



## Variant *Qirā'at* of *Riyāh* and *Rīh*: An Interpretive Analysis in Tafsīr Al-Qurtubī

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### Abstract

The diversity of *qirā'at* (variant readings) in the Qur'an is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but a profound source of theological and semantic depth in Islamic exegesis. This study focuses on the differences in *qirā'at* between the singular form *rīh* (wind) and the plural form *riyāh* (winds) and their impact on the interpretation of wind-related verses in Tafsīr al-Qurtubī. Using a qualitative, library-based approach, this research compiles Qur'anic verses concerning wind, identifies the contextual meaning of each term within its verse, explains the *qirā'at* variations in the respective verses, and analyzes four key verses that demonstrate significant reading variants: al-Hijr: 22, al-Kahf: 45, Yūnus: 22, and Āli 'Imrān: 117. The findings indicate that the singular form *rīh* is predominantly associated with contexts of punishment and destructive force, whereas the plural form *riyāh* generally appears in contexts of mercy and blessing. In his exegesis, al-Qurtubī presents the diverse *qirā'at* transmitted from various imams and elaborates on their semantic and thematic influence on the meaning of the verses. This study affirms that the differences in *qirā'at* not only broaden interpretative possibilities but juga deepen the theological understanding of Qur'anic values. Moreover, this research fills a gap in existing scholarship by specifically addressing this theme within the framework of Tafsīr al-Qurtubī.

*Rīh* and *Riyāh*; Tafsīr al-Qurtubī; Semantic Interpretation; *Qirā'at* Variants.

### Abstrak

Keragaman *qirā'at* dalam Al-Qur'an bukan sekadar fenomena linguistik, melainkan sumber kedalaman teologis dan semantik yang mendasar dalam eksegetis Islam. Penelitian ini berfokus pada perbedaan *qirā'at* antara bentuk tunggal *rīh* (angin) dan bentuk jamak *riyāh* (angin-angin) serta dampaknya terhadap penafsiran ayat-ayat terkait angin dalam Tafsīr al-Qurtubī. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi pustaka, penelitian ini menghimpun ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang angin, mengidentifikasi makna kontekstual setiap istilah dalam ayatnya, menjelaskan variasi *qirā'at* pada ayat-ayat tersebut, dan menganalisis empat ayat utama yang menunjukkan varian bacaan yang signifikan: al-Hijr: 22, al-Kahf: 45, Yūnus: 22, dan Āli 'Imrān: 117. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bentuk tunggal *rīh* secara dominan dikaitkan dengan konteks azab dan kekuatan destruktif, sedangkan bentuk jamak *riyāh* umumnya muncul dalam konteks rahmat dan keberkahan. Dalam tafsirnya, al-Qurtubī menyajikan beragam *qirā'at* yang diriwayatkan dari berbagai imam dan menguraikan pengaruh semantik serta tematiknya terhadap makna ayat. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa perbedaan *qirā'at* tidak hanya memperluas kemungkinan interpretatif tetapi juga memperdalam pemahaman teologis terhadap nilai-nilai Al-Qur'an. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengisi celah dalam literatur yang ada dengan secara khusus membahas tema ini dalam kerangka Tafsīr al-Qurtubī.

**Kata Kunci:** Varian *Qirā'at*, *Rīh* dan *Riyāh*; Tafsīr al-Qurtubī; Interpretasi Semantik.

## INTRODUCTION

Variations in Qur'anic readings (*qirā'at*) play a crucial role in shaping the meaning and interpretation of Qur'anic verses. Far from being mere phonetic differences, *qirā'at* represent a

divinely sanctioned plurality that enriches the semantic, rhetorical, and theological dimensions of the Qur'an (Febra et al., 2024). Classical Muslim scholars have long recognized that differences in *qirā'āt* may clarify meanings, expand interpretive possibilities, reconcile apparent ambiguities, and, in some cases, generate multiple layers of understanding within a single verse (Husna & Setiyawan, 2021). As such, the study of *qirā'āt* is inseparable from the discipline of tafsīr, particularly when interpretation relies on linguistic nuance and contextual analysis.

One noteworthy phenomenon among these *qirā'āt* variations is the usage of the words *riyāḥ* (الرياح) and *riḥ* (الريح), which appear in various Qur'anic verses. Linguistically, both words derive from the same trilateral root *rā-yā-hā* (ر ي ح), signifying "wind" (Marwati & Hamzah, 2024). However, the Qur'anic usage of these two forms 'plural and singular' reveals distinct semantic tendencies that go beyond simple grammatical variation. The plural form *riyāḥ* is frequently associated with mercy, prosperity, balance, and life-giving forces, while the singular *riḥ* often conveys destructive power, divine punishment, or overwhelming force (al-Aṣfahānī, 1412). This semantic polarity has drawn the attention of exegetes, linguists, and scholars of Qur'anic rhetoric alike.

Previous studies have shown that the Qur'an consistently employs *riyāḥ* to depict wind as a positive or beneficial phenomenon, such as bringing rain, facilitating maritime travel, or symbolizing divine assistance (Abaneh, 2025). In contrast, *riḥ* tends to be used in contexts of calamity, such as storms that destroy crops, punish disbelieving communities, or signify divine wrath. Each recurrence of these two terms carries a different emphasis, depending on the syntactic relation and the contextual background of the verse (Ummami, 2018). These differences are not only morphological but also evident in the variations of *qirā'āt* transmitted by different *qurra'* (reciters) from various *riwāyāt* (transmission lines).

The significance of *qirā'āt* variation in verses containing *riyāḥ* and *riḥ* lies in its potential to reshape interpretive emphasis. A shift from singular to plural can move the meaning from punishment to mercy, from destruction to harmony, or from divine warning to divine benevolence (Al Faruq et al., 2024). Studying the consistency of *qirā'āt* in verses containing *riyāḥ* and *riḥ* is essential, as the choice between singular or plural forms and the variation in *qirā'āt* can shift the interpretive emphasis, influencing theological, cosmological, and even legal understandings derived from these verses (Ramanda et al., 2021). Consequently, neglecting *qirā'āt* in the interpretation of such verses risks oversimplifying the Qur'anic message and overlooking the depth intended by its multi-layered transmission.

Within the exegetical tradition, *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* occupies a unique position in addressing *qirā'āt*. Written by Imām Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH), this tafsīr is renowned not only for its juristic orientation but also for its comprehensive engagement with linguistic, grammatical, rhetorical, and recitational aspects of the Qur'an. Unlike tafsīr works that restrict themselves to *mutawātir* readings, al-Qurṭubī often presents a wide range of *qirā'āt*, including *mashhūr*, *shādh*, and less commonly cited readings. He does not merely list these variations but frequently analyzes their semantic consequences and evaluates their relevance to legal rulings and theological understanding (Hikmawati, 2017). Al-Qurṭubī's approach demonstrates that *qirā'āt* are not peripheral to interpretation but integral to uncovering the intended meanings of Qur'anic verses. His treatment of *riyāḥ* and *riḥ* illustrates how a single lexical item, when read differently, can yield

multiple interpretive horizons. By situating *qirā'at* within broader discussions of syntax (*naḥw*), morphology (*ṣarf*), and rhetoric (*balāghah*), al-Qurṭubī provides a methodological framework that is particularly valuable for contemporary studies seeking to bridge classical exegesis with modern linguistic analysis (Al-Riday & Walusimbi, 2025).

Several modern studies have explored the relationship between *qirā'at* and Qur'anic meaning. First, the book by Hikmawati (2017) titled “*Perbedaan Qirā'at dan Pemaknaan: Analisis Semantik Gramatikal dalam Alquran*” provides a detailed explanation of lexical and syntactic differences based on the perspectives of the imāms of *qirā'at*. Second, article titled “*Makna Rīh dan Riyāh dalam Al-Qur'an*” by Wardah (2023) argues that the meanings of *riyāh* and *rīh* extend beyond mere references to wind, encompassing concepts such as power or glory, divine assistance, and even scent or aroma. However, there remains a lack of focused research specifically addressing the influence of *qirā'at* variations between *riyāh* and *rīh* within the context of *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*.

The study aims to demonstrate how different Qur'anic readings contribute to shaping the meaning and theological messages of verses that speak of wind (*riyāh/rīh*). By directly referring to al-Qurṭubī's explanations of the four selected verses, the study also seeks to uncover the principles used by classical exegetes in addressing the diversity of *qirā'at*. Furthermore, this study contributes to expanding contemporary understanding of the relationship between *qirā'at* and *tafsīr*, while filling a gap left by previous research that has not deeply explored this aspect within *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*. It is hoped that this research will not only contribute to the study of classical exegesis but also open avenues for developing *qirā'at*-based *tafsīr* methodology as a rich approach to uncovering the depth of the Qur'anic message.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research (Erwanto & Ashar, 2023). The qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on interpreting textual data in the form of Qur'anic verses and classical exegetical discourse rather than quantifiable variables. The population of this study comprises all Qur'anic verses in which the terms *riyāh* and *rīh* appear, particularly those associated with variant *qirā'at* affecting grammatical number. From this population, a purposive sample of four verses is selected, as these verses clearly demonstrate variations between the singular and plural readings and present significant interpretive implications. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* is employed as the primary exegetical source due to its comprehensive engagement with diverse *qirā'at* and their semantic, rhetorical, and legal consequences.

Data collection is conducted through systematic documentation of the selected verses and their corresponding *qirā'at* as presented in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, supported by relevant classical and contemporary literature on *qirā'at* and Qur'anic linguistics. The main analytical instrument is a structured textual analysis framework developed by the researcher to identify recitational variations, examine their grammatical and semantic features, and assess al-Qurṭubī's interpretive reasoning. Data analysis is carried out through qualitative descriptive and comparative techniques, in which different readings within the same verse are juxtaposed to evaluate shifts in meaning and theological emphasis. The results of these analyses are then synthesized to identify recurring

interpretive principles in al-Qurṭubī's treatment of *qirā'āt*, thereby clarifying the role of recitational diversity in shaping Qur'anic interpretation

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Qirā'āt* in *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*

*Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* is one of the monumental works authored by Imām Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Qurṭubī. This tafsīr is also known by its full title, al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, and was first published in Cairo in 1933 CE in 20 volumes. As the title suggests, al-Qurṭubī composed this work out of his deep devotion to the religious sciences, particularly the study of the Qur'ān. The work reflects a strong jurisprudential (*fiqh*) orientation, yet it does not limit itself to the Mālikī School to which al-Qurṭubī belonged; rather, it engages in comparative discussions across different legal schools (*madhāhib*) (al-Dhahabī, n.d.).

The introduction (*muqaddimah*) of the work outlines al-Qurṭubī's methodological approach to exegesis. He dedicated himself to producing concise yet comprehensive commentary encompassing core elements of tafsīr, language, grammatical analysis (*i'rāb*), *qirā'āt*, as well as refuting deviations and heresies by citing prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*). He also explains the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) to contextualize legal rulings in the Qur'ān, and gathers interpretive opinions from both early (*salaf*) and later (*khalaf*) scholars to clarify ambiguous (*mutashābih*) verses (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384a). This emphasis on the recitational variants (*qirā'āt*) demonstrates the critical role such readings play in the discipline of tafsīr.

The science of *qirā'āt* developed alongside the expansion of the Muslim world, as various ethnic groups and nations entered Islam and began learning the Qur'ān, including its modes of recitation. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) instructed his followers to recite the Qur'ān in accordance with the articulation (*makhārij al-ḥurūf*) of the Arabs. This ensured the preservation of Qur'anic pronunciation, even as Islam spread across diverse regions. *Qirā'āt* thus became a foundational discipline for maintaining the consistency and integrity of Qur'anic recitation, upheld through the transmission of renowned imams of recitation (Zuhdi et al., 2021).

Based on the findings and classifications of *qirā'āt* scholars, the classifications of *qirā'āt* are commonly explained through several categories based on the authenticity of their transmission and their conformity to established criteria. *First*, *mutawātir* refers to a *qirā'ah* transmitted by a large number of reliable narrators in every generation, forming an uninterrupted chain of transmission that goes back to the Prophet. Because of the abundance and reliability of its transmitters, this type of recitation is considered unquestionably authentic. *Second*, *mashhūr* denotes a *qirā'ah* that possesses a sound chain of narration but is transmitted by fewer narrators compared to a *mutawātir qirā'ah*, although it still remains widely known among scholars. *Third*, *ahād* refers to a *qirā'ah* with a sound chain of transmission, yet it does not conform to the Uthmanic script or the established rules of Arabic grammar, which affects its acceptance among scholars (Hasan, 2020).

In addition, there are several categories of recitations that are generally not accepted as valid *qirā'āt*. One of these is *shādh*, which refers to a *qirā'ah* that either lacks a sound chain of transmission or fails to meet one of the three main criteria required for an accepted *qirā'ah*. Another category is *mudraj*, which denotes a recitation that includes an interpolation inserted into the Qur'anic text. Finally, *mandū'* refers to a fabricated *qirā'ah* that is falsely attributed to a

transmitter and lacks any reliable chain of narration, making it entirely invalid within the scholarly tradition of Qur'ānic recitation (al-Dīn al-Shuyūṭī, 1955).

In terms of classification based on transmission, *qirā'at* are commonly grouped into three main categories. The first is the Seven *Qirā'at*, which refer to the recitations transmitted by seven canonical imams of Qur'ānic recitation. The second is the Ten *Qirā'at*, which include the original seven along with three additional imams. The third is the Fourteen *Qirā'at*, which consist of the ten canonical recitations plus four additional ones. However, scholars of recitation (*qurrā'*) generally agree that only the Ten *Qirā'at* reach the level of *mutawātir*, meaning they are transmitted through continuous and widely accepted chains of narration (Pranata, 2020). The remaining four recitations are usually categorized as *shādh* (irregular) because they do not meet the established criteria for canonical acceptance.

The ten canonical recitations are attributed to a group of renowned imams whose readings were preserved through their principal transmitters (*ruwāt*). These include Imām Nāfi' al-Madanī (d. 169 AH), whose recitation was transmitted by Qālūn (d. 220 AH) and Warsh (d. 197 AH). Imām Ibn Kathīr al-Makkī (d. 120 AH) was transmitted by al-Bazzī (d. 250 AH) and Qunbul (d. 291 AH). Imām Abū 'Amr al-Baṣrī (d. 154 AH) was transmitted by ad-Dūrī (d. 246 AH) and as-Sūsī (d. 261 AH), while Imām Ibn 'Āmir ash-Shāmī (d. 118 AH) was transmitted by Hishām (d. 245 AH) and Ibn Dhakwān (d. 242 AH). The recitation of Imām 'Āṣim al-Kūfī (d. 127 AH) was transmitted by Shu'bah (d. 193 AH) and Ḥafṣ (d. 180 AH), whereas Imām Ḥamzah al-Zayyāt (d. 156 AH) was transmitted by Khalaf (d. 229 AH) and Khallād (d. 220 AH). Imām al-Kisā'ī (d. 189 AH) was transmitted by Abū al-Ḥārith (d. 240 AH) and ad-Dūrī. The remaining three canonical reciters completing the Ten *Qirā'at* are Imām Abū Ja'far al-Madanī (d. 128 AH), transmitted by Ibn Wardān (d. 160 AH) and Ibn Jamāz (d. 170 AH); Imām Ya'qūb al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 205 AH), transmitted by Ruways (d. 238 AH) and Rawḥ (d. 234/235 AH); and finally Imām Khalaf al-'Āshir, transmitted by Ishāq (d. 286 AH) and Idrīs (d. 292 AH) (Hasan, 2020).

Beyond these canonical recitations, four additional figures are sometimes mentioned within the broader classification of fourteen *qirā'at*, although their readings are categorized as *shādh*. These include Imām al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 123 AH), Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, known as Ibn Muḥayṣin (d. 123 AH), Yaḥyā ibn al-Mubārak al-Yazīdī an-Naḥwī (d. 202 AH), and Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ash-Shanbūdhī (d. 388 AH). Although these recitations hold historical significance in the study of *qirā'at*, they are generally not recognized as part of the canonical *mutawātir* recitations accepted by the majority of scholars (al-Qaṭṭān, 2000).

### Semantic Range and Functional Differentiation of *Rih* and *Riyāh*

The terms *riyāh* and *riḥ* both literally mean “wind,” with *riyāh* representing the plural form of *riḥ*. According to *Lisān al-'Arab*, the word al-*riḥah* refers to a group or collection of winds (*ṭā'ifah min al-riḥ*), indicating that the concept of wind can appear in both singular and plural expressions in Arabic usage. Previous studies on these two terms have offered several interpretations that expand their semantic range in the Qur'ān. For instance, Ibn al-Jawzī explains that the term *riḥ* in several Qur'ānic verses conveys three possible meanings: wind that does not bring punishment, scent (*al-rā'ihah*), and strength or conquest (al-Jawzī, 1984). Meanwhile, al-

Aṣfahānī (1412) adds further nuances, identifying three additional meanings associated with the term: assistance (*al-naṣrah*), mercy (*al-rahmah*), and punishment (*al-'adhāb*).

Beyond classical lexical explanations, modern scientific interpretations have also attempted to contextualize the use of *riyāh* and *riḥ* in the Qur'ān. In this perspective, the plural term *riyāḥ* is often associated with beneficial functions of wind, such as *lawāqih* agents that fertilize plants and carry charged particles that interact with water vapor molecules as well as serving as a medium for transmitting information within atmospheric systems. In contrast, *riḥ* is frequently connected with wind conditions that exceed beneficial limits and lead to destructive phenomena, including hurricanes or fire tornadoes. Such powerful winds are described in the Qur'ān using expressions like *riḥun ṣarṣar* and *al-i'ṣār*, the latter referring to a violent wind that rises from the earth to the sky in a column similar to a tornado (Ummami, 2018). More broadly, the Qur'ān portrays wind as both a manifestation of divine mercy and power and as a vehicle of divine punishment and disaster. In addition, the imagery of wind is often employed metaphorically to convey broader theological and moral meanings. More broadly, the Qur'ān portrays wind as both a manifestation of divine mercy and power and as a vehicle of divine punishment and disaster (Abdullah, 2022). In addition, the imagery of wind is often employed metaphorically to convey broader theological and moral meanings.

The word “wind” (*riḥ/riyāh*) is mentioned 29 times across 28 verses in 26 different surahs. The singular form *riḥ* appears 19 times, while the plural *riyāḥ* is mentioned 10 times. Below is a Table 1 detailing the specific verses in the Qur'an that reference *riḥ* and *riyāḥ* (Al-Baqi, 1431):

Table 1: Classification of Verses about Wind in the Qur'an

Lafal	Derivation	Frequency	Meaning of the Word	Verses
		3	A wind bearing torment (destroying the people of 'Ād)	al-Aḥqaf: 24, al-Haqqah: 6, dan adz-Dzariyat: 41
		3	Allah subjected the wind to Prophet Sulaymān	al-Anbiyā': 81, Saba': 12, Ṣād: 36
		2	A parable of those who associate partners with Allah (like ashes blown by the wind)	al-Anbiyā': 81, Saba': 12, Ṣād: 36
		1	The effect of the wind on ships at sea	ash-Shūrā: 33
ريح	ريح	1	A stormy wind that drowned the disbelievers	al-Isrā': 69
ريح		1	A cold wind (as a parable of the wealth spent by disbelievers)	Āli 'Imrān: 117
		2	The pleasant scent perceived by Prophet Ya'qūb	Yusuf: 94
		1	A favorable breeze followed by a stormy wind	Yunus: 22
		1	A wind that dries up vegetation	ar-Rūm: 51
	ريحا	1	The wind in the Battle of al-Aḥzāb	al-Aḥzāb: 9

Lafal	Derivation	Frequency	Meaning of the Word	Verses
		2	A furious and violent wind upon the people of 'Ad	Fuṣṣilat: 16, al-Qamar: 19
	ريحكم	1	Your strength vanishes	al-Anfāl: 46
		5	Winds bearing glad tidings (precursors to rainfall)	al-Furqān: 48, ar-Rūm: 48, an-Naml: 46, al-A'raf: 57, Fāṭir: 35,
		2	Alternation or circulation of winds	al-Baqarah: 164, al-Jāthiyah: 5
الرياح	الرياح	1	Allah subjected the wind to Prophet Sulaymān	ar-Rūm: 46
		1	Winds responsible for pollination	al-Hijr: 22
		1	A parable of human life likened to withered plants scattered by the wind	al-Kahf: 45

Based on the previous Table 1, the singular form of the word for wind, *rīh*, appears in three morphological derivations: the base form *rīh* occurs 14 times, the accusative form *rīḥan* (ريحًا) appears 4 times, and the form connected with a pronominal suffix *rīḥukum* (ريحكم) is found once. The use of the terms *rīh* and *riyāḥ*, as classified in the table above, indicates a thematic pattern: the singular form *rīh* most often conveys meanings associated with punishment, torment, or calamity. Though in certain verses, such as al-Anbiyā' (21): 81, *rīh* denotes a beneficial wind (despite being forceful / *ʿaṣīfab*), it does not necessarily entail destruction.

In contrast, the plural form *riyāḥ* consistently signifies blessing, mercy, and divine favor from Allah, such as winds that bring rain and fertility. Hence, the semantic distinction between these two forms reflects a deeper dichotomy: punishment versus hope, wrath versus mercy.

### ***Qirā'at* Variants of *Riyāḥ* and *Rīh***

The lexical and thematic classification above clearly distinguishes between the use of *riyāḥ* and *rīh*. In the Qur'an, *rīh* is often associated with divine punishment, whereas *riyāḥ* is associated with Allah's mercy and provision. Therefore, the two forms represent opposing theological and symbolic meanings. A further dimension to this contrast is found in *qirā'at* (canonical readings of the Qur'an). In some cases, verses containing *riyāḥ* (plural) are recited by certain *Qurra'* (reciters) in the singular form *rīh*, which directly impacts the interpretative meaning of the verse (Wardah, 2023). The commentary of al-Qurtubī becomes a critical reference in examining this issue, as his exegesis often discusses the variations among *Qurra'* and how these affect interpretation. Importantly, al-Qurtubī does not limit his analysis to the Seven *Qurra'* (*sab'ah*), but also includes readings from the Ten, Fourteen, and both *mutawātir* and non-*mutawātir* traditions.

Regarding the variations in *riyāḥ* and *rīh*, al-Qurtubī provides detailed commentary on Sūrat al-Baqarah (2): 164, which is the first verse in the Qur'an to contain the word *riyāḥ*. The verse reads:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of the night and the day, the ships that sail in the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every kind of moving creature, and the directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth - are signs for a people who use reason.” (Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 164)

Al-Qurtubī explains the variations of recitation as follows (Al-Qurtubī, 1384a):  
 العاشرة- قوله تعالى: ” وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ ” قَرَأَ حَمْزَةً وَالْكَسَاءِ ” الرِّيَّاحِ ” عَلَى الْإِفْرَادِ وَكَذَا فِي الْأَعْرَافِ وَالْكَهْفِ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالنَّمْلِ وَالرُّومِ وَفَاطِرِ وَالشُّورَى وَالْجَائِثِيَةَ لَا خِلَافَ بَيْنَهُمَا فِي ذَلِكَ. وَوَأَفْقَهُمَا ابْنُ كَثِيرٍ فِي الْأَعْرَافِ وَالنَّمْلِ وَالرُّومِ وَفَاطِرِ وَالشُّورَى. وَأَفْرَدَ حَمْزَةً ” الرِّيَّاحِ لَوَاقِحَ ” ﴿٢١﴾ “. وَأَفْرَدَ ابْنُ كَثِيرٍ ” وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيَّاحَ ” ﴿٢٢﴾ ” فِي الْفُرْقَانِ. وَقَرَأَ الْبَاقُونَ بِالْجَمْعِ فِي جَمِيعِهَا سِوَى الَّذِي فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالشُّورَى فَلَمْ يَتَقَرَّأْهُمَا بِالْجَمْعِ سِوَى نَافِعٍ وَلَمْ يَخْتَلِفِ السَّبْعَةُ فِيْمَا سِوَى هَذِهِ الْمَوَاضِعِ. وَالَّذِي ذَكَرْنَاهُ فِي الرُّومِ هُوَ الثَّانِي ” اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ ” ﴿٢٣﴾ “. وَلَا خِلَافَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي ” الرِّيَّاحِ مُبَشِّرَاتٍ ”. وَكَانَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ يَرِيدُ بِنِ الْقَعْقَاعِ يَجْمَعُ الرِّيَّاحَ إِذَا كَانَ فِيهَا أَلْفٌ وَلَا مَرٍ فِي جَمِيعِ الْقُرْآنِ سِوَى ” تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيَّاحُ ” وَ” الرِّيَّاحِ الْعَقِيمِ ”. فَإِنَّ لَمْ يَكُنْ فِيهِ أَلْفٌ وَلَا مَرٌ أَفْرَدَ.

“Al-Qurtubī explains that several Qirā'at Imams exhibit variations in the recitation of the word riyāh in this verse. Imams Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'i recite it in the singular form (ar-riḥ) in this verse and likewise in Surahs al-A'rāf, al-Kahf, Ibrāhīm, al-Naml, al-Rūm, Faṭir, al-Shūrā, and al-Jāthiyah. Ibn Kathīr also recites it in the singular form (ar-riḥ) in Surahs al-A'rāf, al-Naml, al-Rūm, Faṭir, and al-Shūrā, and uses the singular form as well in Surah al-Furqān in the phrase “wa huwa alladhī arsala ar-riḥa” (And He it is who sends the wind).”

The majority of other qurrā' (reciters) read it in the plural form riyāḥ in all instances, except in Surahs Ibrāhīm and al-Shūrā, in which only Nāfi' uses the plural form. Outside these two exceptions, all seven canonical qurrā' unanimously use the plural form throughout the Qur'ān. Abu Ja'far Yazīd ibn al-Qa'qā' applies the plural form riyāḥ in every instance where the definite article (al-) is present, except in two specific verses: “tabwī bibi ar-riḥ” (the wind carries it away) and “ar-riḥ al-'aqīm” (the barren wind). In verses without the definite article, he recites the word in the singular form.

Based on this exposition, the following Table 2 presents the variations in the Qirā'at regarding the words riyāḥ and riḥ in the Qur'ān:

Table 2. Variations in the Qirā'at regarding the words riyāḥ and riḥ

Surah and Verse	Qirā'at Reading	Form	Contextual Meaning	Interpretive Implication
Al-A'rāf: 57	الرِّيَّاحِ (Majority)	Plural / Singular	Winds bringing mercy and rain	Plural: Winds from multiple directions, widespread mercy

Surah and Verse	Qirā'āt Reading	Form	Contextual Meaning	Interpretive Implication
	الرِّيحِ (Hamzah, Kisā'ī)			Singular: Consistent direction, possibly neutral
An-Naml: 63	الرِّيَاحِ (Majority) الرِّيحِ (Hamzah, Kisā'ī)	Plural / Singular	Winds that bring rain	Plural: Dispersed mercy Singular: Emphasis on single divine power
Ar-Rūm: 46	الرِّيَاحِ (Majority) الرِّيحِ (Hamzah, Kisā'ī)	Plural / Singular	Winds as harbingers of glad tidings	Plural: Multiple gentle breezes Singular: Possibly one major wind, neutral
Al-Furqān: 48	الرِّيحِ (Ibn Kathīr) الرِّيَاحِ (Majority)	Plural / Singular	Winds that bring rain	Singular: Single directional force, possibly more intense Plural: Diversity of mercy sources
Yūnus: 22	رِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ (All Qira'at)	Singular	Favorable wind propelling ships (mercy)	Singular, but clearly positive due to the qualifier ṭayyibah (good)
Adz-Dzāriyāt: 41	الرِّيحِ الْعَقِيمِ	Singular	Wind that destroyed the people of 'Ād	Singular: Strong, destructive, unproductive wind
Al-Ahqāf: 24–25	الرِّيحِ	Singular	Wind that annihilates everything	Singular: Immense power, punishment from a single direction
Al-Baqarah: 264	الرِّيحِ فِيهَا صُرٌّ	Singular	Cold wind that destroys crops	Singular: Dominant element of punishment and destruction
Al-Jāthiyah: 5, Al-Baqarah: 164	تَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَاحِ (Majority) تَصْرِيفِ الرِّيحِ (Hamzah, Kisā'ī)	Plural / Singular	Variation in wind directions as signs of God's power	Plural: Multiple directions and meteorological complexity Singular: Emphasis on unified system or divine regulation of natural forces

### The Qirā'āt Variants of the Words Rīḥ and Riyāḥ and Their Interpretive Implications

The difference in *qirā'āt* between the singular form *al-rīḥ* and the plural form *al-riyāḥ* has significant implications for the interpretation of Qur'anic texts, as outlined in the previous table.

The commentary of al-Qurṭubī provides a foundational framework to clarify the semantic distinctions between these two forms. Al-Qurṭubī explains that the use of the singular form *rīḥ* is related to its function as an *ism jins* (generic noun), which may refer to both small and large quantities without necessarily specifying a numerical value. Therefore, the usage of the singular form does not automatically indicate a physically singular wind, but rather conveys a general or collective meaning of “wind.”

In contrast, the plural form *riyāḥ* is employed to denote the diversity of winds that blow from various directions and exhibit different characteristics. This plural usage reflects the multiplicity of atmospheric movements and the variation in wind patterns. In his exegesis, al-Qurṭubī further elaborates on this concept by presenting a classification of wind directions and their respective qualities, drawing upon the views of earlier scholars. According to these classical authorities, several principal winds can be identified. The first is *as-Ṣabā* (الصَّبَا), which blows from the direction of the Qiblah toward the opposite direction and is characterized as hot and dry. The second is *ad-Dabūr* (الدَّبُور), which blows from behind the Qiblah toward the Qiblah and is described as cold and moist. Another type is *ar-Rīḥ al-Janūb* (رِيحُ الْجَنُوب), a wind that blows from the right of the Qiblah toward the left and is characterized as hot and moist. Finally, *ar-Rīḥ al-Shamāl* (رِيحُ الشَّمَال) blows from the left of the Qiblah toward the right and is described as cold and dry. Through this classification, classical scholars sought to illustrate the diversity and physical characteristics of the winds encompassed by the term *riyāḥ* (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384a).

This typology suggests that wind, when portrayed as mercy, is dynamic, encompassing, and dispersed. For instance, in the verse “*al-riyāḥ mubashshirāt*” (“the winds as bringers of glad tidings”), the word *riyāḥ* is often used in the context of divine mercy and good news. On the other hand, the singular form *rīḥ* is frequently associated with punishment and destruction. For example, in the phrase “*al-rīḥ al-‘aqīm*” (“the barren wind”), the term signifies a destructive and lifeless force. Thus, *rīḥ* denotes a strong, consistent, unified wind often bearing divine retribution.

Al-Qurṭubī cites a prophetic tradition to support the semantic distinction between the two terms:

وَرُوِيَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يَقُولُ إِذَا هَبَّتِ الرِّيحُ: (اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْهَا رِيًّا حَا وَلَا تَجْعَلْهَا رِيحًا).

“It is reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to say when the wind blew: O Allah, make it [the wind] *riyāḥ* (plural, merciful), and do not make it *rīḥ* (singular, destructive).”

This distinction reinforces the idea that the plural form *riyāḥ* is generally linked to mercy and blessings, while the singular *rīḥ* is typically associated with wrath and calamity. Below is a detailed breakdown of Qur’anic verses that illustrate the semantic differences between the terms *riyāḥ* and *rīḥ*.

#### 1. Surah al-Hijr: 22 (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384b)

Allah SWT states in Surah al-Hijr verse 22:

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَّاحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ

“And We have sent the fertilizing winds and sent down water from the sky, and We gave it to you to drink. And you are not its retainers.”

As mentioned previously, the word الرِّيح in this verse is recited by the majority of Qur'ānic reciters (*qurrā'*) in its plural form. Only Imām Ḥamzah reads it in the singular form (الرِّيح). Al-Qurṭubī explains in his tafsīr that although the word may appear singular, the term الرِّيح can, in certain contexts, carry a collective meaning. This is a recognized rule in Arabic, where a singular noun can imply a collective or plural sense depending on usage, such as in the phrase “جَاءَتِ الرِّيحُ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ” (“the wind came from every direction”). This shows that the singular form in Arabic does not always indicate a literal single unit but can represent a collective.

From the perspective of the verse's meaning, the plural form *riyāḥ* indicates that the process of pollination (لَوَاقِح) is carried out by winds coming from different directions, with varying intensities and types, reflecting the diversity of Allah's mercy. The plural reading supports the agricultural context of the verse that the life of plants depends on the interaction of various kinds of wind carrying pollen or moisture (Amalia et al., 2025). This is consistent with the interpretation that the plural form symbolizes mercy.

Imām Ḥamzah's singular reading does not negate this plurality. The use of the singular form need not be understood as a literal reduction in the number of winds but may emphasize the collective nature of *rīḥ* as a single unified force accomplishing the task of pollination. Similar to the phrase “تَوْبٌ أَخْلَاقٌ” (“a thoroughly worn-out garment,” where *akhlāq* is plural), both the plural and singular *qirā'āt* are linguistically and semantically justifiable. The difference lies in emphasis: The plural form highlights the diversity and directionality of the winds as a source of life, while the singular form emphasizes the unity of action within a coherent system.

## 2. Surah al-Kahfi: 45 (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384b)

This verse explains worldly life as being like lush plants that eventually wither and are scattered by the wind. The verse reads:

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ  
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُقْتَدِرًا

“And present to them the example of the life of this world, [its being] like rain which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it. Then it becomes dry remnants, scattered by the winds. And Allah is ever, over all things, Perfect in Ability.”

The expression used is “تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيَّاحُ” (“scattered by the winds”). In most *qirā'āt*, the word الرِّيَّاح is read in the plural form, although some narrations report the singular reading الرِّيح. This difference creates a nuanced meaning, depicting how the once beautiful and grand worldly life can disappear quickly and completely due to a gust of wind. Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī cites an alternative reading “تَذْرِيهِ” from the *qirā'ah* of 'Abdullāh, enriching the linguistic variety in interpreting the meaning of “being destroyed or scattered by the wind.” In this context, the plural form الرِّيَّاح is

supported by the interpretation that the destruction comes not from one direction but from a combination of forces from all sides, simultaneously overwhelming and obliterating.

Al-Qurṭubī also mentions the verb “أَذْرَيْتُ”, meaning to cast down or dismount someone from a horse, alluding to the wind’s destructive power, not just scattering but decisively toppling and humiliating. The singular reading الرِّيحِ, as found in some *qirā'at*, emphasizes a single but immensely powerful force. Even a single gust can destroy worldly life instantly, underscoring its fragility before Allah’s will. Thus, both readings ‘plural and singular’ carry profound warnings with different emphases. The plural form stresses total destruction from multiple sides, while the singular highlights focused, absolute power.

### 3. Surah Yunus: 22 (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384c)

The verse reads:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرَيْنَ بِهِم بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ  
وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنِ أَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ  
مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

“He is the One who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, then comes a storm wind, and the waves come upon them from every place and they assume that they are surrounded, they call upon Allah, sincere to Him in religion, [saying], “If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.”

An interesting exception occurs here: the verse uses the singular form “رِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ” (“a good wind”) to describe the wind that propels ships across the sea. According to *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, this differs from the usual pattern where the singular form of *rīḥ* often refers to destructive or punishing winds. In this case, however, it denotes a calming and beneficial force. This is an exception to the general pattern that singular *rīḥ* implies punishment, while plural *riyāḥ* signifies mercy. Al-Qurṭubī explains that winds driving ships are usually steady and constant, so describing them as a single effective force is appropriate.

This *qirā'ah* shows that the choice of singular or plural form is not solely dependent on whether the wind is beneficial or harmful but also on its function and structure. Here, the singular *rīḥ* conveys consistency, unified direction, and benefit. This enriches the verse’s meaning, which speaks of the blessing of sea travel granted by Allah, followed by a warning about human arrogance after salvation. Al-Qurṭubī also references the term *ṣirr*, meaning a deadly cold wind with a unique sound, suggesting that *rīḥ* in other contexts can be lethal, depending on its character and purpose. Thus, the singular form does not always imply punishment, it can be neutral or even positive depending on the context.

### 4. Surah Ali Imran: 117 (Al-Qurṭubī, 1384d)

The singular form “رِيحٌ” is used here to depict the futility of wealth spent by disbelievers. The verse reads:

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتُهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves and destroys it. And Allah has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves.”

This verse likens the wealth they spend, hoping for reward but lacking faith, to a crop struck by a “رِيحٌ بَارِدَةٌ” (cold wind), which destroys it without leaving benefit. According to al-Qurṭubī, this wind is extremely cold (*al-ṣirr*), derived from *ṣarir* a word referring to the sound made by a strong wind. This reinforces the idea that the use of the singular *rīḥ* here indicates a destructive, focused force sufficient to destroy an entire field.

There is no variation in *qirā'at* in this verse regarding singular or plural usage. Still, the meaning aligns with the general pattern noted by al-Qurṭubī: the singular form *rīḥ* often conveys punishment or destruction. Its use here also reflects the wind's nature not dispersed like *riyāḥ*, but focused and harmful. This emphasizes that deeds done without faith are not only worthless but may also lead to ruin in the Hereafter. In the Qur'anic rhetorical style, the singular form effectively conveys the sense of a punishing, inescapable blow.

Based on the analysis of four verses about wind (al-Ḥijr: 22, al-Kahf: 45, Yūnus: 22, and Āli 'Imrān: 117), it is evident that the variation in *qirā'at* between the singular form *rīḥ* and the plural form *riyāḥ* is not merely a phonetic difference, but carries deep semantic implications. In its singular form, *rīḥ* is often associated with destructive, directed, and unified force, as seen in contexts of punishment or devastation. In contrast, the plural form *riyāḥ* in many verses indicates blessing, gentleness, and mercy that comes from various directions. *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* emphasizes that the choice of form is closely related to the semantic function in the verse, as well as a reflection of the divine action manifested through the wind, either as punishment or mercy. Thus, these *qirā'at* differences enrich interpretative understanding and broaden the spectrum of meanings contained in the Qur'anic symbolic representation of wind.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the *qirā'at* differences between the singular form *rīḥ* and the plural form *riyāḥ* in the Qur'an shows a significant influence on the interpretation of verses concerning wind. Based on an exploration of *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, it is found that these variations are not only phonetic or morphological in nature, but also carry complex semantic, theological, and cosmological dimensions. The singular form *rīḥ* is generally used in contexts of punishment, disaster, and destructive force, whereas the plural form *riyāḥ* is commonly found in contexts of mercy, rain, and life.

In his *tafsīr*, al-Qurṭubī offers linguistic and contextual explanations regarding the use of both forms, and he maps the variations of *qirā'at* narrated from the *imāms* of *qirā'ah*. He notes that some *qurrā'*, such as Ḥamzah and al-Kisā'ī, recite several verses using the singular form, while the majority use the plural form. This difference reflects varying approaches in understanding the direction, strength, and function of the wind in relation to divinity and the order of the cosmos.

The analysis of the four key verses, al-Ḥijr: 22, al-Kahf: 45, Yūnus: 22, and Āli 'Imrān: 117, shows that the use of *riyāḥ* emphasizes diversity and the dynamic nature of mercy, such as in the process of pollination and the spread of life. Meanwhile, *riḥ* conveys a unity of force that can potentially cause total destruction, as in parables of divine punishment or the failure of deeds not based on faith. However, in certain cases, such as in Yūnus: 22, the singular form is used to describe a wind that brings benefit, showing that the singular form does not always carry a negative connotation, depending on the nature and context.

This study also affirms that *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī* is a rich classical source in accommodating various Qur'anic reading variants (*qirā'at*) and in explaining their methodological influence on meaning. Its emphasis on the aspect of *qirā'at* demonstrates a concern for the authenticity of recitation while also enriching the interpretation of verses. Therefore, this research concludes that the variation in *qirā'at* concerning the words *riḥ* and *riyāḥ* has a profound impact on the construction of meaning and the emphasis of messages in Qur'anic verses. It highlights the importance of *qirā'at*-based exegetical approaches in uncovering the depth of divine messages and supports the integration of *tafsīr* and *qirā'at* sciences in contemporary Qur'anic studies.

#### DECLARATION OF USING AI

The author used ChatGPT to improve language and readability. The author reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content.

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