



Geography, space and education in the qur'anic story of moses: A hermeneutical perspective

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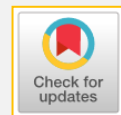
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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of spatiality in the Qur'anic narrative of Prophet Moses, examining six central locations, Egypt, the river, the palace, Midian, the sea, and Mount Tur as transformative stages in the prophetic journey. Drawing upon classical Qur'anic exegesis and Gadamerian hermeneutics, the research employs a textual-analytical approach to explore how each place functions not merely as a geographical site but as a locus of divine pedagogy and existential formation. The study addresses a gap in Qur'anic studies and educational philosophy by highlighting how spatial interpretation reveals the pedagogical dimensions of prophetic experience and the construction of spiritual identity. Through this lens, the paper contributes to developing a Qur'anic philosophy of sacred space and deepens understanding of divine education in the Qur'anic worldview.

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Introduction

The concept of "space" in the Qur'anic discourse plays an active role that goes beyond the traditional geographical framework. It becomes a meaningful, cultural, and spiritual component where doctrinal, rhetorical, and educational meanings intersect. In the Qur'an, places are not inert locations where events simply happen; rather, they transform into spaces full of symbolism, indication, divine responsibility, and revelation. Often, these places give the Qur'anic story a deep spiritual dimension, making the reader experience the event not merely as information but as an existential experience and a cosmic stance.

This reality is clearly evident in the story of Moses (*Musa*), one of the most frequently and diversely mentioned narratives in the Qur'an. Its episodes appear in more than thirty verses across several chapters. The story is characterized by a rich variety of events and spatial-temporal transformations, making it a fertile ground for reflecting on the function and meanings of space within the prophetic journey. From the moment of birth and being cast into the sea "*al-yam*", through the departure from Egypt, residence in Midian, ascent to Mount Sinai, the divine encounter, and the return to confront Pharaoh, the references to place appear as essential structural elements in the prophetic experience. These spatial references are inseparable from the internal transformation of Moses' personality and the stages of his divine mission, struggle, and empowerment.

The story of Moses cannot be fully understood without attention to his relationship with

space. Space reflects spiritual dimensions and serves as a station for purification and preparation for prophethood. It also marks psychological and social transitions in Moses' life. The "Yam" (sea) is not merely a place of survival but represents a second birth that transcends fear toward safety. Midian is not a place of exile but a sanctuary for seclusion, growth, and reassurance following the turmoil of Pharaoh's Egypt. Mount Sinai stands as the climax of revelation and divine commissioning, transforming the place into a sacred station where direct communication with God occurs. Thus, each spatial stage in Moses' life carries symbolic and educational meanings that extend beyond geography to the depths of psychological and spiritual formation.

This approach opens a new perspective on the role of space in the Qur'anic narrative, seeing it not just as a narrative context but as a tool of communication between human beings and revelation, between earth and heaven, and between the prophet and the community. Therefore, analyzing the meaning of place in the story of Moses serves not only the literary dimension but also contributes to uncovering the educational structure of the Qur'anic discourse and how prophets are prepared and nurtured through symbolic spatial stages.

The importance of this study lies in its focus on a subject often neglected in traditional Qur'anic studies. Place is usually mentioned as part of the story's event without a deep examination of its educational, spiritual, and symbolic meanings. Although there are some studies addressing space in the Qur'an generally, such as works by Aslam (2022) and Demirci et al. (2023), or symbolic studies on Mount Sinai and sacred valleys in some Sufi interpretations (Sells, 1996; Gözeler, 2007; Ichwan et al., 2024b), most remain general or do not consider the story of Moses as a comprehensive model of spatial, psychological, and prophetic transformation.

To provide a clear theoretical foundation, this study adopts a philosophical hermeneutic framework inspired by Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of understanding as a dialogical process and Paul Ricoeur's narrative theory, while also drawing upon the principles of Islamic philosophical hermeneutics that emphasize the unity of text, meaning, and revelation. Recent scholarship, such as Masuwd (2025a) Pulungan et al. (2025) and Aini et al. (2025), has demonstrated the vitality of Gadamerian hermeneutics in interpreting religious texts as dynamic dialogues where meaning emerges through the "fusion of horizons" rather than fixed doctrinal boundaries. This dialogical approach, applied here to the Qur'anic story of Moses, enables a richer reading of space as a site of interaction between divine revelation and human experience.

Methodologically, the research employs a qualitative, textual-analytical approach that integrates thematic tafsir (exegesis), semantic interpretation, and phenomenological reflection on spatial experience. This interdisciplinary method allows for the fusion of classical Qur'anic interpretation with modern hermeneutic analysis, creating a bridge between traditional and contemporary approaches.

By focusing on the intersection of space, revelation, and education, the study fills a research gap in Qur'anic scholarship and philosophy of education. It explores how spatial experiences in the prophetic journey of Moses serve as educational stages that cultivate knowledge, faith, and spiritual maturity, revealing the Qur'an's pedagogical structure through the language of sacred geography.

Hence, this study aims to fill a gap in contemporary Qur'anic scholarship by offering an expanded analytical reading of the relationship between space and the prophetic path in the story of Moses, from his birth to his commissioning at Mount Sinai which integrating thematic tafsir (exegesis), semantic analysis, and educational perspectives. This contributes to deepening the understanding of the Qur'anic message as a whole, and especially its spatial dimension as an active, meaningful element rather than mere narrative background.

Literature Review

In recent decades, Qur'anic studies have undergone a notable shift from a primarily literal and historical focus toward more nuanced rhetorical, semantic, and semiotic approaches.

Among these, the analysis of space or "place" has emerged as a critical pillar in understanding Qur'anic discourse. This focus conceptualizes place not merely as a physical backdrop but as an active, symbolic, and hermeneutic element shaping the narrative and theological message. However, this scholarly trend has largely been confined to certain thematic domains and has seen limited application specifically in the context of the Qur'anic prophetic narratives, such as the story of Moses.

A study by Zohra Thabat (2022) explores the pivotal role of space in Qur'anic narratives, examining how diverse locations, such as mountains, caves, seas, and sacred sites, carry rich symbolic meanings and function as semiotic signs within the structure of the Qur'anic discourse. More recent scholarship has integrated literary theory with Qur'anic hermeneutics. For example, Angelika Neuwirth (2010) argues that spatial references function as narrative devices that intersect with theological discourse, transforming place into a dynamic participant in the prophetic story. Similarly, Romdani et al. (2018) identify the comparative language styles used in the story of Moses in the Qur'an through qualitative content analysis. It finds that various rhetorical devices, especially allusion, are frequently employed, revealing deeper contextual meanings intended for practical reflection and application in real life. The interpretation of narrative elements of the Qur'anic stories is essential from literary and exegetical perspective (Masuwd et al., 2019; Abdulghani et al., 2024a; Syahran et al., 2024; Raihani et al., 2024; Kasheem et al., 2025).

Applied analyses focusing explicitly on the story of Moses remain comparatively scarce. Aldawsari et al. (2021) portrays the comparative rhetorical styles used in the Qur'anic story of Moses, highlighting various figurative techniques such as metaphor, simile, allusion, and personification. It analyzes how these styles enhance the aesthetic dimension of the text and effectively convey the religious message. While Faridasr et al. (2023) examines the story of Moses and Khidr in the Qur'an through a narratological lens, aiming to uncover the deeper layers of meaning embedded in its structure. Using a descriptive-analytical method, it models the narrative's coherence and highlights storytelling as a powerful tool for conveying theological and moral guidance. However, focus remained narrow and more influenced by contemporary narrative methods than by symbolic or pedagogical readings.

Another study by Syaripah (2023) analyzes the story of Prophet Moses in the Qur'an through a literary psychological approach, focusing on the narrative structure, his personality based on Allport's theory and Islamic psychology, and the moral messages conveyed. It concludes that Moses embodies a mature and healthy personality, and his life offers ethical lessons such as justice, patience, courage, and commitment. Thus, this conclusion is important for religious education as it highlights the moral and psychological traits of Prophet Moses, offering valuable lessons in character development and ethical conduct (Mujibuddin et al., 2025; Husin et al., 2025; Almajri et al., 2025; Pallawagau et al., 2025). Moreover, the religious education that Moses received is valid for all times and places, as its core values and teachings transcend historical and cultural boundaries, making it adaptable even in the context of modernity and rapid technological progress (Riyadi et al., 2024; Hasibuan et al., 2024; Husayn et al., 2025; Alsayd et al., 2025; Primarni et al., 2025).

In the field of Qur'anic geography and its cognitive impact, ASaeed (2015) explores how time, place, and narrative structure contribute to the development of identity in the story of Moses, emphasizing how different phases and themes reflect the character's transformation. It concludes that temporal features like stability and symbolism play a vital role in shaping identity within the narrative discourse. On the other hand, Ismail (2024) examines the Qur'anic story of Moses as a powerful narrative that combines factual events with spiritual guidance, highlighting how its structure and elements engage readers and convey profound messages. It also explores the art of narrative in both Arabic and English literatures, emphasizing the pedagogical and literary significance of storytelling in the Qur'an. Moreover, Alriteemi et al. (2025), in their study, explore the story of Moses and al-Khidr in Surah al-Kahf as a symbolic and educational journey, emphasizing how geographical space plays an essential role in shaping prophetic knowledge and spiritual transformation. They

demonstrate that each stage of the journey corresponds to a deeper level of epistemological growth, moving from outward reasoning to divine insight. The study concludes that Qur'anic space functions as an active pedagogical element, deeply embedded in the spiritual and moral formation of the individual. These kinds of study expand the understanding of Islamic science from different perspectives (Nafiet al., 2025; Mahmudin et al., 2025; Abdulghani & Alrumayh 2025; Cholidi & Masuwd, 2025)

Cross-religious studies have illuminated shared symbolisms of sacred places. Western interest in the Qur'an began with Robert of Ketton's Latin translation in the 12th century and evolved over time from historical and source-critical approaches to more recent literary and discourse-based analyses of Qur'anic narrative structure and style (Ikhwan, 2010). Moreover, Ayaz Afsar (2004) offers a comparative literary analysis of biblical and Qur'anic narratives using modern critical approaches, aiming to objectively explore their structural and stylistic features without privileging one text over the other. It seeks to develop literary tools to better understand the unique narrative qualities of the Qur'an through close textual analysis.

Despite increasing scholarly interest, the comprehensive study of Moses' spatial journey, from the cradle, through exile, to the theophany at Sinai, remains underdeveloped. Existing research tends to focus narrowly on linguistic, symbolic, or narrative aspects without integrating these dimensions into a holistic, interdisciplinary hermeneutics. This gap underscores the necessity of an expanded, methodologically pluralistic analysis that synthesizes exegetical, symbolic, and pedagogical insights. The current research aims to fulfill this need by providing a balanced and in-depth examination of place as an active educational and spiritual agent in the Qur'anic narrative of Moses.

Methodology

This study is based on the hypothesis that place in the story of Moses in the Qur'an is not merely a neutral geographical backdrop or spatial context, but rather a pivotal semantic element in which doctrinal and educational meanings converge. Place transforms into a constructive tool that shapes the event, directs the narrative, and structures the prophetic trajectory. Accordingly, the study adopts a thematic-analytical methodology that involves tracing a single topic across its various Qur'anic contexts and analyzing its semantic implications within the broader thematic framework.

This methodology is operationalized through a comprehensive analysis of all Qur'anic verses that relate to the story of Moses, linking them into an integrated narrative and functional structure, while remaining open to interpretative tools and supportive analytical approaches. The study examines the concept of place in the story of Moses through four interconnected dimensions, enabling a deeper exploration of how place is utilized within Qur'anic construction and within the prophetic development. These four dimensions are chosen in response to the nature of the Qur'anic text, which integrates narrative structure, symbolic significance, and educational function, all framed within a continuous prophetic mission:

1. The Qur'anic Structure of Spatial Appearance

This dimension regards place as an active element in the dramatic structure of the story rather than a mere external framework. The place moves dynamically with the rising plot, participates in creating tension, guides transitions, and defines moments of conflict and resolution. Analysis focuses on the pattern of spatial appearances, their repetition, and their connection with the temporal and psychological movement of the character.

2. The Educational Dimension

This dimension centers on the formative role places play in shaping the prophetic personality. Each place carries a specific preparatory function: one signifies isolation, another reception, and yet another confrontation. These roles are analyzed in light of Qur'anic educational objectives, including psychological weaning, prophetic preparation, gradual responsibility, and the cultivation of patience and perseverance.

3. The Symbolic and Semantic Dimension

This dimension deals with the symbolic meanings embedded in place on doctrinal, psychological, and cultural levels. Places in the Qur'anic text are charged with signifiers that go beyond geography to convey concepts such as divine protection, trial, rebirth, renunciation of the worldly, and election. Semiotic analysis is employed to decode these symbols and relate them to religious and linguistic imaginaries.

4. Transformation in the Prophetic Path and Constructing the Prophetic Self

This dimension focuses on the transformations in Moses' character resulting from his passage through various places. Each place marks a turning point in the construction of the prophetic self, facilitating the transition from an individual identity to a prophetic one. Hence, place is approached as an existential catalyst for transformation rather than merely a spatial circumstance.

The methodological reading is reinforced by a set of epistemological tools, including rhetorical methodology: to analyze Qur'anic linguistic construction of place and explore expressive and semantic levels (Neuwirth, 2014; Masuwd, 2024; Abdulghani et al., 2024b), symbolic and semiotic Approach: to understand the profound dimension of place as a bearer of metaphysical or educational meaning (Eco, 1976; Engkizar et al., 2025) and educational dimension in exegesis: to benefit from contemporary readings linking place to the formative function of prophets (Nasr, 2000; Abu Alhassen, 2011; Ichwan et al., 2024a).

The study relies primarily on the Qur'an as the main source, extracting and analyzing all verses that contain spatial references in the story of Moses. It also draws on a diverse range of classical and modern Qur'anic exegeses, including *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *al-Qurtubi*, *al-Razi*, *Ibn Ashur*, and *Al-Sha'rawi*. In addition, it incorporates recent academic studies in semantics, symbolism, Qur'anic education, and comparative Qur'anic narrative readings found in muslim or orientalist sources (Dzakiy et al., 2024; Albshkar et al., 2024; Masuwd et al., 2025; Ayad et al., 2025).

The scope is limited to analyzing place within the Qur'anic narrative of Moses and does not extend to parallel stories in other religions except for methodological comparison. It also excludes historical or geographical verification of places, focusing instead on the structural, semantic, and educational dimensions of place. Furthermore, the study does not engage with jurisprudential or political aspects of the story but concentrates on the meaningful construction of the event through the component of place.

This pluralistic methodology was chosen because the Qur'anic story is dispersed across various verses with multiple versions. Thus, the thematic approach is the most suitable to gather dispersed material and build a holistic vision. Since place involves multiple levels (narrative, symbolic, educational), the study integrates rhetorical, symbolic, and educational analytical tools. Moreover, the specificity of the story requires distinguishing the Qur'anic text from others, whereby the comparative approach is employed as an explanatory rather than a determinative tool.

Discussions and Results

The concept of place in the story of Moses constitutes a central constructive element that transcends the mere function of a geographical background. It exercises a profound narrative, educational, and symbolic role. Following the methodology adopted in this study, place is approached as a key hermeneutical device revealing the trajectory of prophetic formation, the development of the prophetic mission, and the transformations of the chosen self from the moment of birth until the stage of confrontation and empowerment. The analysis employs a multidimensional approach that combines a structural perspective, examining the presence of place within the narrative architecture, with a symbolic reading that uncovers layers of meaning, alongside an educational dimension that extracts the formative functions of various spatial stations. This approach was applied to several pivotal spatial nodes in the story, so, unveiling the profound integration between Qur'anic geography and the purposive structure of the prophetic message.

Through this multidimensional lens, the findings reveal how place transforms into a didactic and semantic mediator in the construction of prophecy and the embodiment of divine selection through intertwined physical and spiritual experiences. The following presentation outlines the principal results, dissected in alignment with the four analytical dimensions: (1) the Qur'anic structure of spatial manifestation, (2) the educational function, (3) the symbolic and semantic dimension, and (4) the transformative process in the prophetic journey and the construction of the prophetic self.

1. The Cradle: The Primordial Formative Space of Prophethood

At the beginning, the cradle, representing the initial formative space of prophecy, illustrates this dynamic vividly. Within the Qur'anic narrative structure, the cradle or early infancy phase of Moses, before being cast into the Nile, establishes a foundational spatial moment. The Qur'an states: "And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying, 'Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and make him [one] of the messengers.'" (Qur'an 28:7). A similar divine reassurance appears in Surah Ta Ha (20:39): "Put him into the chest and cast it into the river; the river will throw it onto the bank; there an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his will take him." This intertextual recurrence strengthens the spatial motif of divine guardianship.

This verse portrays the cradle not merely as a physical site of natural protection but as a locus of divine guardianship superseding natural safeguards. As al-Razi observes, this stage reflects God's direct preparation of Moses from the very first moment, rendering the cradle "a locus of revelation not only for his mother but for generations of contemplators on the making of prophecy" (al-Razi, 2000). Thus, the cradle emerges as an existential threshold, marking the initial domain wherein the prophetic personality is shaped under divine auspices.

From the educational perspective, the cradle phase functions as a space where the prophetic identity is forged through experiences of loss and recovery. Breastfeeding, separation, and return symbolize intense psychological stages. This event transcends familial dimensions, encompassing a profound educational dimension; it is Moses' first separation from his mother and a prototype of the recurring isolation characteristic of prophetic formation.

Exegetically, Ibn Ashur (1997) and Al-Sha'rawi (1997) both emphasize that the divine command "do not fear nor grieve" carries a pedagogical tone directed toward the mother, but also symbolically toward every believer who entrusts their destiny to divine decree. Hence, the cradle represents the first Qur'anic lesson in faith-based surrender.

Regarding the transformation of the prophetic self, the cradle can be seen as a metaphor for "hidden formation." Just as seeds germinate unseen beneath the soil, Moses commences his prophetic journey in obscurity and silence, yet he is prepared for monumental destiny. The protection Moses received in the cradle underpins the symbolism of divine protection throughout subsequent stages; the cradle stands as the first school, the first solitude, and the first planting in the soil of prophecy.

2. The River: The Aquatic Cradle of Prophetic Formation

Within the structure of Qur'anic spatial representation, the Nile (*al-yamm*) marks the first pivotal geographical emergence in the story of Moses, signifying a narrative transition from maternal care to a mysterious domain governed by divine providence. The Qur'an states: "And We inspired the mother of Moses, saying, 'Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and make him [one] of the messengers'" (Qur'an 28:7). Further reference in Surah Ta Ha (20:39) highlights divine orchestration: "Throw him into the river, and the river will throw him up on the bank." The repetition of the same command in different Surahs emphasizes the deliberate movement from human fear to divine protection. This spatial moment represents a dramatic rupture wherein the child departs the realm of natural safety and enters the realm of divine decree.

From an educational perspective, the Nile serves as a site of early detachment from

human care and a shift toward reliance on divine safeguarding, establishing the psychological groundwork for a prophetic personality equipped to confront adversity. Ibn Ashur (1997) notes that this divine directive marks the inception of Moses' selection; the maternal trial of separation is the first step in a providential trajectory.

Symbolically, the Nile functions as a second womb, a medium of rebirth not from a mother's body but from the will of God. Al-Razi metaphorically describes the Nile as "a divine womb" that extracts the prophet from the natural order and deposits him into divine care (al-Razi, 2000). Ibn Ashur (1997) also underscores the textual indeterminacy surrounding the river's identity, reading it as a cue to full spiritual trust and abandonment of material means. The lexical connotation of *al-yamm* (a vast sea) in Qur'anic culture consistently evokes themes of trial, transition, and salvation, as seen in the stories of both Noah and Moses.

In terms of prophetic transformation, the Nile marks Moses' first existential shift, an entry into divine selection prior to self-awareness. Ibn Ashur asserts that the river symbolizes the movement from familial protection to divine trusteeship, laying the structural foundation of prophethood upon the trials of loss and detachment from social nurture (Ibn Ashur, 1997). The journey thus commences with a rebirth into an existential order governed not by human agency but by divine command. Al-Sha'rawi describes the event as one of outward severity but inner gentleness, noting that the act of casting Moses into the river is accompanied by a divine prohibition of fear, which signals absolute assurance of divine preservation (Al-Sha'rawi, 1997; Masuwd, 2025b).

3. Pharaoh's Palace: The Arena of Educational Antithesis and Doctrinal Confrontation

In the Qur'anic narrative structure, Pharaoh's palace emerges as the second major spatial turning point in the life of Moses. It signals the beginning of the interweaving between his human upbringing and prophetic formation within the ideological space of the adversary. The Qur'an reports: "Then the family of Pharaoh picked him up so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief" (Qur'an 28:8). The repetition of the palace motif in the narrative marks it as a closed sphere suffused with power and opulence, yet paradoxically serving as the unconscious incubator of prophetic emergence within the confines of tyranny.

According to Ibn Ashur, the selection of Moses within the palace represents a remarkable instance of divine power, whereby the prophet is nurtured within the very apparatus designed to annihilate him (Ibn Ashur, 1997). Al-Razi reflects similarly, interpreting the event as a demonstration of divine subtlety wherein perceived peril transforms into divine favor "manifestation of grace from where harm is feared" (al-Razi, 2000).

The palace fulfills a subtle pedagogical function by granting Moses early exposure to the architecture of despotism and facilitating his detachment from maternal emotional formation. Despite being raised in luxury, exegetes concur that Moses was never psychologically integrated into the palace culture. The palace served as the prophet's first experience in passive learning wherein he witnessed the prototype of oppressive power without internalizing its ethos. This initiated in Moses an awareness of what might be called "the proximate adversary", one who envelops the child yet never becomes a true ally.

On a symbolic level, Pharaoh's palace signifies temporal authority and the paradigm of tyrannical governance over human destinies. However, Moses' presence therein does not denote submission but dramatizes the paradoxical contrast between the incubator and the message. Al-Sha'rawi reflects on this irony by stating that Pharaoh wished to eliminate male newborns but ended up nurturing the one destined to destroy him (Al-Sha'rawi, 1997). Hence, the palace transforms into a symbol of eventual defeat, emerging from within the very structure of its own power. From a practical standpoint, Moses' early exposure to the inner workings of the regime endowed him with insights that later empowered him to confront it with clarity and confidence.

In the trajectory of prophetic transformation, the palace marks a shift from abstract divine protection (as in the Nile) to a new stage of pedagogical challenge within a hostile environment. Upon fleeing the palace after the incident of the killing, Moses moves from

“palatial guest” to “messenger in exile,” signaling the beginning of his existential and ideological rupture with the Pharaonic system. Al-Razi emphasizes that this escape was not a mere personal salvation but rather a prelude to a prophetic mission destined to dismantle the very institution he once inhabited (al-Razi, 2000). At this juncture, the contours of a distinct prophetic identity begin to solidify grounded in a formative awareness cultivated since childhood.

4. Midian: A Space of Seclusion and Quiet Formation

Midian represents the third pivotal spatial station in the prophetic journey of Moses, marking a decisive transition from the turbulence of Egypt to a setting of simplicity, calmness, and inner formation. The Qur’an narrates his arrival in Midian: “And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, ‘Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way’” (Al-Qasas 28:22). Upon entering Midian, his first act was one of quiet compassion: “So he watered [their flocks] for them; then he turned back to the shade” (Al-Qasas 28:24), signaling an inward shift from compulsion and turmoil (exemplified by the earlier act of killing) to deliberate, altruistic human action.

According to Ibn Ashur (1997), Midian is the point at which the moral and prophetic education of Moses begins directly, away from the influence of the palace and the pressures of the Pharaonic environment. Similarly, al-Razi regards Midian as a temporary refuge imbued with latent preparation, a sanctuary where spiritual and psychological recalibration occurs. This stage constitutes what modern Islamic pedagogy might frame as a phase of *nafsi tamhid* (inner cultivation), wherein Moses undergoes a form of “psychological disciplining” through pastoral life and simple living, which develops patience, humility, and endurance (al-Razi, 2000). Midian also bears rich symbolic value. It marks a return to primordial elements as water, shade, trees, labor, each charged with Qur’anic imagery of serenity and balance. It represents a geographical change and a climate change environment which influences human psychology (Shalghoum et al., 2025; Abdulghani et al., 2025). Al-Sha’rawi (1997) asserts that Midian was a new emotional cradle for Moses, wherein he surrendered to divine will and began to see purpose in the journey.

Crucially, Midian marks a significant transformation in the trajectory of Moses’ prophethood. After a decade of seclusion and spiritual labor, Moses departs from Midian not as a fugitive, but as a chosen prophet, ready for divine encounter and mission. Ibn Ashur (1997) comments that Moses’ second departure, this time from Midian, was not an escape, but a divinely-ordained emergence carrying the message of revelation and the tools of confrontation. The experience of Midian, characterized by stillness, contemplation, and modest work, serves as the final preparatory bridge before the momentous theophany at Mount Tur.

5. The Sea: Theatre of Separation from Tyranny and Prophetic Triumph

The sea emerges as a pivotal spatial and theological threshold in the prophetic journey of Moses. It marks the climactic rupture between him and Pharaoh, a moment loaded with both divine intervention and symbolic finality. The Qur’an narrates: “So We inspired to Moses, ‘Strike with your staff the sea,’ and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain” (Al-Shu’ara’ 26:63). In this moment, the sea transcends its natural status to become a dramatic stage for divine justice. It opens for Moses and his people, while simultaneously closing upon Pharaoh’s forces.

Further textual evidence from Surah Ta Ha (20:77–78) and Surah Al-Baqarah (2:50) reinforces this image: “And [remember] when We parted the sea for you and saved you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you were looking on.” This repetition in multiple Surahs underscores the educational principle of collective remembrance, space as testimony to divine justice.

This moment carries deep pedagogical implications. It represents the transition from oppression to empowerment, from pursuit to salvation. Al-Razi (2000) observes that the sea was a mirror reflecting the inexhaustible power of God, as well as the fear of the Israelites and the unwavering certainty of Moses. The parting of the sea occurred solely for Moses, an

honor affirming his prophetic legitimacy and divine favor. Its collapse upon the oppressor signified the irreversible downfall of tyranny, regardless of its material might or temporal dominance.

Symbolically, the sea embodies the concept of crossing, not merely a physical passage, but an existential and spiritual transformation. In religious thought, foundational missions are often preceded by a decisive trial. Likewise, Al-Sha'rawi (1997) describes the sea as God's gateway when all worldly doors are shut. He opens it for believers and drowns tyrants in it. It is the divine declaration that divinely-sanctioned escape is in fact a victory, not a retreat.

From a prophetic perspective, the sea signals a critical turn in Moses' mission. Once the crossing is complete, the prophetic narrative shifts from confrontation to community-building. Ibn Ashur (1997) explains that following the sea, Moses no longer functions merely as a prophet but assumes the role of nation-founder. Thus, the sea becomes a space of both separation and inception where an era of bondage ends and the long journey toward legislation and communal identity begins.

6. Mount Tur: The Moment of Revelation, Divine Election, and Prophetic Transformation

Mount ʿTur (*Sinai*) marks the apex of prophetic formation in the narrative of Moses. It is the site of direct divine encounter and the reception of revelation, a moment recorded in several Qur'anic passages. Among the most striking is: "And when he came to it, he was called from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot from the tree: 'O Moses, indeed I am Allah, Lord of the worlds'" (Al-Qaṣaṣ 28:30). This spatial manifestation is enveloped in an atmosphere of sanctity and awe. The Qur'an refers to it as "*al-buq'ah al-mubarakah*" (the blessed spot) and "*al-wiadi al-muqaddas ʿTuwa*" (the sacred valley of ʿTuwa), elevating it beyond physical geography into a domain of transcendent function and sacred narrative.

Al-Razi interprets this moment as the full manifestation of divine volition in the selection and preparation of Moses for a mission of unparalleled magnitude (al-Razi, 2000). It is here that Moses transitions from being a fugitive to a divinely chosen messenger, a transformation facilitated in isolation and without human mediation. Ibn Ashur (1997) describes this encounter as a moment of spiritual unveiling in which Moses is transported from human uncertainty to prophetic certainty. Al-Sha'rawi (1997) further reflects that ʿTur is not merely a mountain; it is a metaphysical meeting point between heaven and earth, where divine speech descends in unadulterated clarity, free from human interference. This transformation at ʿTur represents the hermeneutic "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer), where the human and divine perspectives converge through revelation, a philosophical insight similarly emphasized by Masuwd (2025a) in applying Gadamer's hermeneutics to theological narratives.

Symbolically, Mount ʿTur represents the annihilation of ego and the unveiling of transcendent truth. When Moses asks to see God, he is answered by the divine self-disclosure to the mountain: "And when his Lord manifested Himself to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious" (Al-A'raf 7:143). Al-Razi interprets this as a statement of the ontological boundary between human perception and divine essence.

In terms of prophetic development, Mount ʿTur is not merely the site of assignment but of equipping. Moses receives not only his mission, but also the tools of confrontation: the staff, the radiant hand, eloquence, and reassurance. Ibn Ashur (1997) asserts that this site marks a complete inversion in Moses' personality, wherein unwavering faith in his mission and readiness to confront tyranny were firmly implanted. At ʿTur, Moses becomes more than a bearer of divine message; he becomes the very voice of truth in the face of injustice. The mountain thus transcends topography to become a symbol of existential ascension, a sacred summit where divine proximity reshapes human destiny.

Conclusion

The spatial journey of Prophet Moses as portrayed in the Qur'anic narrative is not merely a sequence of geographical displacements, but a layered structure of existential, psychological, pedagogical, and theological transformations. Each place, whether Egypt, the river, the palace, Midian, the sea, or Mount ʿTur, functions as a pedagogical stage and symbolic

threshold in the making of the prophetic self and mission. The spatial transitions trace the movement from trauma to responsibility, from divine concealment to divine communication, and from fear to leadership. These locales, imbued with symbolic density, reflect a divine orchestration of isolation and encounter, loss and empowerment, delay and manifestation. They establish that spatiality in the Qur'an is not passive background but an active participant in divine pedagogy. This study affirms that sacred space in the Qur'anic story of Moses serves as both container and catalyst: it houses transformation while simultaneously generating it. By analyzing these settings as narrative theophanies, we understand how geography in the Qur'anic worldview operates not only materially but as a semantic medium for shaping prophetic consciousness.

Furthermore, the findings of this study extend beyond the case of Moses to contribute to the broader field of Qur'anic hermeneutics. They suggest that spatiality in the Qur'an is a hermeneutic key that reveals the dynamic interplay between revelation, human experience, and divine pedagogy. This approach aligns with the philosophical hermeneutic view articulated by Masuwd (2025a), wherein understanding emerges as a fusion between the divine text and the existential horizon of the reader. By treating space as a dialogical medium, the study situates Qur'anic geography within a living interpretive process rather than a static exegetical category.

In terms of educational theory, the analysis proposes that Qur'anic spatiality models a divine pedagogy rooted in movement, testing, and transformation. Each spatial station corresponds to an educational phase that integrates experiential learning, moral formation, and spiritual awakening. This insight provides a conceptual bridge between Qur'anic studies and contemporary educational philosophy, affirming that divine instruction unfolds through lived spatial encounters rather than abstract moral directives.

Hence, this research contributes both to Qur'anic philosophical hermeneutics and to a renewed understanding of education as a spatial, existential process, one in which geography becomes a medium of revelation and human development.

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