

IN THE NAME OF GOD MOST GRACIOUS MOST MERCIFUL

אגרון

BY AGRON BELICA

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“John the Baptist has been misrepresented by scholars of both Christianity and Islam.”
—Agron Belica

Forensic Scriptures

IN THE NAME OF GOD MOST GRACIOUS MOST MERCIFUL

The first misinterpreted word in relation to Prophet Yahya is *sayyid*. Prophet Yahya is referred to as a sayyid, chief in the Quran. The commentators have interpreted this to mean that he was a scholar of religious law, a wise man, a noble wise and pious man, and so forth. This was a prophet of God. Knowledge and wisdom were given to him by his Lord. The title given to Yahya by his Lord shows that Prophet Yahya is one who has spiritual authority over his people and not “noble” or “honorable” as this word is usually translated. Honor and nobility are good qualities, but they fail to indicate that Prophet Yahya was also given a role of leadership by his Lord. Yahya is the only prophetic name designated with this title in the Quran.

Moreover, why has the title of *Sayyid* not been exclusively reserved for the prophet Yahya as is the title Messiah for Isa/Jesus? If one were to say *Messehu* Muhammad, Muslims would quickly respond *astagfurullah* (seeking forgiveness as if one had committed a huge mistake). They would insist that this is an exclusive title for the son of Mary. Would it not be fair to ask why then is the title *Sayyid*, given by God, not exclusive for the prophet Yahya?

That being said, no one has the right to be called *Sayyid* in this meaning, not the so-called descendants of Muhammad, and most certainly not the Prophet Muhammad himself. This, in my opinion, would be a great injustice, Quranically speaking. It should also be noted that the word *sayyid* shares the same root as *sud* meaning “black.” I see Prophet Yahya as the Black Chief who has inherited the House of Jacob. He inherited a Spiritual Kingdom, not material wealth. He threatened not only the throne of Herod Antipas, but also the Jewish religious establishment. The word also signifies “greater or greatest in estimation, rank, or dignity” (*aswadu/Black Excellence*).

The second word that has been misinterpreted is *waliy* (Q. 19:5) which in this verse and many other places in the Quran means “protector” or “guardian,” rather than “heir” or “successor.” *Waliy* can also refer to the Levites, as they were Protectors/Guardians of the sacred precincts. In this specific case, Zechariah prayed to his Lord: And, truly, I feared for my defenders after me. And my woman had been a barren woman. So bestow on me from that which proceeds from Thy Presence a protector” In Q. 3:39, Zachariah’s prayer is answered, “God gives thee good tidings of *Yahya*—one who establishes the Word of God as true—a chief and concealer of secrets and a Prophet among the ones in accord with morality.”

Thus John became the *waliy* “guardian” or “protector” of Mary and ultimately the sacred word, Jesus/*Isa*. It can also imply that John is safe-guarding revelation as a whole. It is commonly thought that Zachariah was simply asking for a son; however, this misconception may be corrected by reading further on in the text. After receiving this good news, Zachariah asked, My Lord! How is it I will have a boy while, surely, I reached old age and my woman is a barren woman. He said: Thus, God accomplishes what He wills. Zachariah was asking how this would be possible as he had not even contemplated being blessed with a son in his old age, and that with a barren wife. Compare this with Mary who said, when she was given good news of a son, “How is it I will be with child when no mortal touches me” (Q. 3:47)

Both Zechariah and Mary were asking about the possibility of such a thing. If Zachariah were asking for a son, as has been suggested by scholars of Islam, than why did he ask such a question when God informed him of the impending birth? The truth is that Zachariah was not asking for a son explicitly. He was asking God to send him a divinely appointed guardian, from the same place where Mary received her provisions (*rizq*); hence “bestow on me from that which proceeds from Thy Presence a guardian.” (Q. 19:5, 3:38).

The third is the word *hasur* used in the Quran (3:39) which is usually translated as “chaste.” My research shows that the Arabic word *hasur* does not mean “chaste” with regard to *Yahya*; rather, it means a “*concealer of secrets*.” Why the mistake in translation and commentary? As there was no extensive information given in the Quran about the life of Prophet *Yahya* nor in the Traditions (*Hadith*), the commentators turned to Christian tradition and simply repeated what they found there. The commentators of the Quran have placed considerable emphasis on this word.

Al-Tabari interprets the word *hasur* to mean one who abstains from sexual intercourse with women. He then reports a Tradition on the authority of Said *ibn al-Musayyab* which has Prophet Muhammad commenting on this: “‘Everyone of the sons of Adam shall come on the Day of Resurrection with a sin (of sexual impropriety) except *Yahya* bin Zechariah (John the Baptist).’”

Then, picking up a tiny straw, he continued, ‘this is because his generative organ was no bigger than this straw’ (implying that he was impotent).” Does this mean that even the prophets other than *Yahya* will be raised up with this sin of sexual impropriety? How can we accept that this was said by such a modest human being as the Prophet of Islam, comparing a straw to another prophet’s generative organ and perhaps implying that *Yahya* was impotent?

Another commentator, *Ibn Kathir*, a renowned Islamic scholar, rejects this view and adds: “This would be a defect and a blemish unworthy of prophets.” He then mentions that it was not that he had no sexual relations with women, but that he had no illegal sexual relations with them. Indeed, the whole discussion is unseemly. It is known that prophets of God are immune from major sins, so this statement makes no sense at all when interpreting the word *hasur*. In addition, I would like to mention the fact that in his commentary, *Ibn Kathir* says he (*Yahya*) probably

married and had children. He said this on the basis of what was related in the Quran of the prayer of Zachariah.

There are several reasons why interpreting *hasur* in this context as “chaste” or “celibate,” as has been done by commentators, is a misinterpretation: First of all, there is another word in the Quran for “chaste” and that is *muhsin*.

As God used a different word, *hasur*, it must imply something different. Secondly, God says in the Quran that Islam did not bring Monasticism, but that it was something that they (the Christians) invented. (Q. 57:27) Also: And, certainly, We sent Messengers before thee and We assigned for them spouses and offspring. And it had not been for a Messenger to bring a sign but with the permission of God. For every term there is a Book. (Q. 13:38) Would it be fair to ask if Prophet Yahya was a messenger of God?

God would not have sent a Prophet who was celibate. In addition, it is contrary to the famous exhortation in the Torah to “go forth and multiply.” Yahya’s father, Zechariah prayed for a protector who would provide descendants (*dhurriyah*) for his family: Zachariah called to his Lord, saying: “My Lord! Bestow on me good offspring from Thy Presence. Truly, Thou art hearing the supplication” (Q. 3:38) God gave him Yahya. God would not have sent a son to Zechariah who would not carry on the line of Jacob’s descendants because then God would not have answered the prayer of Zechariah. The word *hasur* is used once in the Quran and that is in regard to the Prophet Yahya.

A major Arabic-English lexicon, that of Edward William Lane (Taj al-Arus) states that when *hasur* is used alone, it means “concealer of secrets.” In his translation of Ibn al-Arabi’s Book of the Fabulous Gryphon, Elmore also translates the Arabic *hasur* as concealer of secrets. In the referenced passage, “chaste” would not have been appropriate.

The fourth word is *samiyyan* (One of a Kind). Again, another word that we need to pay attention to. It is used twice in the Quran, once in reference to Yahya (Q. 19:7) “O Zechariah! Truly, We give thee the good tidings of a boy. His name will be Yahya and We assigned it not as a namesake for anyone before.” The other time it is used is in reference to God. “The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them! So worship Him and maintain thou patience in His worship. Hast thou known any namesake for Him? (Q. 19:65/See Q. 61:6 The Praised One)

Root letters *smw* to be high/lofty, raised, name, attribute. Samawat heights/heavens/rain, raining clouds. *Ismun* mark of identification by which one is recognized. It is a derivation of *wsm* (pl. *asma*). *Ism* stands for a distinguishing mark of a thing, sometimes said to signify its reality. —Concordance of the Sublime Quran

In the famous Arabic lexicon *Lisan al-Arab*, the root *s m w* means “elevation or highness.” No other prophetic name in the Quran has been given such praise by His Majesty.

The *fifth* word is *hanan* which means grace or mercy, which is part of the compound name *Yu’hanan* (in English “John”), meaning “God is Gracious.” The word *hanan* is used only once in the Quran (Q. 19:13) and that is in reference to Yahya: “and Our continuous grace from that which proceeds from Our Presence and purity and he had been devout”. So he has been graced, so to speak, with continuous blessings.

The name *Yuhanan* means God—Gracious. The number 5 symbolizes God’s Grace and its huge in the Bible as well as the Qur’an. Also, Prophet Yahya is mentioned five times in the Sacred—Reading.

*Yahya is mentioned five times in the Quran (Yuhana/John—God Gracious (5).

The names Yahya and Yu'hanan are not the same as many assume. They have two entirely different roots. Hanan and the *hannah* both derive from the Semitic root h n n. While the word *hannah* means “mercy, grace, or tenderness,” the root word for Yahya is h y y. It means “life” or “he lives” (Life—Force)

One does not need to be a linguist to see the obvious difference. In addition, I would like also to mention that this name and attribute given to Prophet Yahya can also be found in Sabian (Mandean) literature. The Sabians (Mandeans) are mentioned in the Quran in verses (Q. 2:62), (Q. 5:69) and (Q. 22:17) and in their canonical prayer book we find Yahya Yu'hana. It has been known that it was the practice of the Sabians to have two names, a real name and a special name. Both names Yahya from the Quran and Yu'hanan (John) from the bible are connected with the number 5.

According to the *Sabians* (Mandeans), this prophet's real name was Yahya (he lives) and his lay name was Yuhana (John). Prophet Yahya is the only one who was given this name, as the Quran clearly states: “O Zechariah! Truly, We give thee the good tidings of a boy. His name will be *Yahya* and We assigned it not as a namesake for anyone before.”

Was John the Baptist Beheaded?

We are told by an early historian, Josephus, that Chief Yahya/John the Baptist was put to death because of his political importance. The belief that he was executed is probably related to the New Testament story of his beheading at the behest of Salome, a story the truth of which we reject. Josephus does not mention the manner of his death.

Others have stated that he was beheaded. If it be true that Chief Yahya was put to death by Herod Antipas on the suspicion of planning an insurrection, as Josephus indicates, the punishment would not have been beheading. Under Roman law, only Roman citizens were sentenced to beheading. Any non-Roman citizen was sentenced to death by crucifixion for such activity.

This was the case with Jesus, a non-Roman citizen, being accused of treason and sentenced to crucifixion. In addition, we see that when Paul was sentenced to die, he pleaded that he was a Roman citizen so that he would be beheaded and not crucified (Acts 22:27-28).

Certainly, if it was the case that Chief Yahya's followers were many, spread far and wide, as it has been reported by some, and that Josephus mentions that the Jews were greatly moved by his words, and that Herod Antipas feared that Chief Yahya's influence over the masses would cause a rebellious uprising leading to a revolt by the Jews against the Romans (*Antiquities* 18:5.2 116-119), then this would be in accord with the practice of capital punishment of such criminals under Roman law. That is, that non-Roman citizens be crucified.

As far as his being beheaded by Antipas, now believed to be a fiction, we know that records show Herod the Great lost his power to execute anyone. It is also known that he had to bring those whom he wanted to execute to the Roman authorities, as he had lost his title of “Caesar’s Friend.”

With that in mind, there is nothing whatsoever showing that this power to execute prisoners was ever restored to his heirs, one of whom was Herod Antipas. If Antipas had wanted to execute Chief Yahya/John the Baptist, he most likely would have needed permission from Rome to do so. If this be true, then the punishment would have to have been crucifixion and not beheading as this was reserved for Roman citizens.

Would it be fair to say that the High Priest Caiaphas, who was endorsed by Rome, had a problem with this new Black Chief whom the masses were flocking to see by the River Jordan? Would it be fair to say that Chief Yahya/John the Baptist threatened not only the throne of Antipas, but also the Jewish religious establishment?

Would it be fair to say that both Antipas and Caiaphas conspired together to do away with Chief Yahya? That the Sanhedrin and Antipas could not execute anyone should be kept in mind. Would it be fair to say that Chief/Yahya was arrested and brought before Pilate?

The Prophet Yahya could not have been beheaded as has been stated by Muslim and Christian scholars. With regard to Jesus, in the Quran we read: “Peace on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day I will be raised up again.” (Q. 19:33)

The verse states that Jesus was given safety and security in these three situations. But what about the son of Zechariah? We find the same description for him as we find for Jesus: “Peace on him the day he is born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised up again.” (Q. 19:15)

How does the supposed beheading of this prophet fit in with the above Quranic verse of one given peace by his Lord? We find in the commentary of Ibn Kathir that Yahya was also given safety and security in these three situations, but the book speciously ascribed to Ibn Kathir, *Stories of the Prophets*, agrees with the Gospel accounts of Chief Yahya’s being beheaded and the serving of his head on a platter.

How do we explain the beheading of this Prophet of God? How, then, is he one who was “safe and secure”? Are we to say that God saved Jesus, but abandoned Yahya? Is this divine justice?

Josephus’s account of the imprisonment and execution of Yahya/John the Baptist would place it in the middle of the fourth decade, say 35 or 36 AD and therefore years after the events of the supposed crucifixion of Jesus, not before.

In *The New Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, Crook writes, “Josephus’ evidence creates a colossal chronological problem of enormous consequences.”

That is still true. Since we also know that while the gospels portray John in their narratives primarily to introduce and testify to Jesus’ superior stature, we also know from Josephus, that John/Yahya was a major player on the Palestinian stage, not just a walk-on to herald the messiahship of Jesus.

Subsequently, Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas were both removed in 36 AD. Where does the supposed crucifixion of Jesus fit in here exactly? The two principal characters in the gospels responsible for allegedly crucifying Jesus were no longer in

power.

Consider the following examples of the way God dealt with his prophets: “And, certainly, Noah cried out to Us. And how excellent were the ones who answer! And We delivered him and his people from tremendous distress. And We made his offspring—they, the ones who remain. And We left for him to say with the later ones: Peace be on Noah among the worlds. (Q. 37:79)

About Prophets Moses and Aaron: “And, certainly, We showed Our grace to Moses and Aaron. And We delivered them and their folk from the tremendous distress and helped them so that they, they had been the ones who are victors. And We gave them the manifest Book and guided them to the straight path. We left for them a good name with the later ones: Peace be on Moses and Aaron! (Q 37:114-120)

About Prophet Lot: “Truly, he was of Our servants, ones who believe. And, truly, Lot was of the ones who are sent. We delivered him and his people, one and all, but an old woman of the ones who stay behind. Again, We destroyed the others.” (Q. 37:133-136)

About Prophet Jonah: “Then, the great fish engulfed him while he was one who is answerable. If he had not been of the ones who glorify, he would have lingered in expectation in its belly until the Day they are raised up.” (Q. 37:142-144)

All of them, plus Jesus, and Muhammad—as far as we know, all the prophets mentioned by name in the Quran were delivered from their enemies. Yet, the Prophet Yahya, whose name ironically means “He Lives,” is popularly supposed to have been put to death. Clearly, you can see how this story of the

beheading creates an inconsistency with a text believed by Muslims all over the world to be internally consistent.

It is my belief that Prophet Yahya was possibly put on the cross and not Jesus. However, he did not die on the cross. By God’s giving him the name of *Yahya* (“he who lives”) in the Quran and the Quranic fact that the Messiah was not crucified, but it appeared to the people as such, the Quran is telling us that that person was Chief Yahya (The Black Prophet).

Chief Yahya survives as he lives out the words from God of “peace be upon him” as was the case with Prophet Abraham when he was thrown in the fire yet he was saved, “We said: O fire! Be coolness and peace for Abraham!” (21:69); hence: “Peace be on Abraham! Thus We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good! (37:110)”

Chief Yahya died a natural death at some later time, as did Jesus. It is my belief from my understanding of the Quran that Yahya was raised up in honor (*rafa‘a*) as was Jesus. Because this is not mentioned in the Quran, it does not mean that it could not have happened this way.

Again, we must turn to the Quran and its “divine wisdom” to receive understanding. When one compares

Isa/Jesus and Yahya/John, we can observe that Jesus has been mentioned in detail, whereas John has not.

Here are some examples for one to consider:

The Quran tells us that Jesus was sent to the children of Israel, but John is not mentioned as being sent to them. Was John sent to the children of Israel? Of course he was.

Jesus in the Quran preaches to the children of Israel, but John is not mentioned. Did John preach to the children of Israel? Of course he did. We are told that Jesus had disciples, but John's are not mentioned. Did he have disciples? Of course he did. We are told that Jesus received the Gospel (*Injil*), but John's revelation was not specified, but he was told to hold onto the scripture with might. Did John receive scripture from his Lord as did Jesus? Of course he did. Because John is not mentioned in similar circumstances, it does not mean that he was not as favored as Jesus. Countless works have been published pertaining to the false crucifixion of the son of Mary by Muslims, yet the false beheading of the son of Zachariah is ignored, why?

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In the Name of God Most **Gracious** Most Merciful

(**19** Arabic letters) *Qur'an*

1:1 – 1+1= 2

It is mentioned twice as part of the text in the Qur'an.
The second time it is mentioned is in 27:30.

The *Basmala* is mentioned twice in this Chapter (unique)
 $2+7+3+0=12-1+2= 3$

First mention is in the opening of the Book Q. 1:1= **2**

Second mention is in Q. 27:30= 12 1+2= **3**

Combine the two places mentioned $2+3= 5$

Combined total: $1+1+2+2+7+3+0+1+2= 19$ —(**19:5**)

Quran **19:5** (*Guardian* of the Most High God)

The number **5** is God's **Grace** in the Bible and in the Qur'an

Combined verses for Chapter **1** and Chapter **27**—Multiple of **19**

Qur'an 27:30: *It is from Solomon, and it is, 'In the name of GOD, Most Gracious, Most Merciful—(19 Arabic Letters)-(R.Kh.)*

And We made Solomon (and David) to over-stand (the case); and unto each of them We gave over—standing and knowledge.

21:79 *HUKM*—Solomon/David: Endowed with Spiritual Authority—Guardianship—“Correct understanding”(R.Kh.)
 $2+1+7+9= 19$

The number (*5/hey*) is the life source, and master—guardian of God’s *Word (25)* in the mother of the Book (*19*)

Consider the following words of Maryam: She said, “I seek protection in the Most Gracious, that you may be righteous.”

She seeks protection in the Most Gracious. God’s Grace is the number **5**. Chapter and verse 19:18— $1+9+1+8= 19$ (**19/5**)

Q. 19:5 (*Waliy-Guardian*)—The name is in the **19**
(**Y**—10—Arabic word *ashara*—**10** is used for **19** in **Q. 74:30**)

Yahya has a numerical value of $28-2+8= 10$

$74:30-7+4+3+0= 14-1+4= 5$ —*Yahya (Guardian)*

74:35—“This is one of the great miracles”

$7+4+3+5= 19$ “**Over it is 19**” (Over the *ashara*—**10**) The Arabic word being used in 74:30 for the number 19 is *ashara* the number 10. —*Go figure!*

If you add all the verses—signs in the Chapter Key:

$1+2+3+4+5+6+7= 28$ (*Yahya*) $2+8= 10$ *ashara*

7 Chapters 7 Verses— $14-1+4= 5h$

The Key: $1+1+1+2+1+3+1+4+1+5+1+6+7: 34$ $3+4= 7$

Qur’an 1146346— $1+1+4+6+3+4+6= 25-2+5= 7$

Notice how it occurs on the 5th verse and the verse ends with the number **5**. $5+5=10$. *Yahya* has the numerical value of 28 $2+8=10$ and is mentioned **5** times in the Qur'an—(**Yahya-19:5**)

Now take the numerical value of *Yahya* and add it to **19:5**

$2+8+1+9+5= 25$ (*The Word*) $2+5=7$ —(Perfection/Authoritative)

Rashad Khalifa's Translation is the Correct *Hafs* Version of the Qur'an— 114 Sections— 6, 346 Verses

Hafs Version of Qur'an: $1+1+4+6+3+4+6= 25 - 2+5= 10$

(YOD) The Mighty Hand of God is at Work!

(*Yahya—Isa—Maryam*)

5—25—19= 7/Authoritative

$5 \times 25 \times 19 = 296875 - 2+9+6+8+7+5=10$

“And We made the son of Mary and his mother as a Sign: We gave them both shelter on high ground, affording rest and security and furnished with springs.” Q. 23:50

$2+3+5+0+ 10 - Y$

Jesus mentioned 25x $2+5=7$ Mary Mentioned 34x $3+4=7$

Total: $7+7=14$ $1+4= 5$ (Guardian) Add up the word 25,

Mother of the book, and the guardian $2+5+1+9+5= 19$

Mary is mentioned in 32 verses $3+2= 5$ (Guardian) (19-5)

5-Breath, Heart, Soul/—25-The Word— 19 Mother of the Book

There are **28** letters in the Arabic character set.

The total *abjad* numerical value of all 28 letters equals 5995: $5+9+9+5= 28$ (*Yahya*)

Reduced— $2+8=10$ which is the numerical value of *ya*— 10 —*The Mighty Hand of God*

Yahya—y-h-y—Knowledge of Self (h5—soul)

Al’Sayyid Al’Waliy—Master—Guardian

*Lisan—al-Arab—The **tongue** of the Arab*

The word *Tongue* ends with the letter *e*. The **5th** letter of the English Alphabet The Letter *e* actually comes from the Semitic letter **h—(hey 5)**

*The word Tongue appears 25x in the Qur’an
Jesus is mentioned 25x in the Sacred—Reading*

He is designated “*Word of God*” or “*God’s Word*”

“Announcement of John the Baptist”

Begins on the **5th** verse in the Gospel of Luke

Luke1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named *Zechariah*, of the division of *Abijah*; and he had a wife of the daughters of *Aaron*, and her name was *Elizabeth*.

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