-Ghazali explains that Allah SWT has a treason for sinners. The sinners seem to forget about punishment and punishment because they are lulled by momentary delights and or deceptive victories, by being arrogant arrogant. This situation is a dictation from Allah SWT to people who commit disobedience, then Allah SWT pulls them to the brink of destruction at once without them realizing it.

According to Hamka in Al-Azhar, *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* can be interpreted as rising gradually, little by little. It is like climbing a ladder, ladder by ladder, step by step, foothold by foothold, until it reaches the top. Going up gradually to the top, or going down gradually to the bottom. All of this runs on autopilot and is not realized by those concerned, because they have neglected and forgotten the existence of Allah SWT as God Almighty, so He also made them forget themselves. As Allah SWT says in the Qur'an Surah Al-Hasyr [59]: 19:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

"And do not be like those who forget Allah, then Allah makes them forget themselves. They are the wicked ones."

Furthermore, Hamka explains that *istidraj* means being taken out of the straight line of truth without realizing it. They are treated as they wish and all doors of pleasure are opened to them until they forget themselves. They are like "peanuts forgetting their skin". They forget that there is no storm that does not subside and that after a sunny day, there will surely come clouds and rain; after the calm waves of the sea, there will surely come the tide and the big waves; they commit various sins in order to deify their unbridled lusts. Finally, they were complacent until the torment of Allah SWT came to them.

According to Ibrahim al-Qattan, the interpretation of *istidraj* in the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is interpreted as torture level by level or step by step. Similarly, Abu Muhammad Abdullah Ibn Muslimi interprets the phrase *sanastadrijuhum* to mean gently pulling them away little by little without force and persecution. Meanwhile, according to Ghasin Hamdun, *istidraj* is a structured approach to destruction by the method of giving pleasure and deferring time in punishment.

In the interpretation of the Ministry of Religion, *istidraj* is interpreted as people who deny the verses of Allah SWT and oppose the da'wah of Muhammad SAW (inkaru al-Qur'an wa inkaru al-Sunnah), will certainly receive punishment from Allah SWT sooner or later.<sup>28</sup> This is because the deniers do not understand the sunnatullah in social and social life as humans. They forget that victory will always be in favor of those who are right both sooner and later.

From the many opinions of the Mufassirs above, the researcher concludes that *istidraj* is a fall that is barely felt because it goes little by little or step by step. The gradual fall is not yet a climax, the fall is accommodated and held and then poured out at once to the sinner. So, when the time comes for the punishment for the sinner, the punishment that has been accommodated and held back comes all at once.<sup>29</sup> Some examples of cases in the eyes of the general public are rarely worshiping but abundant fortune (money) all giving is difficult but the style always increases elite; Not praying but living deliciously; Eating the property of orphans and du'afa but living peacefully full of laughter. The

<sup>28</sup> Redo Saputra, Muhajirin Muhajirin, and Eko Zulfikar, "Konsep Harta Dalam Al-Qur'an: Analisis Konteks Ayat-Ayat Makkiyah dan Madaniyah," *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (3 June 2024): 222–40, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jsq.v4i1.22594>.

<sup>29</sup> Furqan and Nabilah, "Istidraj Menurut Pemahaman Mufasir."



researcher concludes that the above cases are only a small part of *istidraj*. For the sinners, this postponed fall provides a utopia in that they (*ahlu maksiat*) can do everything, as they wish, arbitrarily, without any restrictions that need to be considered from religious doctrine and punishment as a consequence. Whereas in fact, Allah SWT let them rise or feel themselves high to be dropped at once, without warning and without warning. Logically, falling from a "high place" that occurs without warning and without warning is the most painful "fall" felt by humans.

Indeed, no matter how small the kindness, Allah SWT will definitely reward it, and vice versa. As Allah SWT said in surat al-Zalzalah [99]: 7-8:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

"So whoever does a zarah's weight of good, he will see his reward. And whoever does an evil deed weighing as much as a grain of blood, he will see his reward."

When examined metaphorically and referring to verses 7-8 of Surah al-Zalzalah [99] above, *istidraj* can have a satirical meaning. Not only is the punishment for the wrongdoer delayed and given all at once, but also the good. These give news to the sinners, but there is a similar hidden message for the obedient. Metaphorically, *istidraj* also means anomaly. In which its use is interpreted as an illustration for the sinner as well as for the obedient. Perhaps there are many people around the audience who are diligent in worship but do not appear to enjoy their blessings and sustenance. So in this case, it is also a delay (*istidraj*) in terms of goodness and *jaza' al-khair*. Allah SWT as He promised will reward it all.<sup>30</sup> So that the servants of Allah SWT who continue to serve in sincerely and surrender, will also get a reward at once. As if getting a surprise from Allah SWT for fortune and blessings from things that were not expected and expected. Using the same comparison as the punishment from Allah SWT, then logically, getting great things that have never been expected is the most joyful "surprise" in life that humans can feel.

Looking at hermeneutical studies, the sentence *istidraj* in the verse *sanastadrijuhum* refers to the *harfu ziyadah sin* (س) which means "will". The sentence "will" is hermeneutic, something that must occur in the process of execution, but requires time as a form of process, either fast or slow. Furthermore, the letter nun (ن) after the sentence sin (س) refers to "we". This means that there are many factors in the sentence "we", in which interpretative scholars agree that the use of "we" in interpretation is a structured component as a sign that Allah SWT is not directly involved, but uses several instruments in the process. These instruments can be mediated through angels, humans, natural events and other things that look natural to the human eye. So overall, the sentence *sanastadrijuhum* is interpreted as a reply that will definitely occur through a process, both fast and slow. The reply is conveyed by using several instruments that are assembled into a structured component either through angels, humans, natural events and other things that look natural.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the preceding analysis, three key conclusions can be drawn. First, according to mufasssirun, *istidraj* refers to a gradual descent that occurs incrementally, making it nearly imperceptible. This decline is sustained over time until it ultimately

<sup>30</sup> Jihan Rahmawati and St Nur Syahidah Dzatun Nurain, "Istidraj Perspektif Asy-Syaukani dalam Tafsir Fath Al-Qadir," *AL-MUSTAFID: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 3, no. 2 (2024): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.30984/mustafid.v3i2.1013>.

culminates in a sudden downfall for sinners. Allah SWT permits individuals to ascend to a position of apparent success before abruptly subjecting them to an unforeseen and severe collapse. Logically, an unexpected and unanticipated fall from a position of prominence is among the most distressing experiences for human beings. Second, from a metaphorical perspective, *istidraj* functions as a satirical concept, wherein the postponement of consequences in the form of punishment for wrongdoing or reward for righteousness ultimately results in their simultaneous bestowal. Third, from a hermeneutic standpoint, *istidraj* is understood as a divinely ordained process of retribution that unfolds over time, whether rapidly or gradually. This process operates through a structured mechanism, employing various intermediaries such as angels, human actions, natural phenomena, or other occurrences that appear ordinary yet serve as instruments of divine justice. This research is expected to be able to provide additional knowledge for other researchers in the field of interpretation and be developed into practice as further research.

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