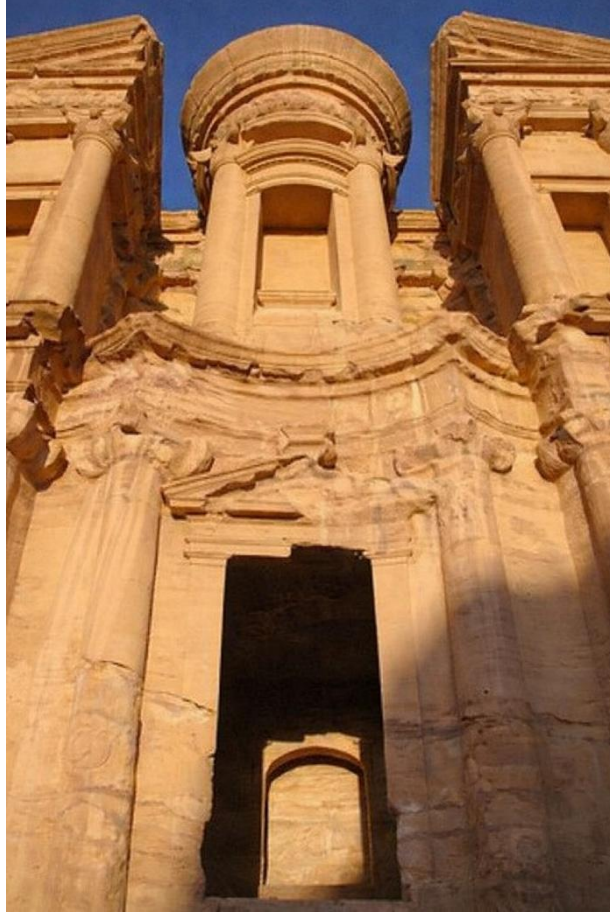


فَلَنُؤَلِّبَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا

We shall turn you to a Qiblah that will please you



اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ ۖ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۖ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۗ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which there is a lamp, the lamp is encased in a glass, the glass is like a radiant planet, which is lit from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west, its oil nearly gives off light even if not touched by fire. Light upon light, God guides to His light whom He pleases.

And God sets forth examples for the people, and God is aware of all things.

Abstract

This study investigates what the Qur'an itself reveals about the location of the inviolable Place of Worship (Masjid al-Haram), examining whether the traditionally site in Mecca corresponds to the description, given in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an provides precise geographic, environmental, agricultural, and historical details, enabling a direct, evidence-based analysis of the region it depicts.

Drawing on geography, linguistics, historical mapping, topography, climate, vegetation, and animal behaviour, this research reconstructs the environment described in the verses. By comparing these descriptions with the natural, ecological, and historical features of Mecca and other possible locations, the study seeks to determine what the Qur'an itself conveys about the true location of the Inviolable Place of Worship (Masjid al-Haram), independent of later tradition or assumptions.

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Introduction:

For as long as I can remember, faith has been a quiet presence in my life. I was raised in a Muslim family and grew up learning to pray, to fast, and to follow the central rituals that were presented to me as the core of my religion. Although I identified as Muslim throughout my life, my connection to the religion remained largely unexamined, limited mostly to fasting during Ramadan and performing familiar rituals.

I attempted to study the Qur'an, yet as a child and even as a teenager, I often found myself reciting words I did not fully understand.

This changed about three years ago, when I began reading the Qur'an seriously for the first time. I did not intend to embark on a transformative journey; I simply wanted to understand the Book for myself. But the more I read, the more it resonated with me. At the same time, the Qur'an challenged me. As I immersed myself in its message, I noticed profound differences between the Book itself and the religious practices I had been taught as a child. What I had long assumed to be core; these rituals now appeared in a new light.

These differences were not minor details or cultural variations. They extended to aspects like prayer, fasting, and even hajj. Question after question arose, questions I could no longer ignore. How could certain ritual acts during Hajj; circling a cube, wearing prescribed garments, throwing pebbles, kissing or greeting a black stone, or restricting women from traveling alone, align with what the Qur'an describes?

How did these practices fit with narratives such as Ibrahim's rejection of stone-based worship [21:52-21:71], or the Qur'an's imagery of "stones and humans" as fuel for the Fire [66:6]?

But it was not just the rituals themselves that felt inconsistent. Even the traditional understanding of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca - its very location - seemed at odds with what the Qur'an describes.

A deep sense of unease settled over me. The picture I had inherited, the one presented as "Islam," did not match what I was reading in the Qur'an. At times, it seemed the only thing the two shared was a name; everything else, the actions, the practices, the focus, was different.

While wrestling with these questions, I encountered other Muslims who, like me, sensed something unsettling, something that did not align with the Qur'an. Some proposed that the historical location of the Masjid al-Haram might not be where it is traditionally understood to be.

The suggestions were wide-ranging: Yemen, Egypt, Morocco, Jerusalem, even the North Pole, each backed by its own interpretations. Yet none of these theories resonated. They felt disconnected from the Qur'an itself, and rather than providing clarity, each only deepened my confusion.

This confusion pushed me deeper into the Qur'an. The Qur'an repeatedly states that it is complete, detailed, and not lacking in guidance [6:114, 10:37, 12:111]. If that were true, then the answers to my questions had to be accessible, provided I read with care and patience.

As I continued reading over the course of the last year, I stored away every verse that mentioned geography, direction, or narrative setting. From the very beginning, it was clear: these verses would either confirm Mecca as the true site or unmistakably reveal the actual location: repeatedly, consistently, verse after verse.

This research grew slowly, not out of frantic searching but out of a desire to let the evidence of the Qur'an speak for itself. Verses gradually accumulated like pieces of a puzzle. Eventually, a coherent picture began to form, one that differed from the traditional narrative, yet emerged directly from my engagement with the Qur'an itself.

In this paper, I will present the verses that shaped my inquiry, outline the reasoning behind my interpretations, and explain how these verses led me to re-evaluate the commonly assumed location of the Masjid al-Haram. My intention is not to provoke controversy, but to document an intellectual and spiritual journey driven by a sincere attempt to understand the Qur'an on its own terms. I will gradually present the conclusion I reached regarding the location of the real masjid al haram as described in the Qur'an.

Bakka and Mecca

The Qur'an mentions two place names that are frequently assumed to refer to the same site: **Bakka** and **Mecca**. Notably, each name appears only once in the text, which calls for careful examination rather than reliance on later tradition. Let us consider the verses themselves.

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِينَ 3:96

The first habitation (Bayt) ¹established for humanity is the one in Bakka, blessed, and a guidance for the worlds.

Here the Qur'an connects Bakka with the "first bayt", the earliest habitation or dwelling established for humanity.

The term bayt can denote a house, a chamber, a tent, or more broadly, any form of habitation.

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ 3:97

In it are clear proofs of the maqam of Ibrahim; and whoso enters it is safe. And God's claim upon mankind is a hajj to the Bayt, for whoso can find a path to it; and whoso denies, God is free from need of all mankind.

Here, the Qur'an refers to maqam² Ibrahim, often rendered in English as "the standing place of Ibrahim" or "the place of Ibrahim's feet." However, classical lexicons clarify that *maqam* has a broader semantic range: it can signify a place of standing, a station, a residence, or a site of continuance. Thus, the Qur'anic usage is not limited to physical standing. For example, in 10:71:

وَأْتَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يٰقَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي وَتَذِكْرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ 10:71

¹ بَيْتٌ [signifies A tent; properly, having more than one pole; but often applied without this restriction: and also a house; a chamber; an apartment; a closet; and the like
Signifying a habitation [of any kind; an abode; a dwelling]

² مَقَامٌ The place of the feet; (K;) a standing place; (S, Msb;) as also مُقَامٌ : (S;) or the latter, a place of stationing: (Msb;) and both, a place of continuance, stay, residence, or abode: (K:) [a standing:] and the latter, a place of long continuance, stay, residence, or abode: (Expos. of the Mo'allakât, Calc., p. 138:) and both, continuance, stay, residence, or abode. (S, K.)

And recite to them the report of Nuh, when he said to his people: “O my people: if my presence(maqam) and my reminding you of the proofs of God be grievous to you, then in God have I placed my trust; so resolve upon your plan and your partners; then let not your plan be unclear to you; then move decisively against me, and grant me no respite.

In this verse, *maqam* clearly refers to Nuh’s presence or station among his people, not to a literal place of standing. This demonstrates that the Qur’an’s use of *maqam* is context-dependent and cannot be assumed to always denote a physical “standing place.”

Claims exist that the footprints found in Mecca represent the standing place of Ibrahim (maqam Ibrahim). At this stage, these claims are not confirmed or verified and are presented solely as reported assertions.



Alleged maqam Ibrahim in Mecca

We now turn to the other verse that mentions Mecca:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ
 اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا 48:24

And He is the One who withheld their hands against you, and your hands against them in the belly of Mecca, after He had made you victorious over them. And God is, of what you do, seeing.

This is the only mention of Mekka.

It appears in a context involving conflict, where God restrained fighting.

Nothing in this verse links Mekka to the “first bayt” mentioned in 3:96.

Many people claim that “Mecca used to be called Bakka.” However, this comes not from the Qur’an itself.

Others propose that the word Mekka may have meant “destruction,” or may have had other metaphorical connotations. These ideas exist, but the Qur’an does not confirm or deny them at this point.

From the Qur’an so far, no definitive location can be identified. The verse about Bakka speaks of the first human habitation and blessing; the verse about Mekka speaks of a conflict.

Neither verse gives enough information to locate the location or confirm that Bakka and Mekka are identical.

Therefore, the next step is to examine other passages to see whether the Qur’an provides further descriptions, geographical, historical, or environmental, that can help identify the true setting of the first bayt.

Ibrahim

Since the Qur’an associates the “first Bayt” with maqam Ibrahim, it is natural to examine the verses concerning Ibrahim himself. Do these passages provide any geographical clues about the site of the Bayt?

A few verses are central. Rather than relying on traditional translations, we look at them word-for-word to avoid inherited assumptions.

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ 22:27

And proclaim among the people the [Hajj]. They will come to you walking and on every lean mount, coming from every deep ravine.

At this point, it is important to consider the meaning of ḥajj³.

The English term “*pilgrimage*” often conveys an external duty or ritual obligation, but the Arabic word carries a deeper, more intimate sense of purposeful movement.

According to Lane’s Lexicon:

حَجَّ — He repaired or betook himself to, or toward, a person or place; in an absolute sense, or to an object of reverence, veneration, respect, or honour. He repaired or betook himself frequently toward such an object.

In this sense, ḥajj is not merely a physical journey; it is a movement of both heart and body toward a place one sincerely desires to approach.

³ He repaired, or betook himself, to, or towards, syn. قَصَدَ, (Ṣ, A, Mgh, Mṣb, K,) a person (Ṣ, A, Mgh) [or place], in an absolute sense: or to, or towards, an object of reverence, veneration, respect, or honour: or, accord. to Kh, he repaired, or betook himself, much, or frequently, to, or towards, an object of this kind: and also he repaired to, betook himself to, or visited, a person: (TA:) and he went to, or visited, a person repeatedly, or frequently. (ISk, T, Ṣ, Mgh, K.*) You say also, حَجَّ بَنُو فُلَانٍ فُلَانًا The sons of such a one continued long going repeatedly to visit such a one. (Ṣ.)

They will come to you walking and on every lean mount; coming from every deep ravine.

The place God is describing is surrounded by deep ravines and mountain passes.
Many translators render ⁴عُمُق as “distant,” but the core meaning is related to depth.

This image becomes even sharper with the mention of approaching it على كل ضامر “on **every lean mount**.” It suggests narrow entries, where only slender animals can pass.

Another account of Ibrahim provides additional insight into the setting of the first Bayt:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً
مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ 14:37

*Our Lord, I have housed / settled some of my descendants in a **valley without cultivation** at your inviolable Bayt so that they may establish the Salat so make hearts among the people descend toward them and provide them with fruits, that they may be thankful.”*

Our Lord, I have housed / settled some of my descendants

The verb أَسْكَنْتُ (askantu) does not mean “I abandoned them” or “I left them behind.”
It means to lodge, to settle, to establish residence.

in a valley without cultivation

Again, a clear description:
a valley, at that time without local agriculture.

At your forbidden Bayt

مُحَرَّم (muḥarram)

This word consistently means forbidden, inviolable in the Qur’an. [2:85; 5:26; 6:139; 6:145]
Its use indicates something placed under restriction.

so that they may establish the Salat

While commonly translated as “prayer,” ṣalāt comes from the root ṣ-l-w, which in classical Arabic carries the sense of connection, alignment, devotion, not merely ritual performance.

⁴ عُمُق (Ṣ, O, Mṣb, K, TA) and عُمُقٌ (Ṣ, O, K, TA,) or the latter is an inf. n., (Mṣb,) and عُمُقٌ (K, TA,) The *bottom* (قَعْر) of a well (Ṣ, O, K, TA) and the like, (K, TA,) and of a [road such as is termed] فُجْج, and of a valley: (Ṣ, O, TA:) or the *depth* of a well (Mṣb, TA) and the like; [i. e.] the *distance to the bottom*: (TA:) [and غُمُوقٌ, which may be a pl. of the first or second, and perhaps of the third, signifies *deep places* of the ground: (see حَسْفٌ) and عُمُقٌ signifies also *depth* of anything; or *distance between the two opposite surfaces* thereof:] but accord. to IAḡr, عُمُقٌ as an attribute of a road signifies *distance*: and as an attribute of a well it is the *length* of its cavity, or *interior*, from top to bottom. (TA.)

In this context, Ibrahim's request is not simply that his descendants perform a formal ritual, but that they uphold an ongoing connection with God at this sanctified dwelling.

so make hearts among the people descend toward them

تَهْوِي (tahwī) ⁵literally means to fall downward,
again matching the geography of a valley below to which people descend.

and provide them with fruits

If the valley has no inherent agriculture, then Ibrahim's supplication for fruit could suggest two possibilities: either the fruits were brought from elsewhere, or the valley could produce fruit under certain conditions, such as after rainfall or cultivation.

Another verse states:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ
22:26

When We established for Ibrahim the location of the Bayt. Do not associate anything with Me, and purify My Bayt for the ṭā'ifīn, the qā'imīn, the rukkā', and the sujūd.

"When We established for Ibrahim the location of the Bayt..."

The verb bawwa'nā in the quran (10:93, 7:161, 12:56) means to settle, lodge, or assign a dwelling, not merely "to point out." Ibrahim is being given a designated habitation, a place to be occupied.

God then commands:

"Do not associate anything with Me, and purify My Bayt."

Here (purify) ṭahhir means more than physical cleaning, it means to remove practices, symbols, or influences that corrupt exclusive devotion. The Bayt is defined as a pure monotheistic sanctuary, free from all forms of shirk (association).

Then follows:

"for the ṭā'ifīn, the qā'imīn, the rukkā', and the sujūd."

Though often interpreted as ritual movements. Its usage in the Qur'an shows broader meanings:

ṭā'ifīn — those who circulate, visit, attend with presence [37:45; 56:17; 52:24; 76:15; 76:19; 68:19]

qā'imīn — those who stand firm, uphold, remain devoted [3:18; 70:33]

⁵ هَوَى بِهِ He made it to fall down:

rukḳā' — those who humble themselves, incline sincerely [5:55]

sujūd — those who submit completely [2:58; 4:154; 12:4; 13:5]

These describe states of devotion and nearness, not a prescribed choreography. The bayt is therefore a sanctified habitation for people who approach, stand with integrity, humble themselves, and submit to God.

The verse builds a clear picture: a designated, purified monotheistic dwelling prepared for sincere believers whose devotion is defined by connection and humility.

Another clue comes from the supplication of Ibrahim:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَيُئْسِنَ الْمَصِيرُ 2:126

*And when Ibrahim said: "My Lord, make this **a secure land**, and provide its people with fruits, whoso among them believes in God and the Last Day," He said: "And whoso denies, him will I let enjoy a little, then will I drive him to the punishment of the Fire; and evil is the journey's end."*

THE STRUCTURE IS CLEAR:

Security and sustained provision are tied to belief, while those who deny receive only **brief enjoyment at this location**.

Having examined the verses relating to Ibrahim and the Bayt, we can begin to draw a clearer picture of the location being described. The Qur'an emphasizes:

- a valley that is housed
- safe
- accessible only through narrow passes
- Fruits were either brought from elsewhere, or the valley could produce fruit under certain conditions, such as after rainfall or cultivation

Next, I must examine Muhammad's location: where he lived, what the Qur'an reports about his environment, and whether he is depicted at the same location as the Bayt or in a different setting.

Muhammad

After analyzing the verses about Ibrahim's settlement, the Qur'an carries the narrative forward with Muhammad. He, too, is situated in a sanctuary that exhibits the same defining characteristics.

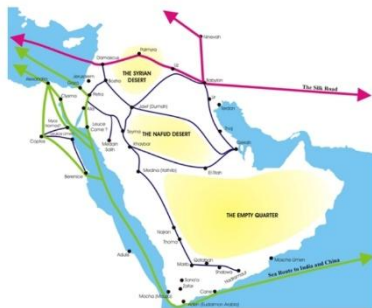
وَقَالُوا إِن نَّتَّبِعِ الْهُدَى مَعَكَ نَتَّخِظَ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا يُجَبَى إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِزْقًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ 28:57

*And they said: 'If we follow the guidance with you, we will be driven out of our land. Did We not make for them a **secure sanctuary**, to which the **fruits of all things** are brought as **provision from Us**? But most of them do not know.*

From this verse we notice two important points:

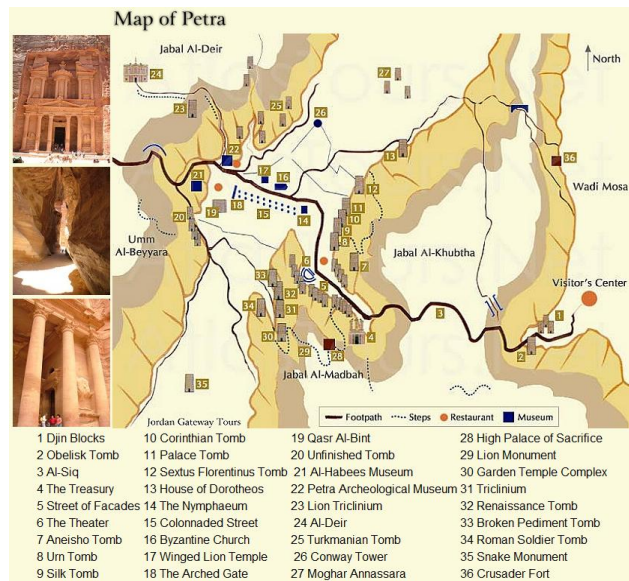
1. **Continuity of place:** Muhammad is in the same place as Ibrahim: **a secure, protected sanctuary**.
2. **Provision from everywhere:** The phrase “*thamarāt kullī shayʾ*” / *ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ* indicates that sustenance is not confined to local resources but is drawn from multiple sources.

To explore where such a place could be, it is useful to consider ancient trade routes and the cities that once thrived along them. These routes connected Arabia to the Levant, Mesopotamia, and beyond, and many cities were central hubs for commerce, travel, and pilgrimage. Comparing the Qurʾānic description with the geography and function of these centres helps identify which locations fit the criteria best.



Trading routes of the ancient Middle East, when Petra was the last stop for caravans carrying spices before being shipped to European markets through the [Port of Gaza](#)

PETRA, for example, lies in a deep, enclosed valley with sheer cliffs and narrow gorges, naturally protected from outside threats. The valley relied on imported goods, while being historically long-inhabited. Situated on a major north-south trade corridor, Petra combined enclosure, trade prominence, and strategic security. These features suggest a potential correspondence with the environmental and logistical details described in the Qurʾān, warranting further verse-based investigation.



Map of Petra



One of the main entrances into Petra

By contrast, Mecca lies in a wider, more open valley with broad entrances rather than narrow, defensible gateways. It features some local agriculture and played a relatively minor role in ancient trade. While it shares certain characteristics, it does not exhibit the depth and enclosure described in the Qur'an. (22:27)

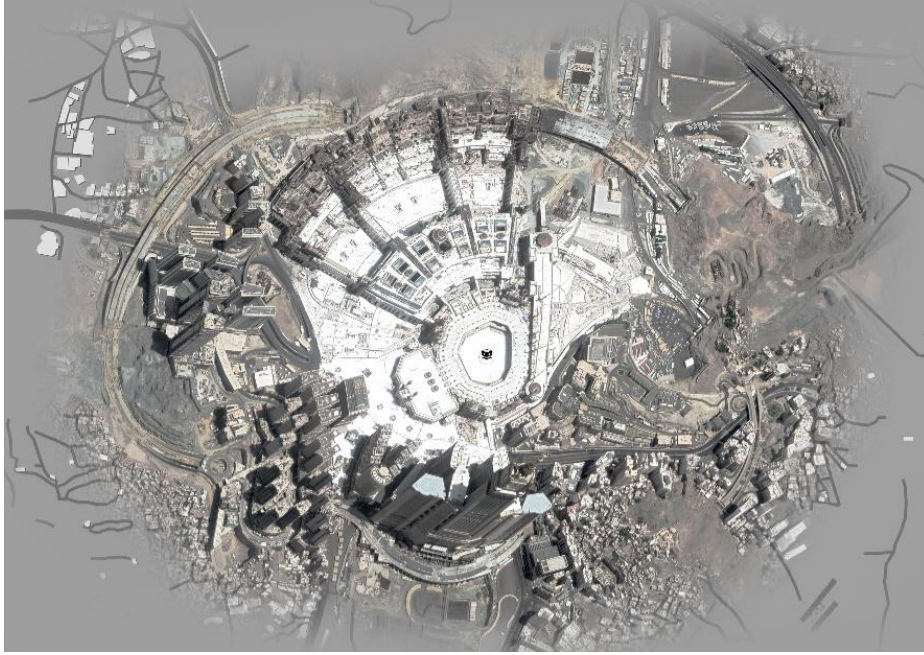


Image of Mecca

Other major trading centres: Alexandria, Babylon, Damascus, Palmyra, and Silk Road cities like Samarkand or Kashgar, were largely open, fertile and thus fail to align with the description of a deep, enclosed valley.

Cities in northern Arabia, such as Madā'in Salih (Hegra) and Taymā', partially meet the geographic criteria, with rocky terrain and caravan access, but still lack the full combination of enclosure and trade significance described in the Qur'an.

Taken together, this comparison shows that, among ancient trade centers, Petra for now, best aligns with the Qur'anic picture a naturally protected, deep, valley, reliant on imported goods, central to trade, and historically inhabited.

To reach any meaningful conclusion, I cannot rely on only two or three verses. I must examine the Qur'an meticulously, considering every detail. If the location of the bayt had ever shifted in history, God would have known, and He is the best of planners [8:30]. His wisdom ensures that the Qur'an contains precise guidance, with additional verses offering further clues about the Bayt's true location.

The next step is to examine Muhammad's environment and the communities he encountered, analysing how the geography and settlement patterns correspond with, or diverge from traditional assumptions.

Salih and Hud

As we continue examining the Qur'an's geographical clues, the next set of verses turns our attention to something very physical and very visible: the ruins of earlier destroyed peoples that Muḥammad's audience was familiar with. The Qur'an speaks as if the listeners regularly passed through their dwellings, saw their remnants, and even lived among them.

This gives us an important environmental marker: wherever Muhammad lived and preached, it had to be within close reach of the remains of 'Āad, Thamud, and other ancient communities.

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسَاكِينِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمْ الْأَمْثَالَ 14:45

And you **dwelt in the dwellings** of those who wronged themselves; and it was made clear to you how We did with them; and We struck similitudes for you.

The audience did not merely pass by these ruins, they dwelt in them, meaning they lived among or used these remains directly.

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودَ وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَسَاكِينِهِمْ^ط وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ 29:38

And 'Āad and Thamud: and it has become clear to you from their dwellings and the shaytan made their deeds fair to them, and turned them away from the path, even though they could see.

The people addressed in the Qur'an knew the houses of 'Āad and Thamud. They were not legendary, distant civilizations, their remains were visible.

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ 20:128

Has it not guided them, from the many generations We destroyed before them, through **whose dwelling places they now walk?** There truly are signs in this for anyone with understanding.

They literally walk through the ruins of earlier civilizations.

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ 32:26

Has it not guided them, how many generations We destroyed before them, in whose homes they now walk? There truly are signs in this- do they not hear?

The Qur'an repeats the same reality several times.

The ruins are not distant, they are part of the daily landscape.

WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT 'AAD AND THAMUD?

After the Qur'an tells us that Muḥammad's community walked and lived in the dwellings of earlier destroyed peoples, the next step is to examine what the Qur'an itself says about these civilizations.

These descriptions give us physical, architectural, and environmental markers, real features that must be present in the region where Muhammad lived.

THAMUD – SALIH

This verse is addressed to the people of **Thamud**:

وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سَهُولِهَا قُصُورًا
وَتَنْحِتُونَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا فَاذْكُرُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ 7:74

And remember that He made you successors after 'Aad, and He established you in the land so that you make castles on its plains, and you carve homes in the mountains. So remember the grace of God, and do not roam the land as corrupters.

وَتَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ 89:9

And Thamud who hollowed the rocks in the valley.

From these verses, we can identify several defining features of Thamud's environment.

- They carved houses from rock
- They also built structures on plains
- Thamud "are the successors after" 'Aad of the same land

'AAD - HUD

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ 89:6
إِزْمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ 89:7

Did you not see what your Lord did to 'Aad? Irum, of the **pillars**?

وَاذْكُرْ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَخْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ النَّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ
إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ 46:21

"And remember the brother of 'Āad when he warned his people in **al-Aḥqāf**⁶, and the warners before him had disappeared from before and behind him: 'Do not worship except God; indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a great Day.'"

Traditional interpretations often place Al-Aḥqāf in the south, but the lexical range is wider: it can refer to any curved, winding, or elevated sand tract, not exclusively southern deserts.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ غَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا غَارِضٌ مُمِطِرُنَا ۚ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ رِيحٌ فِيهَا
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 46:24

But when they saw a cloud heading towards their valleys, they said: "This is a cloud that will bring to us rain!" No, it is that which you sought to hasten; a wind wherein there is a painful retribution.

تَدْمِرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَى إِلَّا مَسَاكِينُهُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ 46:25

Destroying everything by the command of its Lord." And morning found them, there was nothing to be seen save their dwellings. Thus, reward We the lawbreaking people.

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْقُرَىٰ وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ 46:27

And We destroyed the cities around you, and We arranged the signs so that they might return.

From these verses, several defining features of 'Āad can be identified.

- The destruction came through their valleys, showing that this community wasn't settled in a wide-open desert.
- They were famous for erecting monumental pillars
- The remains are visible as dwellings. The Qur'an again links the ruins of the past with the present landscape "Around you" suggests the Prophet's people lived within proximity to these destroyed settlements.

⁶ A curving, or winding, tract of sand: (Ṣ, Mgh, Mṣb, Ẕ:) pl. [of pauc.] أَخْقَافٌ (Ṣ, Mṣb, Ẕ) and [of mult.] حَقَافٌ (Ṣ, Ẕ) and حَقَافٌ (O, L, Ẕ), and pl. pl. حَقَائِفُ and حَقَقَةٌ (Ẕ), the former of these two being pl. of أَخْقَافٌ or of حَقَافٌ (L, TA,) but the latter of them, accord. to the O, is a pl., not a pl. pl.: (TA:) or a heap, or hill, of sand, that has assumed a bowed form: (IDrd, TA:) or a curving, or winding, thin tract of sand: (Har p. 51:) or a great, round tract of sand: (Ibn-'Arafah, Ẕ:) or an oblong, elevated tract of sand: (Fr, Ẕ:) or الْأَخْقَافُ applies [particularly] to certain oblong tracts of sand in the region of Esh-Shihr: (Ẕ,* TA:) accord. to J, [in the Ṣ,] to the country of 'Ād. (TA.) Also The lower, or lowest, part of a tract of sand, and of a mountain, and of a wall. (O, L, Ẕ.)

COMPARING THE DESCRIPTION OF 'ĀAD AND THAMUD WITH MECCA AND PETRA

Having examined the verses concerning 'Āad, Thamud, and the destroyed peoples “around” the Prophet’s audience, we can now ask a simple question:

Does the physical environment of Mecca match these descriptions, or does Petra and its surrounding region correspond more closely?

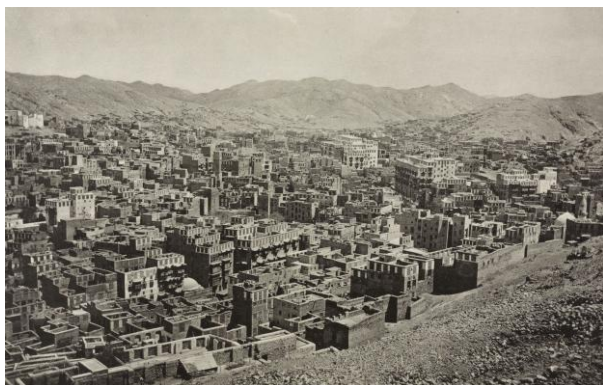
We proceed by matching the features: carved dwellings, visible ruins, pillars, winding valleys, inherited settlements against the two proposed locations.

MECCA

Archaeologically, Mecca presents several difficulties when compared with descriptions of ancient civilizations like 'Āad and Thamud:

- There are no known remains of carved dwellings or monumental rock-cut architecture in the Mecca region that match the Qur’anic descriptions of people carving homes from mountains.
- Modern archaeological surveys and historical analyses note that pre-Islamic Mecca leaves minimal archaeological traces of substantial settlement activity prior to the 7th century, no published, peer-reviewed excavations have revealed a continuous, significant urban site with infrastructure such as city walls, markets, caravanserais, imported trade goods, or datable stratified artifacts.
- There are no pre-Islamic inscriptions discovered in the Mecca valley that explicitly link the region to 'Āad, Thamud, or other named ancient civilizations of the Arabian interior.

Thus, based on the available archaeological and documentary evidence, Mecca as settlement does not currently match the kind of ancient urban context that one might expect if it were the primary locus of long-recorded civilizations like 'Āad or Thamud.



Old picture of Mecca

PETRA

Petra and its surrounding region, Wadi Musa, Wadi Rum, and Wadi 'Araba, present a dramatically different picture from Mecca and align closely with the Qur'anic descriptions of ancient civilizations such as Thamud and 'Āad.

ROCK-CUT ARCHITECTURE AND CARVED DWELLINGS

Petra is world-famous for its monumental architecture carved directly into mountains. Entire façades, tombs, sanctuaries, and residential complexes were hewn from solid rock. This corresponds closely to the Qur'anic portrayal of Thamud as a people who *“carved homes from the mountains.”*

Rather than isolated structures, Petra represents a vast landscape of rock-cut urbanism, precisely the type of civilization described in the Qur'an.



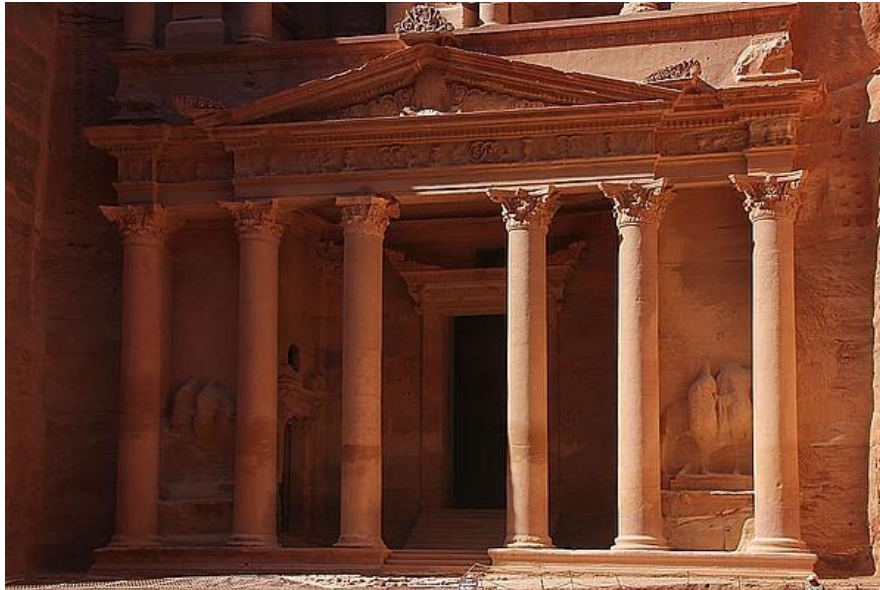
Residential complexes found in Petra

PILLARS

Petra also strikingly matches the Qur'anic imagery of monumental pillars. The city is filled with columned architecture carved directly from stone, including:

- **Al-Khazneh (The Treasury):** An iconic façade dominated by towering pillars.
- **The Great Temple:** A vast complex supported by rows of columns.
- **The Colonnaded Street:** A major roadway lined with long rows of stone pillars.

These pillar-lined monuments rise within a landscape of narrow gorges, carved valleys, and towering sandstone formations, an environment that naturally aligns with the Qur'anic descriptions associated with 'Āad and Thamud.



Al-Khazneh (The Treasury)



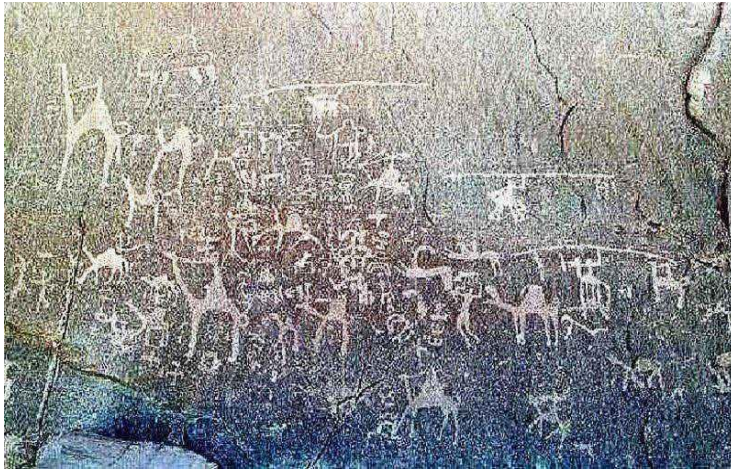
The Great Temple



The Colonnaded Street

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESENCE OF THAMUD

Thamudic inscriptions are found in abundance across northern Arabia and the Jordanian plateau, including the broader Petra region. This places Petra within the same cultural and epigraphic zone traditionally associated with Thamud.



Thamudic inscription

EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FOR 'ĀAD

Beyond its monumental architecture, the wider region around Petra and southern Jordan has yielded epigraphic evidence that may be linked to the tribe of 'Āad described in the Qur'an. In a study, epigrapher Ahmad Al-Jallad surveys pre-Islamic inscriptions and identifies a Safaitic text in which an individual explicitly describes himself as being "of the lineage of 'd," which is understood as a reference to the tribe of 'Āad in the ancient Arabian epigraphic record. This evidence suggests that groups identified by similar names to the Qur'anic tribes were present in northern Arabia and southern Levantine desert regions around the early centuries CE.

BRINGING THE EVIDENCE TOGETHER

When the evidence is combined, from:

- the verses describing Ibrahim's and Muhammad's settlement (a valley, enclosed by deep mountains, linked to trade)
- and the verses describing 'Āad and Thamud (monumental pillars, carved dwellings, and visible ruins),

a coherent geographical picture begins to emerge.

Mecca fails to match multiple elements of these descriptions, both for Ibrahim's environment and for the civilizations of 'Āad and Thamud.

Petra, by contrast, aligns with every major feature identified so far:

- rock-cut dwellings
- towering sandstone pillars
- visible ruins of ancient civilizations
- Thamudic inscriptions
- inscriptions mentioning 'Āad
- a historical trade-city setting
- proximity to major caravan routes
- a valley enclosed by mountains
- minimal natural agriculture

This does not yet conclude the investigation, but the pattern is already striking. Mecca repeatedly fails to match the Qur'anic descriptions, while Petra consistently aligns with them. To be thorough, we now turn to additional verses to deepen the analysis.

Lut

After examining the verses connected to Ibrahim, Salih, and Hud, the Qur'an gives us yet another geographical marker, this time through references to the people of Lut.

وَلَقَدْ أَتَوْا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي أَمْطَرَتْ مَظَرَ السَّوْءِ ۚ أَفَلَمْ يَكُونُوا يَرْتَوْنَهَا ۚ بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ نُشُورًا

And they came upon the city that was drenched by the terrible rain. Did they not see it? But they do not expect resurrection. 25:40

وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لِّمَنِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ
إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَايِرِينَ
ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ
وَإِنكُمْ لَتَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهِمْ مُصْطَفِينَ
وَيَاللَّيْلِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ
37:133-137

And Lut was one of the messengers. When We saved him and his people all together Except an old woman who was one of those who stayed behind. Then, We destroyed the rest. And you pass by them in the morning, And at night. Do you not comprehend?

The Qur'an states directly that the audience passes by the ruins of Lut
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- in the morning,
- and at night.

Combined with 25:40, this gives the impression of people passing the site on their way out in the morning for their business and returning in the evening, meaning the ruins lie along an active, routinely travelled road.

WHERE DOES THE QUR'AN PLACE THE PEOPLE OF LUT

The Qur'an provides a few details about the location of Luṭ's community. To understand the geography being described, we need to gather these verses and see how they fit together. When combined, they form a clear set of coordinates that can be compared to the actual landscape.

Luṭ lived in the same blessed region as Ibrahim

وَوَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ 21:71

And We delivered him and Lut to the land We had blessed for all mankind.

This places Luṭ in the same region previously described, the mountainous, enclosed, trade-dependent land associated with Ibrahim. [14:37; 3:96]

It is interesting to note that the Qur'an never places Luṭ's people explicitly near a sea.

Ruins lie on an established road

وَإِنَّهَا لَيْسَبِيلٌ مَّيْمَنٌ 15:76

And it is upon an established road

So far, we have established several preliminary identifications: the verses provide clues about the people of Lut and their geographical proximity to the Prophet's audience. But to move beyond broad outlines, we must now examine more closely what the Qur'an says about their fate and what physical traces, if any, were left behind.

Only by examining these details can we begin to identify where Luṭ's people really lived and how their ruins match the Qur'anic description.

The Qur'an repeatedly says that their punishment came from above:

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا ٭ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ 7:84

And We rained down upon them a rain, so see how was the punishment for the criminals.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا ٭ فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ 26:173/ 27:58

And We rained upon them a rain; and evil is the rain of those who were warned.

Other verses specify what that rain consisted of:

لِنُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ طِينٍ 51:33

to send upon them stones of clay.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا¹ إِلَّا عَالَ لُوطٌ تَجَيَّنَهُمْ يَسْحَرُ 54:34

We sent upon them a storm of stones save the family of Lot, We delivered them at dawn.

According to Lane's Lexicon, ḥāsib⁷ refers to a storm that hurls stones, or a shower of hard material falling violently from above.

Another important detail appears in Sūrat al-'Ankabūt:

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ
وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ 29:35/ 29:34

*We will send down upon the people of this town an affliction from the sky for what wickedness they were in. **And We left remains of it as a clear sign for a people who comprehend.***

The Qur'an explicitly states that the destruction of the people of Lut left behind visible remains, a physical trace that endured long after the event and could still be seen by later generations. This was not a catastrophe that disappeared without a trace; it produced a lasting ruin meant to serve as a sign for those who reflect.

However, while the Qur'an affirms the existence of these remains, it does not yet tell us what they looked like. To meaningfully compare this sign with places like Mecca or other candidate locations, we must first determine what kind of physical imprint such a punishment would plausibly leave behind.

Two more verses describe this same event:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ مَنْضُودٍ 11:82

*So when Our command came, We turned it uppermost nethermost, and rained on it stones of **hardened clay[sijjil⁸]**, piled up in layers.*

⁷ خَاصِبٌ [A thrower, or pelter, of stones]. You say, هُوَ خَاصِبٌ لَيْسَ بِصَاحِبٍ [He is a pelter of stones (app. meaning a calumniator): he is not a friend]. (A, TA.) [Hence also,] خَاصِبٌ, (S, K,) or رِيحٌ خَاصِبٌ, (A,) A violent wind that raises the pebbles; (S, A,*) as also خَصْبَةٌ: (S:) or a wind that bears along the dust (K, TA) and pebbles: (TA:) and a wind casting down pebbles from the sky: or a wind that tears up the pebbles. (TA. [See the Kur liv. 34, &c.])

⁸ Stones like lumps of dry, or tough, clay: arabicized from سَنَكٌ وَكَلٌّ (K, TA;) which are Pers. words, meaning "stone and clay;" the conjunction falling out in the arabicizing: (TA:) or baked clay: (Jel in xi. 84 and xv. 74 and cv. 4:) or stones (S, K) of clay (S) baked by the fire of Hell, whereon were inscribed the names of the people [for whom they were destined]: (S, K:) so in the Kur; as is indicated therein, in li. 33 and 34: (S:) or مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ in the Kur means مِنْ سِجِّلٍ, i. e. of what had been written [or decreed] for them, that they should be punished therewith; and سِجِّيلٌ means the same

فَجَعَلْنَا غَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ 15:74

*And we turned it uppermost nethermost, and rained on it stones of **hardened clay**[sijjil].*

In Lane lexikon, sijjil refers to hardened, baked, or compacted clay, often understood as rock-like, dense clay stones.

After examining the two passages that describe the destruction of Lut's people using the rare word **sijjil** (11:82 and 15:74), an important connection immediately presents itself. The Qur'an uses this same unusual term "sijjil" only one more time, and that is in Sūrat al-Fīl:

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ

105:4 *"striking them with stones of sijjil."*

The word sijjil appears in the Qur'an exclusively in:

- the destruction of Luṭ's community
- the event described in Sūrat al-Fīl

This rarity forces us to consider that the Qur'an is pointing in Surah-al Fil to the same event itself.

Yet, despite this linguistic link, the popular explanation of Sūrat al-Fīl relies on stories about an Ethiopian ruler and elephants, a narrative never mentioned anywhere in the Qur'an. The Quran itself gives no reference to:

- Abraha, an Ethiopian general
- an army
- the Ka'bah being attacked
- elephants used as weapons

These details come entirely from later conjecture, whereas the Qur'an consistently warns:

"Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge." (17:36)

"Most of them follow nothing but conjecture." (6:116)

These are God's Verses which We recite to you in truth. In which hadith, after God and His revelations, will they believe?(45:6)

as سِجِّيلٍ, mentioned and expl. in the Qur lxxxiii. 8 and 9: (K:) AO says that سِجِّيلٍ means *many and hard*; and that سِجِّيلٍ is syn. with سِجِّيلٍ in this sense: (TA:) it is also said to be from سِجِّيلٍ meaning *Hell*; the ب being changed into ج: (Bd in xi. 84:) also, to be from أَسْجَلْتُهُ meaning "I sent forth him or it:" or from أَسْجَلْتُ meaning "I gave;" and to be from السُّجُلِ. (TA.

Now we turn to Sūrat al-Fīl to see what each verse actually describes.

Since this Sūrah uses the same rare vocabulary found in the destruction narrative of Lut’s people, we can now examine it verse by verse to see how its details align with the pattern we already identified.

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ 105:1

Did you see what your Lord did to the companions of the elephant?

Until now, there is no other mention of elephants anywhere in the Qur’an. The Qur’an gives no story, no context, no event involving an elephant. This means the expression “companions of the elephant” is a label, not yet explained within the Qur’an.

Later, once we identify the true location of Lut’s people, we will see whether the term “elephant” has a geological, symbolic, or regional meaning connected to that site. For now, the Qur’an leaves it open.

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ 105:2

Did He not make their plan go astray?

What was the actual “Plan?”

They planned to expel Lut and his followers:

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ

“The answer of his people was only: ‘Expel them from your town! They are a people who keep themselves pure.’7:82. They repeated this threat again. [27:56]

وَأَرْسَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا ۚ أَبَابِيلَ ۚ 105:3

“And He sent against them misfortune (Tayr) 9 in successive waves (Ababil).”

To understand this verse correctly, two words must be explained: ṭayr and abābīl. Although ṭayr can mean birds, the Qur’an also uses it with non-bird meanings, such as:

⁹ also signifies A thing from which one augurs either good or evil; an omen, a bodement, of good or of evil: (K:) and طَيْرَةٌ (S, K) and طَيْرَةٌ (K) and طَوْرَةٌ (IDrd, Sgh, K, TA [in the CK, in this art., erroneously, طَوْرَةٌ, but in art. طَوْر is it is طَوْرَةٌ,]) a thing from which one augurs evil; an evil omen or bodement; (S, K, &c.): contr. of قَالَ: (TA:) and طَائِرٌ signifies fortune, (A'Obeyd, K, TA,) whether good or evil: (TA:) and especially evil fortune; ill luck; as also طَيْرٌ and طَيْرَةٌ

7:131 – ṬĀ'IR = DISASTER / BAD FATE

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَتَّخِذُوا يَمُوسَى وَمَنْ مَعَهُ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And when good came to them, they said: "This is ours." And if evil befell them, they thought Musa and those with him an **evil omen**; in truth, their **evil omen** was but with God, but most of them knew not.

27:47 – ṬĀ'IR = EVIL OMEN

قَالُوا أَطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَيَمَنُ مَعَكَ قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ

They said: "We think you and those with you an evil omen." He said: "Your **evil omen** is with God. The truth is, you are a people subjected to means of denial."

36:18 – ṬĀ'IR = OMEN / CALAMITY

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Said they: "We think you an evil omen. If you cease not, we will stone you; and there will touch you from us a painful punishment."

Thus, ṭayr in Qur'anic language can describe an affliction, destiny, or event sent upon a people, not necessarily a living creature.

Lane lexikon defines abābīl ¹⁰as:

- companies or bands following one another.
- It means troops arriving successively, in detachments.
- It denotes flocks, groups, or clusters that come one after another.

Lane stresses it is a description of groups in succession, not a species.

When both terms are read in their proper lexical and Qur'anic sense:
calamities sent in successive waves."

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِجَآرَةٍ مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ 105:4

Striking them with stones of hardened clay[sijjil].

This matches exactly the punishment of Lut's people: sijjīl, hardened clay stones

فَجَعَلَهُمْ كَعَصْفٍ مَأْكُولٍ 105:5

And He made them like eaten straw.

¹⁰ ² signifies, accord. to some, A company in a state of dispersion: (M:) or dispersed companies, one following another: (Msb:) or distinct, or separate, companies, (Akh, S, Msb, K,) like leaning camels: (Msb:) or companies in a state of dispersion.

This describes what remained: crushed, broken, flattened, and scattered, like stalks in a field after they've been harvested.

The people of Lut were left in **visible ruin**, exactly as the Qur'an says:
"And We left from it a clear sign." (29:35)

The destruction produced a real, observable aftermath, a ruined landscape meant to be seen and remembered.

LOCATING THE PEOPLE OF LUT

From the previous verses about Lut, we identified several concrete markers:

1. A visible ruin left as a sign (29:35).
2. Destruction that looks "like eaten straw" (105:5).
3. A road passing by the ruins, seen repeatedly, in the morning and evening (37:137–138).
4. A destruction tied to the name "the companions of the elephant." (105:1)

Having these markers, we can now test them against real locations.

MECCA

With the markers identified from the Qur'anic verses about Lut, we can now see how they compare to Mecca.

- **No visible ruin left as a sign:** Today, Mecca shows no remnants of a "pre-Islamic" catastrophe or a site that could be described as a ruin left for travelers to see. Archaeological surveys consistently report minimal settlement evidence from the relevant period, and there are no traces of destroyed structures that correspond to the Qur'anic description.
- **No destruction resembling "eaten straw":** The Qur'an describes the aftermath as flattened, crushed, and scattered, yet there is no site in Mecca that exhibits this kind of ruin. There is nothing that matches the image of pulverized remains or a landscape visibly transformed by divine punishment.
- **No ruins along a road that travelers pass repeatedly:** The verses indicate that travelers passed by the ruins "morning and evening," suggesting a site along a known route or thoroughfare. Mecca, however, does not have any such ruins along trade or pilgrimage routes that would have been visible in this way.
- **No elephant-related structures or associations:** The Qur'an links this story with the term "the companions of the elephant," yet Mecca has no archaeological or historical connection to elephants or monuments referencing them in the pre-Islamic period.

Conclusion: None of the Qur’anic markers appear in Mecca. The city lacks ruins, visible signs of destruction, identifiable landmarks along old routes. Based on the evidence, Mecca cannot be matched to the descriptions given in the Qur’an about the people of Lut.

PETRA

If my assumption is correct - that the people of Lut, and by extension the Prophet’s audience, lived in Petra, then the site should show:

- The road mentioned in the Qur’an
- Ruins resembling “eaten straw”
- A clear reason for the title “companions of the elephant”

Remarkably, Petra contains all three.

A line running through the center of Petra is the **Colonnaded Street**, the city’s main thoroughfare connecting grand temples, public spaces, and marketplaces. Travelers passing along this road would have seen monumental ruins at every turn.

Beside this road stands the **Great Temple**, now a vast ruined complex. Its collapsed columns, shattered blocks, and scattered fragments create a **field of debris** that looks much like *‘asf ma’kūl*—flattened, trampled, and scattered—evoking the Qur’anic image of “eaten straw.”



Harvested field

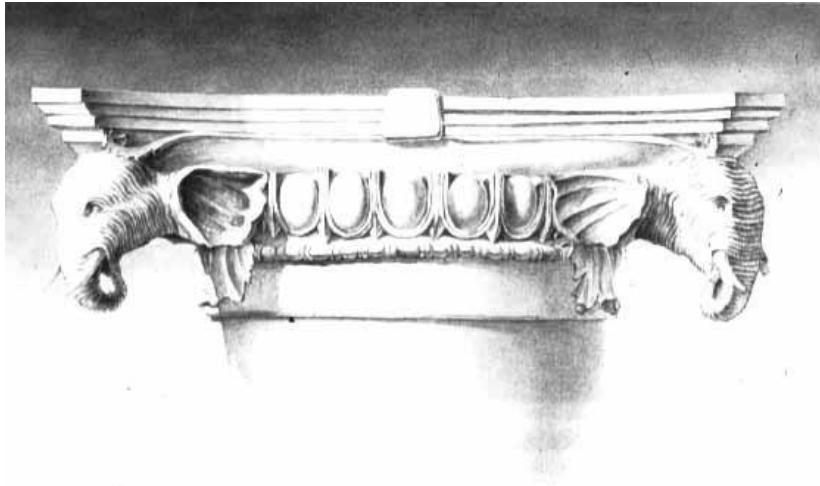


Ruins of the great Temple, Petra

The decisive marker: elephant heads

The Great Temple was decorated with **elephant-head capitals**.

www.quran-is-fully-detailed.com



A reconstruction of the Elephant Column -Brown University

All 120 columns of the lower temenos were topped with intricately carved heads of Asian elephants instead of the usual corner volutes. Scholars estimate there were between 536 and 576 elephant heads, each individually designed and covered with a thin layer of white plaster.

Elephants were literally carved into the architecture of a monumental building that now lies in ruins beside the road. This provides a natural, text-based explanation for the Qur'anic term:

أصحاب الفيل — the companions of the elephant

Not a reference to an invading army, a foreign legend, or a story of elephants crossing the desert, but a **people associated with a monumental structure adorned with elephant imagery**, whose ruins still remain along a visible route.



Complete elephant head from the Lower Temenos 1999. This sculptural element decorated the columns of the triple colonnades. - Brown University

Shu'ayb

Following our placement of Lut along the colonnaded streets of Petra, the Qur'an situates the Companions of Al-Aykah, along the same road.

فَجَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ
 وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ مُّقِيمٍ
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
 وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لظَالِمِينَ
 فَانْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَبِإِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ

And We utterly overthrew it and rained upon it stones of hardened clay. In that are proofs for those who can discern. And it is upon an established road; In that is a proof for the believers. And the companions of Al Aykah ¹¹were wrongdoers. And We took vengeance on them and both are on a clear way. 15:74-79

From the Qur'an we learn that Shu'ayb was sent as a messenger to the people of Al-Aykah:

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
 إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

The companions of Al Aykah disbelieved the messengers. When Shu'ayb said to them: "Will you not take heed? 26:176-26:177

Shu'ayb's message to the people of Al-Aykah also provides a crucial geographical clue. When he admonishes them, he situates them in proximity to Lut's people:

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ

¹¹ - brush; bush; bushwood; undergrowth; a thicket

- rough low-growing bushes; undergrowth

- a small wood; a thicket

- low bushes and trees

- Barke; boscase; boskage; bosket (n); brushwood; coppice (n); copse (n); davenport; jungle (n);...

And: “O my people: let not my dissension cause you to commit evil, that there befall you the like of what befell the people of Nuh, or the people of Hud, or the people of Salih; and the people of Lut are not far from you.” 11:89

This verse emphasizes that the communities of Luṭ and Al-Aykah were near each other. Close enough that Shu‘ayb’s people could perceive, the destruction that had befallen Luṭ’s people.

The following verse provides several crucial pieces of information about Shu‘ayb and his people:

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۖ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ۚ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And to Median, their brother Shuayb. He said, “O my people, worship God; you have no god other than Him. A clear proof has come to you from your Lord. Give full measure and weight, and do not cheat people out of their things, and do not corrupt the land once it has been set right. This is better for you, if you are believers.” 7:85

From this verse, several important details about Shu‘ayb, his people, and their town emerge:

Town explicitly named: The verse clearly identifies the location as Median

Confirmation of a trading hub: Shu‘ayb emphasizes honesty in commerce: “*give full measure and weight, and do not cheat people*”, highlighting that the city’s economy depended on trade and fair dealings. This aligns closely with Petra, known historically as a major hub on caravan routes, where commerce and market integrity were central.

Pattern of guidance and corruption: The instruction “*do not corrupt the land once it has been set right*” reflects a recurring Qur’anic theme: a messenger is sent to a people, they reject guidance, and God punishes the disbelievers. The believers inherit the land, but over time the community again strays, prompting another messenger to guide them.

Further Geographical Clues About Shu‘ayb’s Community

This verse provides additional details about the location and nature of Shu‘ayb’s town:

وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُوتَهَا عَوجًا ۖ وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَرَكُمْ ۚ وَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And sit not on every road, threatening and turning away from the path of God him who believes in Him, and seeking deviation therein. And remember when you were few, and He multiplied you; and see how was the final outcome of the workers of corruption. 7:86

Key observations:

- The verse mentions “every road” (plural), indicating that Shu‘ayb’s people positioned themselves along multiple well-traveled routes.
- The mention of obstructing travelers and diverting them highlights their active control over movement along these routes, which fits the pattern of a bustling center.

The destruction of Shu‘ayb’s people by earthquake aligns with Petra’s location on the Dead Sea Rift, a geologically unstable region:

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

Thereupon, the quake struck them; and they became lifeless in their homes. 7:91

We have established from the Qur’an that Shu‘ayb was sent to Median. The Qur’an provides additional geographical clues to help locate Median through the journey of Musa:

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ۖ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا ۖ قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

And when he arrived at the water of Median, he found there a community of people watering, and he found besides them two women holding back; he said: “What is your case?” They said: “We do not water until the shepherds drive hence; and our father is a very old man.” So he watered for them; then he turned away to the shade and said: “My Lord: I am in need of what you hast sent down to me of good.” 28:23-24

Key observations:

- **Water source:** The community was centered around a well-used water point, where people regularly gathered to water themselves and their livestock.
- **Shade:** Musa seeks shelter after watering, indicating the presence of natural or constructed shade, a practical feature in a hot, arid environment.

Taken together with earlier markers about Shu‘ayb’s people, the Qur’an provides a set of **physical indicators** for locating Madyan:

- Close proximity to the people of Lut.(Great Temple)
- Situated along an established, well-traveled road.
- Access to a reliable and frequently used water source.
- Availability of shade.
- Positioned near multiple intersecting routes.

With these details, we now have concrete environmental clues that can be compared to visible archaeological structures on the ground, allowing for a meaningful identification of Median, Shu‘ayb’s location.

EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER: THE NYMPHAEUM AT PETRA



When all the Qur’anic geographical and environmental markers are considered; roads, water, shade, and strategic location, they converge in a remarkable way at **Petra**, particularly at the **Nymphaeum**, a semi-circular public fountain.

Located along the **Colonnaded Street** and near a junction connecting another major thoroughfare, the Nymphaeum provided a **reliable water source** for locals and travelers alike.

Its semi-circular design and built-in channels allowed multiple people to draw water simultaneously, reflecting the bustling commercial and social character of the city. Adjacent to the fountain stands a large tree, providing shade. While the current tree is estimated at roughly **450 years old**, the Qur’anic term *Al-Aykah* (low bushes and trees) suggests that shade-giving trees existed here, creating a comfortable gathering spot for the community.

The Nymphaeum’s location is also **strategically significant**. Situated near a junction, it sits at the crossroads of major routes through the city, making it an ideal point for trade, social interaction, and travel. This perfectly aligns with the Qur’anic depiction of Shu’ayb’s community as a hub along well-traveled roads where people intersected.

In addition to water and shade, the Nymphaeum served as a **social and commercial hub**, where locals and travelers could meet, rest, and exchange goods or information, echoing the Qur’anic emphasis on ethical trade and community life.

Its proximity to the **Great Temple**, the monumental site associated with the people of Lut, further strengthens the spatial connection between the narratives.

Strikingly, the Nymphaeum fulfils all the Qur'anic markers for Shu'ayb's settlement:

- Located on the **Colonnaded Street**
- Positioned **near a junction of multiple streets**.
- Provides a **dependable water source**.
- Offers **shade for public use**.
- Lies **in close proximity to the Great Temple**, tying it to the Luṭ's narrative.

Taken together, the **alignment of these physical features with the Qur'anic text** makes the Nymphaeum a tangible, enduring link between the ancient narrative and Petra's landscape, a convergence of geography, architecture, and history that brings the Qur'anic markers vividly to life.

The Qur'an's pattern

By this stage in my research, a striking pattern had already emerged: six major figures, spanning different eras, all pointed back to the same geographical region, Petra.

- Ibrahim
- Hud (to 'Āad)
- Salih (to Thamud)
- Luṭ
- Shu'ayb
- Muhammad

Though separated by generations and preserved through different narratives, every trail curved back into the same mountains and valleys.

As I continued searching for the true location of the Masjid al-Haram, this pattern reappeared with such consistency that it could no longer be dismissed as coincidence. I was forced to consider a possibility I had not previously entertained: If these six messengers were active in this same land, then perhaps others like: Musa, Nuḥ, Yusuf, Sulayman, Dawud, and 'Isa ibn Maryam, were as well.

Despite how compelling the evidence had become, despite how strongly it now pointed away from Mecca and toward Petra, I knew this was not enough. I did not merely need confirmation; I needed explanation. I needed to understand the larger framework that made all these independent lines of evidence converge on Petra, and why this convergence occurred in the first place.

Suddenly, verses began to align, revealing a clear and coherent geographical and historical picture:

IN THE LAND [فِي الْأَرْضِ]

The Qur'an does not recount the stories of earlier messengers as distant myths or events buried in some unreachable past. It presents them as having unfolded in a real, continuous landscape, a land its original audience could traverse, recognize, and physically verify.

Again and again, God issues the same command: **Travel in the land and see**

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ

Say, "Travel in the land, and observe the fate of those who came before. Most of them were idolaters. 30:42

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ

Say: "Travel in the land, then see how the final outcome of the deniers was." 6:11

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۚ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

Have they not roamed the land and had hearts with which to comprehend and ears with which to hear? No, it is not the sight, which is blind, but it is the hearts that are in the chests that are blind. 22:46

These are not invitations to contemplate ruins scattered across some remote, unreachable continent. They are direct challenges to walk the land, to see the remains of earlier peoples with one's own eyes, and to draw conclusions from what is physically still there.

SUCCESSORS IN THE LAND

Then come a series of verses built around a strikingly consistent phrase: **khala'if fi al-ard** — **successors in the land**.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And He it is that made you the successors of the land, and raised some of you above others in degree, that He might try you by what He has given you. Your Lord is swift in retribution; and He is forgiving and merciful. 6:165

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

Then We made you successors on the land after them, to see how you would behave. 10:14

أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۖ وَادُّكُّوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَسْطَةً ۖ فَادْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Do you marvel that there has come to you remembrance from your Lord through a man among you, that he should warn you? And remember when He made you successors after the people of Nuh, and increased you in creation abundantly; then remember the favours of God, that you might be successful.” 7:69

وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْ سَهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْجَثُونَ الْجِبَالَ بَيْوتًا ۖ فَادْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

And remember when He made you successors after ‘Āad, and settled you in the land; you make castles out of its plains and hew the mountains into houses. Then remember the favours of God and commit not evil in the earth, working corruption.” 7:74

The Qur’an does not speak of humanity inheriting the earth in some vague, global sense. It speaks of one land being passed from one destroyed nation to the next - a continuous physical territory, repeatedly inherited, abandoned, and re-inhabited.

Successors **in what land?**

Successors **after whom?**

The text itself answers: after Nuh, after ‘Āad, after Thamud, all peoples already placed in a specific, traceable landscape whose ruins the Qur’an repeatedly commands its audience to go and see.

The implication is powerful: the Qur’an envisions a single historical corridor of civilizations, layered on top of one another in the same region, with each new community walking among the remains of those who came before them.

A LAND RESTORED AFTER CORRUPTION

The Qur’an repeatedly describes the land as undergoing a cycle of devastation and restoration:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا ۚ إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ
And do not corrupt the land after it has been made right; and call on Him fearing and hoping. Surely the mercy of God is near the righteous. 7:56

This fits the pattern of every messenger already examined:

- A messenger is sent.
- People reject him
- Destruction comes.

- The land is set right again.

The Qur'an never portrays these nations as scattered across unrelated regions. It describes **one land** repeatedly corrupted, destroyed, restored, and repopulated - a continuous stage on which successive civilizations rise and fall.

A LAND FILLED WITH VISIBLE TRACES

The Qur'an does not describe past nations as lost to time or buried beyond reach. It presents them as peoples whose **physical remains were still standing in the landscape** - whose homes, cities, and works could still be seen by those who came after them.

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

These are their homes, in ruins, on account of their iniquities. Surely in this is a sign for people who know. 27:52

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِمْ مَوْعِدًا

And those cities: We destroyed them when they did wrong; and We made for their destruction an appointment. 18:59

These are identifiable places whose ruins remained in the land. This is why the Qur'an repeatedly challenges its audience:

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضَ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

Did they not roam the land and see how it ended for those before them? They were more powerful than them, and they cultivated the land and they built in it far more than these have built, and their messengers came to them with the proofs. God was not to wrong them, but it was they who wronged themselves. 30:9

This verse describes a landscape once heavily built - a land filled with monuments, and human labor, now reduced to ruins.

It matches precisely what the Qur'an elsewhere says about the earlier nations:

- Thamud carved their homes directly into rock
- 'Āad raised monumental structures
- Their dwellings and works remained visible

These were not distant, unreachable civilizations. The Qur'an assumes their remains were still embedded in the terrain its audience walked through.

The command “travel through the land and see” is therefore literal. The Qur’an is pointing to a land filled with abandoned houses, carved dwellings, collapsed cities, and the physical scars of vanished peoples

A CONTINUOUS LINEAGE

The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes that guidance passes through connected generations, forming an unbroken chain of chosen individuals and their progeny. These are not isolated figures scattered randomly across the earth.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

God chose Adam and Nuh and the house of Ibrahim and the house of ‘Imrān above all mankind: Descendants one of another; and God is hearing and knowing. 3:33-34

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۚ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يُدْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَ مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ كَمَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ
آخَرِينَ

*And your Lord is the Free from Need, the Possessor of Mercy. If He wills, He will remove you and appoint to succeed after you whom He wills, **as He produced you from the progeny of other people.** 6:133*

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرَىٰ ۖ كُلَّ مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رَسُولُهَا كَذَّبُوهُ ۚ فَاتَّبَعَنَا بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آخِذِينَ
فَبَعْدًا لِقَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ 23:44

*Then We sent Our messengers **in succession**. Every time a messenger came to his community, they called him a liar. So We made them follow one another, and made them history. So away with a people who do not believe.*

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۚ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ
وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

*And We bestowed upon him Ishaq and Yaqub. We guided all of them; and We guided Nuh before them **and of his descendants**, Dawud and Sulayman and Ayyub and Yusuf and Musa and Harun; and this is the way We reward the virtuous. 6:84*

The Qur’an’s focus on genealogical continuity implies geographical continuity: a single stage where successive messengers and their communities rise, fall, and are succeeded by their descendants.

We have now shown from the Qur’an itself that its earlier messengers were not scattered across distant, unrelated regions. Through the narratives of Ibrahim, Lut, Shu‘ayb, Hud, Salih,

and Muḥammad, the Qur'an places them within one continuous land, a land whose ruins were still visible and whose history was physically inherited from one people to the next. The Qur'an calls this *al-ard* - the land.

If this is true, then the same must apply to the other major figures it names.

So now we turn to Nuh, Musa, Yusuf, Sulayman, Dawud and Isa ibn Maryam and ask a simple question:

Where does the Qur'an actually place them?

Nuh

THE PEOPLE OF 'ĀAD AS SUCCESSORS OF NUH

The Qur'an provides a clear chronological and geographical anchor: the people of 'Āad succeeded the people of Nuh, inheriting their land.

أَوْعَيْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ ۖ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَسْطَةً ۖ فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Are you surprised that a reminder has come to you from your Lord, through a man from among you, to warn you? Remember how He made you successors after the people of Nuh, and increased you greatly in creation. And remember God's blessings, so that you may prosper." 7:69

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَتَبْجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ وَأَعْرَفْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۖ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ

Then they denied him; so We delivered him, and those with him in the ship, and made them successors, and We drowned those who denied Our proofs. Then see how was the final outcome of those who had been warned. 10:73

Since the Qur'an identifies the location of 'Āad, and we have already established that this was in Petra, it follows directly that the people of Nuh must have lived in the same region.

THE FLOOD WAS REGIONAL, NOT GLOBAL

The Qur'an presents divine punishment as precise, measured, and purposeful. God never destroys a people indiscriminately or without warning; punishment is always targeted at those who persist in rejection, not at distant peoples or all of humanity. This principle is central to the narrative of Nuh and the flood.

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُونَ

Never did We destroy a town, but it had warners. 26:208

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ

And never would your Lord destroy the cities until He has raised up in their principal city a messenger reciting to them Our proofs. And never would We destroy the cities save when the people thereof were wrongdoers. 28:59

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes a key principle: punishment comes only after warning, and only for those who reject it. In Nuh's case, the disbelievers alone are the object of divine retribution:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ وَأَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ
They denied him, so We saved him and those with him in the ship, and We drowned those who denied Our revelations; they were a blind people. 7:64

وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ
And We granted him victory against the people who denied Our revelations. They were a people of evil, so We drowned them all. 21:77

The Qur'an's language is precise: the punishment is limited to the disbelieving segment of Nuh's community. It is not a global flood annihilating all humanity, nor are distant lands affected.

This principle is reinforced by the Qur'an's repeated insistence that no soul bears the burden of another:

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا
Whoever is guided—is guided for his own good. And whoever goes astray—goes astray to his detriment. No burdened soul carries the burdens of another, nor do We ever punish until We have sent a messenger. 17:15

Nuh himself prays for the punishment of only those who have persistently rejected him:

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا
Nuh said, "My Lord, do not leave of the rejecters a single dweller on the land. 71:26

The Qur'an thus frames the flood as regional and targeted, aimed at the disbelievers of Nuh's community alone. This aligns with its broader principle: divine punishment is never arbitrary or universal; it is precisely measured, justified, and limited to those who persist in wrongdoing.

THE NATURE OF THE PUNISHMENT

The Qur'an provides a detailed, physically grounded description of Nuh's flood, highlighting both the forces involved and the terrain in which it occurred. Several verses describe the event's mechanics:

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ 54:11
وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ 54:12

Then opened We the gates of heaven with water pouring, and caused the earth to gush forth with springs; and the waters met for a predetermined purpose.

These verses indicate two distinct sources of flooding: sustained rainfall from above, and water bursting from springs.

The movement of Nuh's ship further highlights the terrain:

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ

And so it sailed with them amidst waves like mountains. And Nuh called to his son, who had kept away, "O my son! Embark with us, and do not be with the disbelievers. 11:42

When his son attempts to escape to higher ground, the Qur'an confirms the decisive role of elevation and confinement:

قَالَ سَآوِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ ۚ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ ۚ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ

He said, "I will take refuge on a mountain, it will protect me from the water." He said, "There is no protection from God's decree today, except for him on whom He has mercy." And the waves surged between them, and he was among the drowned.

From these verses, several clear markers emerge:

- The flood involved intense rainfall.
- The land itself released water through springs.
- The region contained mountains and elevated terrain.
- Confined channels producing massive, destructive waves.

The Qur'an's description - waves "like mountains" - is inconsistent with a flat, open plain. Such waves occur where water is forced through narrow valleys, gorges, or wadis, where changes in elevation amplify flow height and velocity. This is precisely the behavior of valley-based floods.

Petra exhibits all these features:

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- A network of narrow wadis surrounded by steep rock formations channels water into confined paths.
- Intense or prolonged rainfall can produce sudden, destructive floods.
- Archaeological evidence shows ancient flood-control systems, indicating that inhabitants anticipated severe water surges.
- Modern observations confirm the danger: heavy rains can turn Petra's wadis into torrents capable of sweeping away vehicles, collapsing paths, and endangering lives within minutes.
- Scientific studies identify a major flood event in Petra around the 3rd–4th century CE, demonstrating the region's capacity for catastrophic flooding.

These findings demonstrate that the region is capable of producing flood events powerful enough to match the Qur'anic description.

MODERN PARALLELS

Recent floods in mountainous regions confirm the mechanism described in the Qur'an.

In places such as Ahrtal, Germany, and other mountain-valley areas, extreme rainfall produced:

- Walls of water racing through narrow valleys
- Entire villages destroyed within minutes
- Waves rising higher than buildings

Destruction was amplified because the mountains contained the water, channelling and accelerating it rather than letting it spread out. The physics is identical to the Qur'anic description.

The Qur'an's phrase "waves like mountains" precisely captures the experience of modern valley megafloods.

TWO OF EVERY KIND

As the flood begins, God commands Nuḥ to take a pair of every kind:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ
وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ

When Our command had come to pass, and the oven boiled over, We said: "Load therein of every kind, two; and your household, save him against whom the word has gone forth, and him who believes." And there believed with him only a few. 11:40

This command is followed by its outcome:

فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ

And We made them successors. (10:73)

Those who were saved were meant to remain and succeed after the destruction had passed. Taking pairs of animals ensured the re-establishment of herding and agriculture, and the rebuilding of a functioning society.

This reflects a recurring pattern:

punishment → survival → succession → restoration of the land

THE BOAT: TECHNOLOGY, NOT MYTH

The Qur'an describes Nuh's boat in terms that reflect real, functional construction, not myth:

وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ ذَاتِ الْأَوَاجِ وَدُسْرٍ ۖ 54:13

And We bore him upon that of planks and Cord of the fibres of the palm-tree.

The phrasing “planks and cords” corresponds with ancient boat-building techniques in the Near East, where planks were sewn or lashed with natural fibers rather than nailed.

What is often overlooked is that communities like the Nabateans were not purely terrestrial. While Petra is famed for its land-based architecture and caravan routes, the Nabateans and their predecessors also used watercraft:

- Trade records indicate they engaged in maritime commerce, connecting inland Petra to Red Sea ports such as Aqaba and Gaza.
- Historical and ethnographic studies reveal that fiber-lashed planks, exactly as described in the Qur'an, were a standard method for constructing lightweight, resilient boats in the region, used for trade and transport.

BLESSED LAND & AL-JŪDĪ

Nuh's supplication at the conclusion of the flood underscores that he was seeking more than mere survival. He prays to be settled in a blessed land:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُّبَارَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

And say: “My Lord, cause me to embark upon a blessed place, for You are the best for those who embark. 23:29

The Qur'an repeatedly applies the description of a blessed land [برك] to the same vicinity. [3:96; 7:137; 17:1; 21:71; 21:81; 27:8; 28:30; 34:18; 41:10]

This is the same territory already associated with Ibrahim, Lut, Shu'ayb, 'Aad, Thamud, and later Muḥammad. Nuh's prayer does not introduce a new location; it confirms continuity within a blessed landscape.

The Qur'an further specifies that Nuh's ship came to rest 'alā al-Jūdī:

وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءُ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ
وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

And it was said: "O earth: swallow your water," and: "O sky: desist," and the water subsided and the matter was concluded. And it came to rest upon Al-Jūdī. And it was said: "Away with the wrongdoing people!" 11:44

It is important to note that the Qur'an does not explicitly identify Al-Jūdī as a specific mountain. The term الْجُودِيّ is derived from the root ج-ود (J-W-D), which conveys meanings such as:

good, excellent, abundant, bountiful, generous, high-quality, superior, efficient, effective

According to Lane's Arabic–English Lexicon, the root denotes quality and abundance, not a particular geographic feature.

Linguistically, then, 'alā al-Jūdī describes the state or character of the land: a place marked by goodness and blessing.

VISIBLE PROOF: FLOOD EVIDENCE IN PETRA

The Qur'an emphasizes that the punishment of Nuh's people was left as a visible sign for future generations:

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَّبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا
And the people of Nuh: when they denied the messengers, We drowned them, and made of them for the people a proof; and We have prepared for the wrongdoers a painful punishment. 25:37

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ۚ 54:15
And We left it as a proof; so is there any who will remember?

These verses make clear that the event, was meant to be observed and remembered. The Qur'an repeatedly presents the destruction of past communities as a tangible, physical phenomenon that is left on the land itself:

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّانَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ يُمْكِنْ لَكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ
مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ يَذُوبُهُمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ

Have they not seen how many a generation We destroyed before them? We established them in the land as We have not established you, and We sent the sky upon them in abundant rains and made the rivers flow beneath them; then We destroyed them for their transgressions, and produced after them another generation. 6:6

FLOOD EVIDENCE

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Petra and its surrounding valleys provide a striking match to the Qur'anic description of Nuh's flood, combining geography, hydrology, and archaeological markers:

Geography: Narrow wadis and steep, mountainous terrain create confined channels where water can surge violently. Such conditions produce waves “like mountains” (11:42), exactly as the Qur'an describes.

Water Sources: Seasonal rainfall and springs feed these wadis, consistent with the Qur'anic depiction of water bursting both from the sky and the earth (54:11–12). The combination of torrential rain and sudden spring-fed surges amplifies the destructive force, creating the type of flood described in the text.

Historical Mega-Floods: Geological studies document catastrophic floods in Petra. Notably, research by Tom Paradise identifies a 4th–5th century CE mega-flood, leaving extensive erosional features still visible today, including channels carved into rock and deep sediment deposits.

Modern Flooding: Contemporary rainfall events confirm the region's vulnerability. Heavy rains in Petra's wadis can produce flash floods that sweep away structures, erode paths, and carve new channels, mirroring the Qur'anic account. Reports from the Jordanian Civil Defense and Petra News (2018–2020) document such destructive flows in Wadi Musa, demonstrating that these natural processes remain active.

Visible Proof: Erosional scars, sediment layers, and water-carved channels are still observable today, providing a tangible, lasting witness to past floods, exactly the kind of evidence the Qur'an indicates was left as a sign for future generations (25:37; 54:15; 6:6). Taken together, Petra's landscape, its historical flood record, and modern observations form a cohesive, scientifically grounded match to the Qur'anic description.

Every clue, narrow valleys, mountain-surged waves, spring-fed torrents, and lasting erosional features, points to Petra as the site of Nuh's flood, linking the Qur'anic markers to a real, observable geography.



Flash floods in Petra

Yusuf

It is commonly assumed that the story of Yusuf took place in Egypt. Yet this assumption does not come from the Qur'an itself. Although ancient Egypt carefully recorded its rulers, officials, and major events, there is no clear historical trace of a figure who corresponds to Yusuf in the Nile-based Egyptian record.

By contrast, the Qur'an presents the story of Yusuf as one of its most detailed and internally rich narratives. It includes numerous concrete clues: wells, caravans, trade, storehouses, gates, and systems of administration, that point to a specific social and economic environment.

If we set aside inherited assumptions and allow the Qur'an to speak for itself, a distinct geographical setting begins to take shape. This leads us to a simple but important question:

What does the Qur'an itself reveal about the land in which Yusuf lived and governed?

THE WELL AND THE CARAVAN

We begin with the first concrete geographical marker in the story of Yusuf:

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيِّبَتِ الْجُبِّ يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ 12:10

Said a speaker among them: "Kill not Yusuf, but cast him into the depth of the well - some caravan will gather him up — if you must act."

The Qur'an is specific: Yusuf is thrown into a well. Wells belong to arid and semi-arid landscapes, where water is reached by digging down rather than flowing across the land. The verse assumes that travelers routinely stop at such wells to draw water, which already tells us something important about the setting.

The word al-sayyārah (السَّيَّارَةِ) means a moving caravan. It is the same word used in 5:96 in the context of travel during hajj. The statement "*some caravan will pick him up*" reflects a known travel corridor, where caravans passed often enough that leaving someone in a well meant he would almost certainly be found.

This gives us three concrete clues from the very start of the story:

- A well-based water system, not river irrigation.
- A regularly traveled route, not an isolated countryside.
- Organized caravan traffic, moving predictably through the area.

The story of Yusuf begins, not in a river valley, but in a desert-trade landscape, structured around wells and caravans.

WOLVES

Another environmental clue appears in Ya'qub's expressed fear for Yusuf's safety:

قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَنَّ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غٰفِلُونَ 12:13

He said: "It saddens me that you should take him, and I fear that the wolf will eat him if you will be absent of him."

Ya'qub's concern only makes sense if wolves were a real presence in the region. It reflects a known environmental danger. People do not warn about animals that do not exist where they live.

The Qur'anic mention of wolves therefore functions as an ecological marker. It tells us that Yusuf's early life took place in a landscape where wolves roamed and posed an actual threat to people.

FALSE BLOOD

A further clue about the local environment comes from the brothers' deception:

وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ
عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

And they came with his shirt stained in false blood. He said: "You have invented this tale yourselves. So sweet patience, and God is sought for help against what you describe."

The Qur'an emphasizes that the blood on Yusuf's shirt was false (دَمٍ كَذِبٍ), a deliberate fabrication rather than the result of an actual attack. In the ancient world, such imitation often relied on naturally occurring red pigments, especially iron-rich earths like red ochre, which could be found as soil, sand, or mineral deposits. These pigments were widely used for coloring, ritual marking, and symbolic purposes.

This detail implies that Yusuf's surroundings included readily accessible red-hued earth or mineral-rich soil, adding another environmental indicator consistent with a desert or semi-arid landscape with exposed red terrain.

TRADE INFRASTRUCTURE

The Qur'an provides further insight into the economic and commercial setting of Yusuf's early life:

وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَبُشْرَىٰ هَذَا غُلْمٌ وَأَسْرُوهُ يَضَعَنَّ عَلَيْهِ يَدَايَهُ فَاذْلُمُوهُ
يَمَّا يَعْْمَلُونَ

And there came a caravan; and they sent their water-drawer, and he let down his pail. He said: "O glad tidings: here is a lad!" And they hid him as merchandise; and God knows what they did.

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخِيسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ 12:20

And they sold him for a low price, a few dirhams and they regarded him as insignificant. The Qur'an states that Yusuf was taken by a moving caravan. After discovering him in the well, they concealed him as merchandise and sold him for a counted price of dirhams.

These verses indicate that Yusuf was discovered by a moving caravan, concealed as merchandise, and sold for a specific amount of currency (dirhams). From this we can draw several important conclusions:

- **Commercial caravan:** This was not a group of casual travelers; they operated as a trading entity.

- **Existing market infrastructure:** The sale presupposes the presence of a recognized trade environment, with buyers, currency, and market norms.

In other words, the transaction presupposes a recognized trade environment rather than an isolated location.

MISR AND ESTABLISHMENT IN THE LAND

The Qur'an next describes Yusuf's purchase and settlement:

12:21 وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لَأَمْرَأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَتِفَعْنَا أَوْ تَتِفَعَنَّا وَلَدًا وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

And he from *Misr*¹² who had bought him said to his wife: "Make his stay generous, perhaps he will benefit us or we may take him as a son." And it was thus that We established Yusuf in the land and to teach him the interpretation of the narrations. And God has full control over his situation, but most of the people do not know.

The verse states that Yusuf was purchased by "the one from Misr" (مِصْر). Classical translations often render *Misr* as Egypt. However, classical Arabic usage, as preserved in Lane's Lexicon, shows that *misr* does not inherently denote a country. Rather, it signifies a major urban or administrative center:

- A great town: synonymous with *balad 'aẓīm*, indicating a major settlement rather than a small village or nomadic encampment.
- A *kūrah* or provincial capital: often the administrative hub of a surrounding region, where legal ordinances (*ḥudūd*) were enforced.
- A center for economic administration: where *fay'* (state revenues or tribute) and *ṣadaqāt* were collected and distributed, reflecting organized governance and resource control.

In short, *misr* is a functional designation, not a proper name for a country.

The second key statement in the verse is equally important:

"Thus We established Yusuf in the land"

This phrasing "*makkannā li-Yusuf fī al-arḍ*" is deliberate and carries a consistent thematic meaning. Across the Qur'an, to be "established in the land" always signals settlement within

¹² Hence, A great town; syn. بَلَدٌ عَظِيمٌ; (Bd, ii. 58;). *كُوزَة* [here meaning city, or provincial city]: (M, K:) or *كُوزَة* (Lth, IF, Msb) in which the [ordinances of God which are termed] خُذُود are executed, and (Lth, TA) in which the [spoil or tribute termed] فَيْء and the [alms termed] صَدَقَات are divided (Lth, IF, Msb) without consulting the Khaleefeh; such is its signification in the language of the Arabs: (Lth, TA:) or that [town] whereof the greatest of its mosques will not hold, or contain, its inhabitants: (KT:)

one specific territory.[6:6; 7:10; 18:84; 22:41; 28:6; 28:57] From our previous analysis, for other messengers, “the land” corresponds to Petra.

PRESSING INSTALLATIONS

The Qur’an here records Yusuf’s interpretation of the king’s dream, which contains concrete clues about the local economy and infrastructure.

ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْصِرُونَ 12:49

Then after that will come a year wherein men will be given abundant rain and wherein they will press.”

The verb yā’surūn refers to the pressing of grapes, olives, or similar crops. This indicates that Yusuf’s location had the necessary installations or facilities for pressing, such as stone presses, basins, or specialized structures for producing juice or oil.

This provides a concrete geographic and archaeological marker: a settled area equipped with pressing infrastructure.

TREASURIES, TRADE, AND ADMINISTRATION

The Qur’an next details Yusuf’s administrative role, highlighting his authority over resources, trade, and regional governance.

قَالَ أَجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلِيمٌ 12:55

He said: “Appoint me over the treasuries of the land, for I am a knowledgeable custodian.”

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُصِيبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 12:56

And thus We established Yusuf in the land, to settle therein wheresoever he willed. We bestow with Our mercy whom We will, and We cause not to be lost the reward of the doers of good.

وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَازِهِمْ قَالَ أَتُنُونِي بِأَخٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أَوْفَى الْكَيْلِ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ 12:59

So, when he furnished them with their provisions, he said: “Bring me a brother of yours who is from your father. Do you not see that I give full measure and that I am the best of hosts?”

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُون 12:60

But if you bring him not to me, then no measure will there be for you with me, nor will you approach me.”

As previously noted, Miṣr does not necessarily denote modern Egypt; it signifies a major regional hub or district with administrative and economic authority. These verses provide a clear picture of what such a center entails:

- **Treasuries:** Yusuf is appointed over the treasuries of the land, implying centralized storage, oversight, and management of resources.
- **Authority over settlement and distribution:** He is established in the land to reside wherever he willed, reflecting administrative control across multiple sites and the ability to direct resources regionally.
- **Organized trade and logistics:** Yusuf's measured distribution of provisions demonstrates systematic commercial and logistical operations, consistent with a bustling administrative hub.

Together, these elements: treasuries, storage, measured allocation, and regional authority, perfectly match the definition of Miṣr as a major administrative and trade center, confirming the meaning derived from classical lexicography.

MULTIPLE ENTRANCES

Another detail about Yusuf's environment comes from Ya'qub's instructions to his sons regarding entry into the city.

وَقَالَ يَبْنَى لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَأَدْخُلُوا مِنْ أَنْبُوبٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَلْحَكُمُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ 12:67

And he said: "O my sons: enter not by one gate, but enter by different gates. But I cannot avail you anything against God. Judgment is but for God; in Him have I placed my trust. And in Him let trust those who would place their trust aright."

By advising his sons to enter through separate gates, Ya'qub highlights a feature of the settlement: it must have multiple entrances or access points. This implies an environment, capable of accommodating traffic through multiple gates.

SAFETY

The Qur'an further emphasizes the secure and protected nature of Yusuf's settlement.

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ ءَاوَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ءَامِينَ 12:99
And when they entered upon Yusuf, he took his parents to himself, and said: "Enter Misr if God wills, in safety."

When Yusuf tells his parents to “enter Misr in safety”, the Qur’an signals that this is a place of protection and refuge. The phrasing here mirrors the same language used for the places where both Ibrahim and Muhammad were settled. This reinforces the idea that Yusuf’s setting is within the same protective and secure area, linking all narratives to a consistent geographic location.

BEDOUIN

The Qur’an also indicates that Yusuf’s family came from a Bedouin environment nearby, showing that nomadic life persisted around the settled center:

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَأْتِبْ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ تَرَجَّ الشَّيْطَانُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

And he raised his parents upon the throne. And they fell down in submission, and he said: “O my father: this is the fulfilment of my dream before. My Lord has made it true. And He did good to me when He took me out of the prison, and brought you from the bedouin life after the shaytan had provoked to evil between me and my brothers. My Lord is subtle in what He wills; He is the Knowing, the Wise.”

This verse emphasizes that Yusuf’s family originated from Bedouin life, likely in the surrounding area. It suggests a mixed landscape, where a settled administrative hub existed alongside nearby nomadic communities.

COMPILING THE MARKERS: YUSUF’S SETTING

When the Qur’anic markers are compiled, a clear picture of Yusuf’s environment emerges:

- Arid/semi-arid landscape with wells and caravan routes
- Presence of wolves
- Red soil or mineral-rich earth
- Established trade and market infrastructure
- Regional administrative and treasury center
- Facilities for pressing crops
- Settlements with multiple gates or entrances
- Protected, sheltered environment
- Evidence of Bedouin life in the vicinity

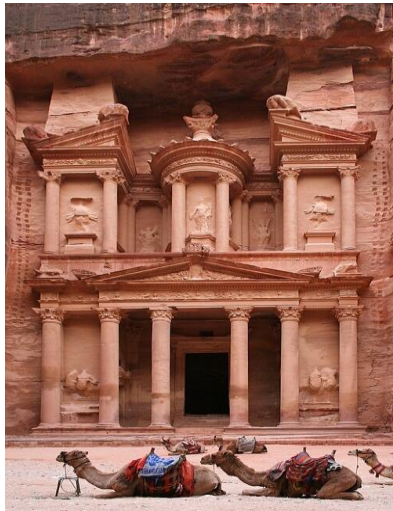
Examining these markers against historical and archaeological evidence, Petra stands out as a uniquely fitting candidate for the setting of Yusuf:

- **Arid landscape and caravan routes:** Petra functioned as an oasis along major trade routes connecting Arabia, the Levant, and the Gulf. Strategically placed wells and cisterns served travelers along these paths.

- **Presence of wolves:** The surrounding mountainous desert historically supported wild dogs, including wolves, as documented in ecological studies of the region.
- **Red soil and mineral-rich earth:** Petra's sandstone cliffs and near Wadi's contain iron-rich layers that naturally produce red ochre, consistent with the Qur'anic reference to red pigment or soil.
- **Established trade:** As the Nabatean trade hub, Petra controlled the movement of spices, incense, and textiles. Excavated marketplaces reveal organized commercial activity, matching the depiction of a caravan-oriented economy.
- **Agricultural pressing facilities:** Rock-cut terraces, wine and olive presses, and cisterns demonstrate local processing of agricultural produce, in line with the reference to pressing crops.
- **Multiple gates and entrances:** Petra's design and surrounding complexes include several access points through the canyon and plateau, allowing controlled entry for residents and traders.
- **Protected, sheltered environment:** The city is naturally secured by cliffs, gorges, and hidden valleys, offering safety from raiders and harsh desert conditions, consistent with the description of Yusuf's settlement.
- **Bedouin life:** Archaeological and historical evidence indicates nearby nomadic encampments, reflecting the Bedouin presence mentioned in the Qur'an.

Taken together, these features do not merely suggest a generic location in the southern Levant. Rather, they converge on Petra with striking specificity: its topography, trade infrastructure, agricultural terraces, multiple gates, and natural protection correspond closely to the Qur'anic markers.

As a final note, the Qur'an presents Yusuf as being appointed over **حَرَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ** — “**the treasures of the land**.” Interestingly, the first monumental building encountered when entering Petra's Siq is locally known as **al-Khazna (“the Treasury”)**. While its precise function remains debated, this coincidence between the Qur'anic terminology and the local name highlights a remarkable alignment between the narrative and the physical site.



The Treasury

Musa

It is widely assumed that the narrative of Musa and Fir‘awn unfolds entirely within Egypt. This view is deeply embedded across religious and historical traditions. However, the Qur‘an consistently presents itself as reporting events as they truly occurred, rather than merely repeating inherited assumptions.

When the Qur‘anic account is examined on its own terms, through its language, geography, ecology, and narrative structure, it invites a careful reassessment of these long-held conclusions.

Earlier analysis of the people of Madyan has already shown that Musa, at a significant stage of his life, was present in Petra, specifically at the Nymphaeum (28:22; 28:23; 20:40). Building on this foundation, it becomes necessary to examine the remaining Qur‘anic passages to determine where the broader narrative truly unfolds.

Musa is the most frequently mentioned prophet in the Qur‘an, and his story appears across numerous surahs. These passages consistently include environmental and geographic details.

When compiled, they form a coherent setting, allowing us to assess whether the Qur‘anic description points genuinely to Egypt, or to a different landscape altogether.

THE MEANING OF FIR‘AWN

The Qur‘an frequently refers to **فِرْعَوْن** (commonly translated as “Pharaoh”). While modern translations often treat it as a proper name for the rulers of Egypt, a closer look at **Lane’s Lexicon** reveals a broader and more precise understanding:

فِرْعَوْنُ

[Pharaoh;] the surname of El-Weleed Ibn-Mus'ab, king of Egypt: (فِرْعَوْنُ) or the surname of every king of Egypt: (فِرْعَوْنُ) or it signifies, (فِرْعَوْنُ) or signifies also, (فِرْعَوْنُ) [app. used as a proper name,] anyone inordinately proud or corrupt or unbelieving; (فِرْعَوْنُ) insolent and audacious in acts of rebellion or disobedience, or extravagant therein and in wrongdoing: as also فِرْعَوْنُ and فِرْعَوْنُ; (فِرْعَوْنُ) the last mentioned by IKh, from Fr, and anomalous: (فِرْعَوْنُ) pl. فِرْعَوْنِيَّة. (Msb, K, TA.) It is said in a trad., أَخَذْنَا فِرْعَوْنَ هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةَ [app. meaning One of us is the Pharaoh of this people, or nation]. (فِرْعَوْنُ in one of my copies of the S, أَخَذْنَا and فِرْعَوْنَ.)

In other words, Fir'awn in the Qur'an is not automatically a specific individual or dynastic title, but a designation for a ruler marked by arrogance, oppression, and defiance, precisely the traits attributed to him in the narrative.

This is evident in the following narratives:

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ قَالَ سَنَقْتُلُنَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ 7:127

And the eminent ones among the people of Firawn said: "Will you leave Musa and his people to work corruption in the land, and leave you and your gods?" He said: "We will kill their sons and shaming their women; for indeed we have them in subjugation."

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضِعُّنَّ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ يَذِخُّ أْبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ 28:4

Fir'awn became mighty in the land, and he turned its people into factions; he oppressed a group of them by killing their sons and shaming their women. He was of those who corrupted.

Thus, when the Qur'an recounts the story of Fir'awn, it aligns perfectly with the lexicographic sense: a symbol of arrogant, unjust authority, rather than merely a historical pharaoh of Egypt.

THE PHARAOH'S COLUMN

Having clarified the meaning of Fir'awn, we now turn to the construction attributed to him in the Qur'an. Multiple verses describe a structure intended to assert dominance and symbolically "reach toward the heavens":

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَا هَامَانُ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ 28:38

And Fir'awn said: "O eminent ones: , I have not known of any god for you other than me. So kindle for me, O Hāmān, upon the clay, and make you for me a tower, that I might look upon the god of Musa; and I think him of the liars."

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانُ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ
40:36

And Firawn said: "O Hāmān: build for me a tower, that I might reach the causes,

أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعَ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ وَصُدَّ
عَنِ السَّبِيلِ ۚ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي تَبَابٍ ۚ 40:37

The causes of the heavens, that I might look upon the God of Musa; but I think him a liar."
And thus was made fair to Fir'awn the evil of his deed, and he was turned away from the path; and the plan of Fir',awn was only in ruin.

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ
الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۖ يَمَّا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمَهُ وَمَا كَانُوا
يَعْرِشُونَ 7:137

And We let the people who were being oppressed inherit the east and the west of the land that We had blessed in. And the good word of your Lord was completed towards the Children of Israel for their patience; and We destroyed what Firawn and his people were doing, and what they built.

The Qur'an emphasizes a **monumental, towering construction**; something conspicuous, audacious, and intended to display human arrogance.

Remarkably, Petra contains a structure that corresponds closely to this description: the **Column of Pharaoh**.

- **Location and visibility:** Positioned along Petra's main approach and visible from surrounding terraces, the Column of Pharaoh is a freestanding, stacked-stone monument. Its original height, according to archaeological surveys, would have been greater than the surviving remains, creating a dramatic vertical presence in the city.
- **Cultural memory:** Locally, the monument is called the "*Pharaoh's Column*," preserving a folk memory linking it to Musa and Fir'awn.
- **Symbolic placement:** Its isolated and prominent location would have made it a highly visible statement of authority and power, perfectly matching the Qur'an's depiction of Fir'awn's ambitious and prideful building.

This alignment between the Qur'anic account and Petra's monument provides a compelling convergence of textual description, geographic context, and archaeological evidence.



Pharaoh's Column in Petra

SIGNS SHOWN TO FIR'AWN

The Qur'an recounts that Fir'awn was shown multiple signs. These accounts provide crucial geographic and environmental details that help pinpoint the setting of these events.

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا
مُجْرِمِينَ 7:133

So We sent them the flood, and the locust, and the lice, and the frogs, and the blood; all detailed signs; but they turned arrogant, they were a criminal people.

Most of these phenomena; Locusts, frogs, and floods, are not unique to any specific location. The mention of blood, however, stands out as a tangible geographic and environmental clue.

Natural events can cause water to turn red, as recently observed at Hormuz Island, Iran, where iron-rich sands color coastal waters.

Similarly, Petra's sandstone cliffs and surrounding soils are rich in iron oxide, giving the city its distinctive rose-red hue. Rainfall could plausibly wash this pigment into local watercourses, producing a dramatic, blood-like effect, a natural phenomenon that resonates strikingly with the Qur'anic account.

This detail adds a distinctive environmental marker, linking the Qur'anic narrative of Fir'awn's signs to Petra's unique geological and visual characteristics.



Hormuz Island, Iran

SNAKE

The Qur'an repeatedly describes Musa's staff transforming into a snake.

فَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ 107:7

So he cast his staff and then was it a clear snake.

فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى 20:20

And he cast it down, and then was it a snake moving.

Remarkably, Petra preserves a tangible connection to snakes in its art and architecture.

Several monuments and tombs in the region feature snake motifs. Notable examples include the so-called "Snake Monument" and the "Snake Tomb."



Snake Monument



Snake Tomb

The continuity between the Qur'anic imagery and Petra's snake iconography provides another geographic and cultural marker, reinforcing the link between the narrative of Musa and the Petra region.

THE EXIT OF FIR'AWN: GEOGRAPHIC MARKERS

The Qur'an describes the outcome of Fir'awn's destruction and the inheritance granted to the Children of Israel:

فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ
وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ
كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

*And We turned them out of gardens and springs,
And treasures and a noble maqam.
Thus! And We caused the children of Israel to inherit them. 26:57-59*

Several geographic and material markers emerge from this passage:

- **Gardens and springs**
- **Treasures**
- **Noble station (maqam karīm)**

These features correspond closely with Petra:

- **Gardens and springs:** Archaeological evidence documents terraced gardens, cisterns, and water channels in Petra, fed by natural springs and carefully engineered hydraulic systems.

- **Treasures:** The surrounding mountains and valleys contain rich mineral deposits and iron-rich stone, historically exploited for trade, construction, and commerce.
- **Economic hub:** Petra functioned as a major center of wealth and trade, controlling caravan routes connecting Arabia, the Levant, and the Gulf. Excavated marketplaces, storage facilities, and infrastructure confirm the city's prosperity and strategic economic importance, directly reflecting the Qur'anic description of treasures.

Notably, the Qur'an uses the term *maqam* here, echoing its use in 2:125–127 for the "Maqam of Ibrahim" at Bakka. The designation *maqam karim* signals that this site is not merely any location, but a place linked to Ibrahim. This reinforces the Qur'an's consistent geographic focus on a singular, prominent area - Petra.

INHERITANCE OF THE LAND BY THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

After the downfall of Fir'awn, the Qur'an emphasizes that the oppressed, the Children of Israel, were granted the land.

Key verses illustrate this:

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَآئِرٍ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يُفْرِعُونَ مَثْبُورًا 17:102
فَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْتَفِرَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَعْرَفْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ جَمِيعًا 17:103
وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَكُنُوا الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيفًا 17:104

He said: "You know that no one has sent these down except for the Lord of the heavens and the earth as visible proofs. And I think that you Firawn are destroyed. And he wished to turn them out of the land; and We drowned him and those with him all together. And We said, after him, to the children of Israel: "Dwell in the land; and when there comes the promise of the Hereafter, We will bring you in a mixed multitude.

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ 28:5

And We desired to give grace to those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors,

وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ 28:6

And to establish them in the land, and to show Fir'awn and Hāmān and their forces through them what they feared.

وَأَوْزَنَّا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا ۖ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ
الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا
يَعْرِشُونَ 7:137

And We let the people who were being oppressed inherit the east and the west of the land that We had blessed in. And the good word of your Lord was completed towards the Children of Israel for their patience; and We destroyed what Firawn and his people were doing, and what they built.

Verse 7:137 is particularly significant. It explicitly describes the inherited land as blessed, echoing the same wording used in 3:96 in connection with Ibrahim's settlement. This repetition emphasizes that the Qur'an consistently points to the same sacred and prosperous region, linking the inheritance of the Children of Israel directly to the geographic area associated with Ibrahim's settlement.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

Having established that Fir'awn was removed and the Children of Israel inherited the land, the next question arises: What kind of land did the Qur'an describe?

Sacred land

The Qur'an explicitly clarifies the nature of this inheritance by describing it as sacred:

يَقُومُوا أَدْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ 5:21

O my people: enter the sacred land which God has prescribed for you; and turn not back, for you will turn back as losers."

This verse leaves no ambiguity. The land to which Musa leads his people is **al-ard al-muqaddasah**—the *sacred land*. This designation aligns directly with earlier references to the same blessed and protected region associated with Ibrahim.

Entering the City: A Linguistic Marker

The Qur'an describes the entry of the Children of Israel into the sacred land with a precise instruction:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا أَدْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَأَدْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ
تَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَتَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ 2:58

And when We said: “Enter this city, and eat freely of it wheresoever you will. And enter the gate in submission, and say: ‘**Absolution [hita]**!’¹³ We will forgive you your offences, and will increase the doers of good.”

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ يَمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ 2:59

But the wicked altered what was said to them to a different saying, thus We sent down upon the wicked an affliction from the heavens for what wickedness they were in.

What makes this passage especially striking is the linguistic detail preserved by early lexicographers. According to Lane’s Lexicon, instead of uttering ḥiṭṭah, the children of Israel pronounced a Nabataean expression, such as *hiṭṭi sumāthā* or *ḥiṭṭah shumqāyā*, meaning “red wheat.”

This linguistic detail is highly significant, because it situates the city described in the Qur’an firmly within the Nabataean cultural and linguistic sphere.

Ayn Musa - Spring of Musa

The Qur’an introduces a concrete geographic marker in the account of Musa bringing forth water:

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ 2:60

And when Musa sought water for his people; so We said: “Strike with your staff the rock,” then there gushed therefrom twelve springs; each people knew its drinking-place: “Eat and drink of the provision of God, and commit not evil in the land as corrupters.

A rock yielding multiple springs, as described in the Qur’an, points to a landscape where groundwater emerges from fractured rock, not flat floodplain rivers.

This aligns closely with Petra’s hydrogeology. The city lies in the Jordan Rift Valley along the Dead Sea Transform, a tectonically active region where fractured sandstone and limestone formations create conditions for springs to emerge from rock faces. Such fault-controlled aquifers naturally produce multiple discharge points, matching the Qur’anic description of distinct drinking places.

¹³ but they changed this saying, (Fr, Sgh, K,) using for it a Nabathean expression; (Fr, TA;) saying هِطَّى سُمَهَاتَا, i. e. “red wheat, “ (Sgh, K,) accord. to Es-Suddee and Mujāhid; or, accord. to IAar, حِنْطَةُ سُمَقَايَا,

Among Petra's springs is 'Ayn Musa (Spring of Moses, Arabic: عَيْنُ مُوسَى), located just north of Wadi Musa near the main archaeological zone. The spring emerges from fractured sandstone, feeding cisterns, reservoirs, and local channels, and continues to supply water to the area today.

Archaeological surveys in Petra document rock-cut channels, cisterns, dams, and gravity-fed distribution systems, which directed spring water to different sectors of the settlement. Matching closely the Qur'anic detail that "each people knew its drinking place."



Ayn Musa

For water to burst forth from rock, two conditions must exist:

1. a saturated subsurface aquifer
2. fractures or faults that allow the water to emerge.

This sharply narrows the range of plausible landscapes. A rift-valley, rock-cut environment with fractured aquifers and natural springs, such as Petra, fits the description far more precisely than a low-lying floodplain dependent on surface rivers.

The Qur'anic wording thus reflects a specific hydrological reality, aligning with terrain defined by rock, faulting, springs, and engineered channels and cisterns; features extensively documented at Petra.

Manna and quails

Another clear indicator of the location comes from the provisions given to the Children of Israel:

وَوَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلَوى كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ 2:57

And We caused the cloud to overshadow you; and We sent down upon you manna and quails: "Eat of the good things that We have provided you." And they wronged Us not, but they wronged their souls.

Botanical and historical sources suggest that *manna* likely refers to a natural sweet substance produced in desert environments, either from tree sap or as honeydew excreted by scale insects on certain trees.

Key candidate species include Tamarix (tamarisk) and Fraxinus (manna ash). These trees produce a seasonal, rain-dependent exudate that has historically been collected for consumption.

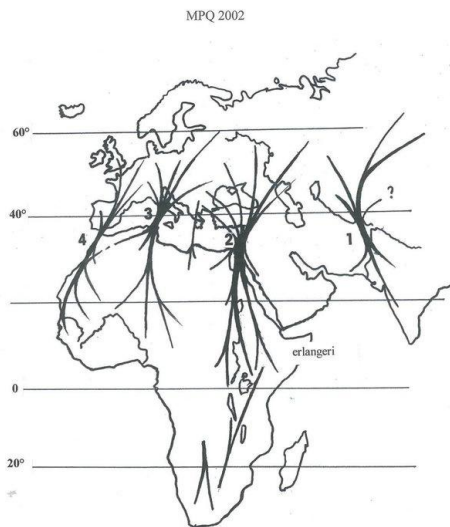
Ethnobotanical studies confirm that such manna is regionally specific and appears following rainfall events, consistent with the Qur'anic detail that the cloud preceded its descent. Both Tamarix and Fraxinus species are native to the southern Levant, including southern Jordan and the Petra region. Local Bedouin traditions historically collected sweet exudates from these trees after rains, providing a plausible environmental and cultural context for the Qur'anic description.

The sequence, cloud followed by manna, matches Petra's climatic pattern: **rainfall in the mountainous valley triggers natural exudates from these trees**, providing a locally available, sustainable food source.

This ecological detail, when combined with the other geographic markers in the Qur'an, strengthens the identification of the sacred land with the **Petra region**, showing that the narrative is deeply rooted in the specific environmental realities of the area.

The bird referred to as السَّلَوَى in the Qur'an corresponds to the common quail (Coturnix coturnix), a well-documented migratory species in the western Palearctic region.

The common quail breeds across Europe and western Asia and migrates south toward Africa in autumn, returning north in spring. The Levantine corridor, including Jordan, Israel, and surrounding regions is a major flyway used by hundreds of millions of birds annually during migration. The Jordan Valley and adjacent uplands, situationally not far from Petra, function as an important passage route for migratory birds, including quail.



Main migration paths of the Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* to/from the West Palearctic.

Rain and Quail Descent

Quails tend to descend into valleys and forage after rain, rather than flying during heavy downpours.

Migratory quails often travel at night and will delay movement during storms, choosing to land in sheltered terrain when weather conditions improve. This matches the Qur'anic sequence: clouds (rain) precede quails. The quail's arrival after cloud cover is not random but part of natural behaviour, as the birds seek available food and roosting areas when winds and rain subside.

DESCEND

Yet, despite the manna and quails provided, the Children of Israel demanded crops requiring fertile, well-irrigated soil: cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَحِيدٍ قَادَعُ لَنَا رَبُّكَ يُخْرِجُ لَنَا مِمَّا تُثْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَهَيِّطُوا مِصْرًا

فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضَرَبْتَ عَلَيْهِمُ الدِّلَّةَ وَالْمَسْكَنَةَ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبِ مَنْ أَلَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

*And when you said: "O Musa: we will not endure one food, so call to your Lord for us that He bring forth for us of what the earth grows of its green herbs, and its cucumbers, and its garlic, and its lentils, and its onions." He said: "Would you exchange for what is worse what is better? **Descend [Msr - مصر]**, and you will have what you have asked." And humiliation and wretchedness were pitched upon them; and they incurred wrath from God, for it is that they denied the proofs of God! And they killed the prophets without cause, for it is that they opposed and they exceeded all bounds!*

Their demands: crops like cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions, required very fertile, irrigated land unavailable in their current location. The Qur'an explicitly links their removal to moral accountability: Wrongdoing and ingratitude result in dispossession.

Taken together, the Qur'anic markers; monumental constructions, springs, manna and quail, snake motifs - converge on a single landscape. Petra alone exhibits this combination of geological, hydrological and ecological features.

The textual and material evidence align with remarkable precision, making Petra the most plausible setting for the narrative of Musa, Fir'awn and the Children of Israel.

Dawud & Sulayman

It is commonly assumed that the kingdoms and palaces of Dawud and Sulayman were centered in Jerusalem or its immediate surroundings. This assumption, however, rests largely on later historical tradition. When the Qur'an is read on its own terms, it presents a more consistent and internally grounded picture that invites reconsideration.

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ 38:26

O Dawud: We have appointed you a successor of the land; so judge between people with justice; and follow not vain desire lest it cause you to stray from the path of God." Those who stray from the path of God will have a severe punishment because they forgot the Day of Reckoning.

Across multiple passages, God states, "We made them successors" and "We caused them to inherit the land" (أَوْرَثْنَا), language repeatedly used for communities that assume authority over a land previously settled and judged (7:100; 7:128; 7:137; 21:105; 28:5; 44:28).

If this pattern is applied consistently, the accounts of Dawud and Sulayman cannot be treated as exceptions. Their authority, judgment, and dominion would belong to the same

continuous geographic and sacred landscape. It therefore becomes necessary to examine the remaining passages concerning Dawud and Sulayman to determine whether they confirm this continuity.

KINGDOM:

The first passage to be examined is Sulayman's own supplication:

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ 38:35

He said, "My Lord, forgive me, and grant me a kingdom never to be attained by anyone after me. You are the Giver."

Sulayman's request is explicit. He asks for *Mulk*¹⁴ in the Qur'anic sense of unrivaled dominion: sovereign authority and effective control over people and material resources.

Significantly, he asks that this dominion be unparalleled - one that no later ruler would equal. The Qur'an records this prayer without censure, indicating that such a kingdom was granted.

When this description is set alongside the archaeological record, Petra at its height corresponds with striking precision. Petra was not merely prosperous; it functioned as a focal point of accumulated wealth within the ancient Near East. Archaeological excavations and material studies have uncovered extensive evidence of long-distance trade, including imported fine ceramics from the Mediterranean, Roman glassware, incense burners, and coinage from multiple political spheres. These finds reflect Petra's role as a key hub in trade networks linking southern Arabia, the Levant, Egypt, and the wider Mediterranean world, with connections extending into the Indian Ocean trade system.

This concentration of wealth in a desert city is exceptional. Petra's prosperity was built upon its control of caravan routes and its ability to regulate, tax, store, and redistribute high-value goods. Such an economic profile aligns closely with the Qur'anic concept of *mulk*: dominion expressed through command, coordination, and centralized authority.

Architecturally, Petra's built environment exceeds ordinary monumental construction. Entire façades, sanctuaries, tombs, and ceremonial complexes were carved directly from living rock. Such projects required centralized planning, sustained labor forces, technical expertise, and authority capable of mobilizing and maintaining them over extended periods. This level of coordination strongly implies a form of dominion that extended beyond mere commercial success.

Finally, Petra's ascendancy was singular and finite. When its trade routes declined and regional power shifted, no subsequent kingdom inherited its position or replicated its scale.

¹⁴ مُلْكٌ *Dominion; sovereignty; kingship; rule; mastership; ownership; possession; right of possession; authority; sway.*
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In this sense, Petra uniquely fits the Qur’anic description of a dominion “not to be attained by anyone after”, a kingdom unparalleled in its environment, function, and historical trajectory. It is therefore no wonder that Petra is today recognized as one of the seven wonders of the World, a modern acknowledgment of an achievement that was already extraordinary by ancient standards.

WHAT WAS BUILT

The Qur’an presents Sulayman’s kingdom in concrete, tangible terms, emphasizing construction, water management, and monumental architecture.

وَالشَّيَاطِينَ كُلَّ بَنَّاءٍ وَعَوَّاصٍ 38:37

And the shaytans, every builder and diver,

وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَن يَغْوُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْمَلُونَ عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ 21:82

And among the shaytans were those diving for him, and doing work besides that; and We were over them a guardian.

The reference to diving implies the presence of substantial water bodies - engineered pools, reservoirs, or submerged works. It signals sophisticated hydraulic infrastructure under Sulayman’s command.

The Qur’an then specifies the nature of the constructions themselves:

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَّحْرِبٍ وَتَمَثِيلٍ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ رَاسِيَتٍ أَعْمَلُوا ءَالَ دَاوُدَ 34:13 شُكْرًا

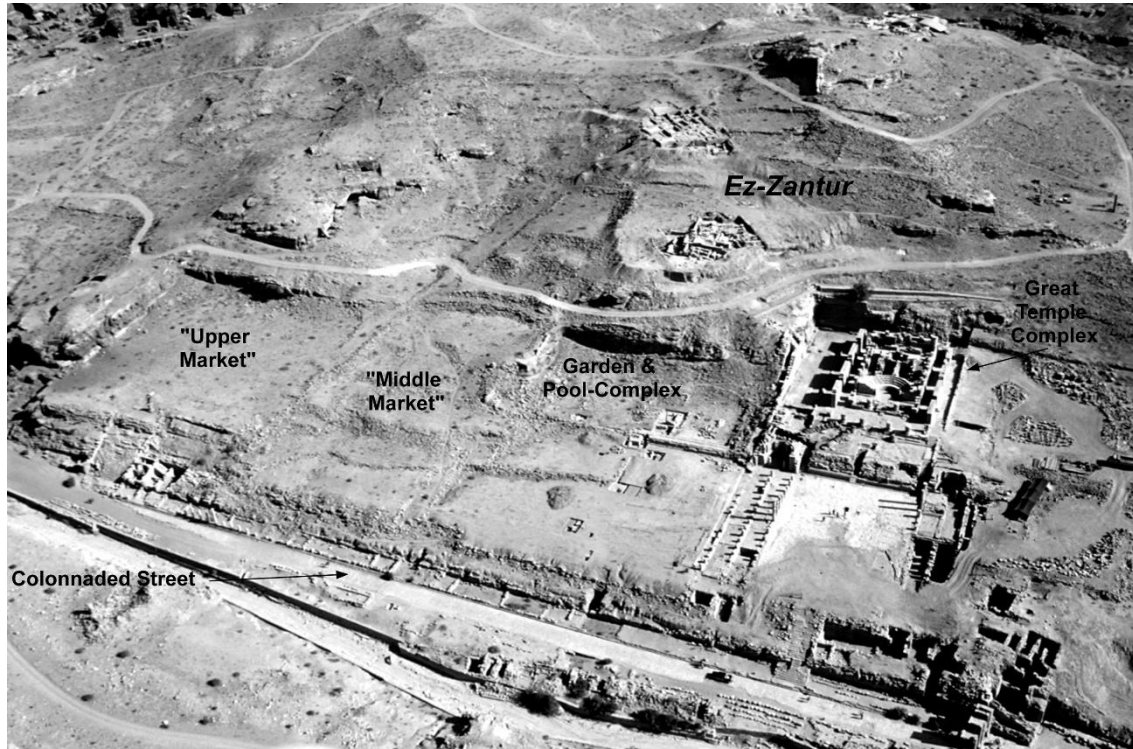
They made for him what he willed of sanctuaries, and statues, and basins like pools, and vessels firmly fixed. “Work, house of Dawud, in gratitude!” And few are the grateful among My servants.

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُمَرَّدٌ مِّن قَوَارِيرَ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ 27:44

It was said to her: “Enter the pavilion.” But when she saw it, she thought it a body of water and uncovered her legs. He said: “It is a pavilion, made smooth with glass.” She said, “My Lord: I have wronged my soul, and I submit with Sulayman to God, the Lord of All Creation.”

These verses collectively describe **monumental and permanent architecture**: sanctuaries, statues, fixed basins, large vessels, and engineered waterworks. The account culminates in the description of a *ṣarḥ*¹⁵, a monumental pavilion.

PETRA PROVIDES A PRECISE PHYSICAL PARALLEL



Visual reconstruction of the Petra Garden and Pool Complex (Chrys Kanellopoulos)

¹⁵ *قصر* [i. e. *palace*, or *pavilion*, &c.]: (Zj, S, A, K:) and (as some say, TA) *any lofty building*: (S, A, K, TA:) or *a single house or chamber, built apart, or detached, large, and lofty*: (Mšb, TA:) pl. *قصور*. (S, A.)

At the center of Petra's urban complex lies the Garden and Pool Complex, one of the most remarkable water-related monuments in the ancient Near East. Excavations have identified a large monumental pool with an island pavilion at its centre, part of an elaborate hydraulic infrastructure unique among Nabataean sites.

This pool was far more than ornamental. Alongside it, the Nabataeans built an integrated water management system that included carefully engineered canals, pipelines, cisterns, dams, and settling basins designed to collect, store, purify, and redistribute water in the arid desert environment. Contemporary hydraulic research shows that Petra's systems drew on multiple springs, including Ayn Musa and others up to several kilometres away, and carried water into the urban core through aqueducts and terracotta pipelines tailored to topographic constraints.

The Qur'an's reference to "divers" (الشَّيَاطِينُ كُلُّ بَنَاءٍ وَعَوَاصٍ) finds functional resonance here. The operation and maintenance of such a complex water network, including underwater channel sections, submerged conduits, and sealed foundations, would have required direct engagement with water itself, consistent with the notion of specialized workers attending to aquatic infrastructure.

Likewise, the Qur'anic mention of "basins like pools" (34:13) corresponds directly with Petra's monumental garden pool, and "vessels firmly fixed" reflects the permanent stone cisterns and hydraulically engineered installations that were essential to urban Petra's survival and prosperity.

In sum, the Qur'anic descriptions of built waterworks; monumental pools, engineered basins, and the specialized labor associated with their construction and maintenance, find a precise material expression at Petra. The city's combination of architectural permanence, water control technology, and integrated hydraulic infrastructure aligns closely with the narrative's requirements, providing a uniquely fitting archaeological parallel.

BLESSED LAND

The Qur'an makes it explicit that Sulayman's kingdom was established within the same blessed land as earlier messengers. Verse 21:81 states:

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ غَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ 21:81
And to Sulayman: the wind raging, running by his command to the land that We had blessed; and We knew everything.

This echoes 21:71, where God says of Ibrahim and Lut:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُ وَلَوْظًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ
And We delivered him and Lut to the land which We had blessed for all peoples.

The repetition of “**the land We had blessed**” (**baraknā**) underscores continuity: the same valley that sheltered Ibrahim and Lut later became the seat of Sulayman's dominion. This linguistic link affirms the Qur'anic pattern of succession and inheritance, situating Sulayman within an established landscape rather than an arbitrary location.

IRON AND BRASS

The Qur'an attributes advanced technological and craft skills to Dawud and Sulayman, emphasizing integrated metallurgical expertise and organized production:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ 21:80
And We taught him the making of garments for you, to protect you from your might; are you then grateful?

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يُجِبَالُ أَوَّيَ مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَأَلَّنَا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ 34:10
And We gave David from Us bounty: “O you mountains: echo with it, and you birds.” And We softened iron for him.

أَنْ أَعْمَلَ سُبُغْتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ وَأَعْمَلُوا صَليحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 34:11
That you may make armor, with perfect fittings. And work righteousness, for I am Seer of what you do.

وَأَسْلَمْنَا لَهُ الْغَيَّاتِ 34:12
And We made flow for him a spring of molten brass.

These passages indicate a high degree of technological sophistication: softening iron, casting molten brass, and producing fitted armor, all pointing to organized, industrial-scale metalworking.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Extensive archaeological and metallurgical research confirms that southern Jordan, particularly the Wadi Faynan and Wadi ‘Arabah regions, was one of the most important centers of ancient metal production in the southern Levant.

Copper Metallurgy and Smelting:

Chemical and mineralogical analyses of slag deposits from sites in southern Jordan demonstrate in situ copper smelting and processing from at least the Chalcolithic period through the Iron Age and into later historical phases. The scale, composition, and distribution of these slag heaps confirm active extraction and metallurgical production rather than mere reliance on imported finished metals. While Petra itself was primarily an urban, ceremonial, and commercial center during the Nabataean period, it was closely connected to, and economically benefited from, these nearby metallurgical zones.

Large-Scale Industrial Sites:

Wadi Faynan, located north of Petra, contains one of the largest known ancient copper ore fields in the Levant. Excavations at Khirbat en-Nahas, Khirbat al-Jariya, and related complexes reveal systematic mining, smelting, and casting operations conducted on an industrial scale, particularly during the Iron Age (10th–9th centuries BCE). Massive slag accumulations, furnace remains, and infrastructure attest to long-term, organized extraction and processing, making the region a major metallurgical landscape of the ancient Near East.

Organized Craft Production and Coordination:

Archaeological evidence from southern Jordan indicates highly organized metallurgical systems, including specialized production areas, controlled fuel procurement, labor coordination, and administrative oversight. In this sense, Qur’anic references to iron being softened and metal being shaped and cast resonate with a historical landscape where coordinated metallurgy and technical expertise were demonstrably present.

Together, the textual and material evidence converge: Dawud and Sulayman’s kingdom was a tangible, resource-rich landscape where metallurgy, trade, and technological mastery were both practiced and organized.

Petra and its environs provide a historically attested context where iron and brass production could flourish, reinforcing the alignment between Qur’anic description and the archaeological record.

Maryam and 'Isa

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that it is a clear, straight book, free from crookedness:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا

Praise be to God, who revealed the Book to His servant, and placed not therein crookedness.

18:1

قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

A Quran in Arabic, with no crookedness, so they may be righteous. 39:28

This principle is essential when addressing the question of Maryam and 'Isa ibn Maryam.

When the Qur'an states:

يَا أُخْتُ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا

O sister of Harun: your father was not an evil man, and your mother was not unchaste."

19:28

it speaks plainly. Traditional explanations attempt to reinterpret this verse by claiming that "sister of Harun" refers merely to lineage or symbolic association. Yet the Qur'an itself presents its language as direct and unambiguous, without crookedness. There is no indication here of metaphor, honorific usage, or figurative genealogy.

Further clarity comes from the narrative of Musa and Harun:

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ يَنْتَسِمَا خَلْفَتُمُونِي مِنْ بَعْدِي أَعَجَلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ
وَأَلْقَى الْأَلْوَاحَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ إِلَيْهِ قَالَ ابْنَ أُمِّ إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونَنِي فَلَا
تُشْمِتْ بِيَ الْأَعْدَاءَ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

And when Musa returned to his people, angry and disappointed, he said, "What an awful thing you did in my absence. Did you forsake the commandments of your Lord so hastily?"

And he threw down the tablets; and he took hold of his brother's head, dragging him towards himself. He said, "Son of my mother, the people have overpowered me, and were about to kill me; so do not allow the enemies to gloat over me, and do not count me among the unjust people." 7:150

This verse establishes explicitly that Musa and Harun share the same mother and are biological brothers. Taken together, the Qur'anic statements indicate that Maryam, Harun, and Musa are siblings. Consequently, Musa and Harun are the uncles of 'Isa ibn Maryam.

This conclusion is not derived from external tradition, but from the Qur'an's own internal consistency and its insistence on clarity and lack of distortion.

We have already seen that the narrative of Musa is anchored in Petra. If Musa and Harun belong to this same familial and geographic framework, then the location of Maryam and the birth of 'Isa must be reconsidered accordingly.

The widespread assumption that 'Isa was born in Bethlehem does not come from the Qur'an. Bethlehem is never mentioned, neither by name, description, nor implication.

Instead, the Qur'an provides specific and concrete markers:

- the place where Maryam withdrew,
- the natural features present at the time of birth,
- the availability of water and vegetation,
- and the location where Maryam and 'Isa were later sheltered.

These are not symbolic details. They are geographic and environmental indicators. When examined carefully, they allow for a systematic and evidence-based evaluation of the actual landscape described by the Qur'an.

DIRECTION: EASTWARD WITHDRAWAL

The Qur'an notes:

وَأُذْكَرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا 19:16

And recall in the Book Maryam, when she withdrew herself from her family to a place which was to the east.

The Qur'an explicitly situates Maryam's retreat **toward the east**, providing a first directional marker for her location.

SECLUSION AND CONCEALMENT:

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا 19:17

So she separated herself from them/[she took a screen apart from them]; then We sent to her Our Spirit, and he appeared to her as a sound human.

The Qur'an emphasizes Maryam's deliberate seclusion, indicating both privacy and concealment.

DISTANCE:

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا 19:22

Then she bore him, and withdrew with him to a distant place.

The Qur'an emphasizes Maryam's movement to a remote location. In classical Arabic, **qaṣī'**¹⁶ denotes a location that is **removed from populated areas**, a site not close to family, community, or routine pathways. The Qur'an's use of **qaṣī'** here highlights both:

- Physical remoteness (away from her people), and
- Social isolation (secluded and protected).

Thus, the Qur'anic term does not merely indicate "far away" in a neutral sense; it denotes a deliberate withdrawal to a secluded place.

VEGETATION:

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَّنْسِيًّا
And the pains of childbirth brought her to the trunk of the date palm. She said: "Would that I had died before this and been utterly forgotten. 19:23

The Qur'an specifies a **date palm**, indicating access to **water** and a cultivated environment. This ecological detail provides another geographic marker for the narrative's setting.

WATER SOURCE:

فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا
Then he called to her, from below her: "Grieve not; your Lord has placed beneath you a streamlet. 19:24

The Qur'anic phrase **تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا (taḥtaki sarīyan)** literally means "beneath you, a hidden or flowing water source." Classical lexica confirm that sarīyan denotes a modest but reliable stream or spring - sufficient to sustain the date palm and provide for Maryam and 'Isa.

ELEVATED GROUND:

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَءَاوَيْنُهُمَا إِلَى رِبْوَةٍ ذاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ 23:50
*And We made the son of Maryam and his mother a proof, and We **gave them shelter** upon high ground: a fixed lodging and apparent water.*

The verse situates Maryam and 'Isa in a distinctive geographic setting: a hill or elevated tract (rabwah) that is firmly settled (dhāt qarār) and supplied with flowing water (ma'in). These terms together form a precise environmental profile - a secure elevated terrain with permanent water.

The Qur'an presents a set of geographic and environmental markers, requiring a single coherent location that is:

¹⁶ - faraway; far-off; outlying; out-of-the-way; secluded; abroad; age-old; ancient; antique; away; distant; elsewhere; exiled; expatriated; far; far-off; gone; isolated; not here; not present; out; remote; separated
 - extending far; widely distributed
 - driven away or out
 - or towards that place

- oriented toward the east,
- secluded,
- elevated yet stable and habitable,
- enriched with vegetation, including date palms,
- and sustained by a reliable water source.

Bethlehem does not satisfy this full combination. It lacks, seclusion from settlement, and the topographic features described in the Qur'an.

However, one place within Petra fits all these criteria: *Wadi Farasa East*. Remarkably, the toponym itself preserves the directional cue noted in the text: “**East**”.

WADI FARASA EAST



The Wadi Farasa consists of an eastern (1) and a western section (2). On the right, the famous Soldier Tomb complex (3).
© Photos: Haupt & Binder

Location:

Wadi Farasa East is a narrow valley within Petra, branching from the area near the High Place of Sacrifice and descending toward the city's eastern sector. Situated southeast of Petra's central basin, it is one of the more secluded and sheltered wadis within the site. The upper reaches occupy raised sandstone terraces, before sloping into the lower city, corresponding

closely to the Qur’anic term رِبْوَة (*rabwah*), indicating elevated yet stable terrain suitable for dwelling.

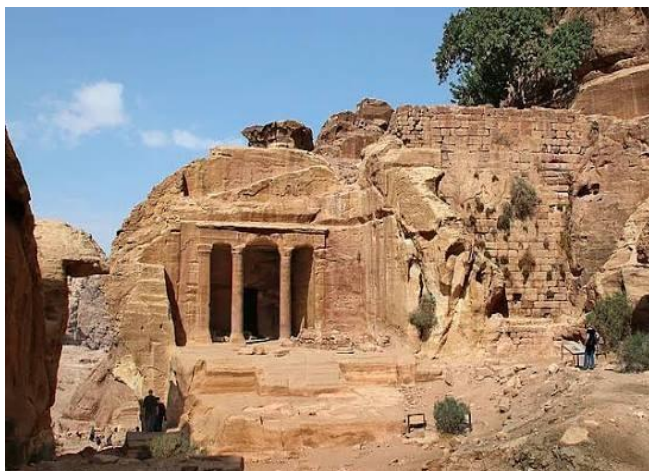
Water

The wadi contains a sophisticated hydraulic system, including an 8-meter-high retaining wall forming a large cistern, smaller cisterns, and channels fed by both rainwater and natural springs. These structures form part of Petra’s broader water management network, capable of delivering reliable running water (سَرِيًّا / مَعِين) in an otherwise arid environment. The presence of perennial water sources supports both vegetation and prolonged habitation.

Garden Valley

Early explorer Gustaf Dalman designated the upper section of Wadi Farasa East as “Gartental” (Garden Valley), noting grass fields, oleander, and cultivated vegetation during his 1904 expedition. This area also houses the Garden Triclinium, a monumental open structure overlooking gardens and water installations. Archaeologist Stephan G. Schmid, director of the International Wadi Farasa Project, observes:

With its sophisticated water supply system and gardens, the combination of sacred areas and spaces for the dead with installations for the living, Wadi al-Farasa East must have once offered a very impressive picture, a kind of paradise on earth, that is often described as an ideal utopia in ancient literature.” (S. G. Schmid, p. 344.)



Garden Triclinium

GARDEN TRICLINIUM: A CANDIDATE FOR MARYAM AND ‘ISA’S RESIDENCE

Within Wadi Farasa East, the Garden Triclinium presents an extraordinary architectural complex that closely aligns with the Qur’anic markers for Maryam’s place of seclusion and ‘Isa’s early life. The Qur’an describes a location that is eastward (19:16), secluded (19:17), distant (19:22), elevated yet habitable (23:50), vegetated with palms (19:23), and sustained by running water (19:24, 23:50). The Garden Triclinium exhibits each of these characteristics.

The building is completely rock-hewn, featuring a 7.5-meter-wide façade, a raised platform reached by a wide staircase, a deep cistern, and two sequential interior chambers. Horizontal grooves suggest a peristyle or colonnaded courtyard, and archaeological reconstructions

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indicate that an upper floor may have existed, offering privacy, surveillance of the surrounding valley, and protection from view, perfect for the Qur'anic requirement of concealment.

HABITABLE INTERIORS

The front chamber functions as a vestibule (6.2 × 6.8 m), and the rear chamber (5.1 × 5.4 m) is finely chiseled for possible stucco decoration, indicating attention to comfort and domestic usability. The window overlooking the lower terrace and valley would have allowed observation without exposure, supporting a lifestyle of sustained but discreet habitation.

WATER ACCESS AND VEGETATION

The Triclinium is integrated into Petra's sophisticated hydraulic network, with a large cistern, channels, and spring-fed systems providing consistent water supply. This aligns directly with the Qur'anic مَعِينًا / سَرِيًّا, which ensures both survival and the ability to cultivate vegetation. Historical observations by Gustaf Dalman in 1904 describe the area as "Gartental" (Garden Valley), with grass, oleander, and cultivated plants, echoing the Qur'anic reference to a palm tree and surrounding vegetation (19:23).

SECLUSION AND ELEVATION

The site's position on elevated ground overlooking the valley, combined with its narrow, hidden approach, corresponds precisely to رَئِيَّةً (elevated, stable terrain) and قَصِيًّا (distant/secluded). These features allowed Maryam to withdraw from her family and the wider settlement, as described in 19:16–22, while remaining accessible to water and vegetation for survival.

POTENTIAL FOR HABITATION

The design of the Triclinium, including cisterns, covered courtyards, two interior chambers, and possibly an upper floor, demonstrates that it was not merely a ceremonial or garden structure. Its scale, water infrastructure, and enclosed spaces indicate it could have supported sustained human habitation, allowing Maryam to live there for a period sufficient to give birth, care for 'Isa, and remain concealed.

CONCLUSION

The Garden Triclinium provides a grounded setting that meets all Qur'anic markers: eastward orientation, seclusion, distance, elevation, vegetation, water, and habitability. Unlike Bethlehem, which lacks these combined features, Wadi Farasa East; including the Triclinium, offers a precise real-world match to the Qur'anic narrative, making it a strong candidate for the location where Maryam withdrew, gave birth, and nurtured 'Isa.

EVIDENCE OF LOCAL BELIEF IN 'ISA

Archaeological evidence confirms that belief in 'Isa existed in the region. One Inscription explicitly invoke him by name:



O Īsay ('sy), help him against those who deny you.

Such inscriptions indicate that belief in 'Isa was locally recognized and practiced, reflecting a cultural awareness of him in southern Jordan and northern Arabia. This supports the plausibility of an inhabited setting, such as Wadi Farasa East, where Maryam and 'Isa could have lived.

THE QUR'ANIC CRITERIA VS. TRADITIONAL "HOLY LANDS"

The Qur'an never identifies Bethlehem, Jerusalem, or any part of modern Israel/Palestine as the setting for Maryam and 'Isa. Instead, it emphasizes a set of **moral and geographic conditions**: the land must be inherited and occupied by the righteous, believing servants, not by those who reject or distort God's message.

3:55 and **21:105** make this principle explicit: the faithful followers of God are promised the land, while those who deny or misrepresent His message are excluded. The inheritance of the land, therefore, is determined by spiritual and moral suitability.

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُعِيسَى ابْنِي مَتْوَفِيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ 3:55
فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

For God said: "O Isa, I will terminate your life, and raise you to Me, and purify you of those who have rejected, and make those who have followed you above those who have rejected until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, all of you, so I will judge between you in what it was that you disputed."

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ 21:105
And We decreed in the Writings [Zabur] after the remembrance: "My righteous servants will inherit the land."

Yet the traditional Holy Lands are dominated by groups whose beliefs the Qur'an explicitly condemns:

Christians, who revere 'Isa as the Son of God or part of a Trinity (5:72–75).

Jews, who reject him and label him a false messenger (4:157).

Muslims who follow secondary sources, such as hadith, and misrepresent the real Qur’anic message (5:104; 45:6).

The Qur’an establishes a clear principle: the land is inherited by the righteous, believing servants, not by those who reject or misrepresent God’s message.

Consequently, the Qur’an’s own markers disqualify Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other traditionally “holy” sites as the genuine location of Maryam and ‘Isa.

The people of the cave

Many traditional interpretations have assumed that **Qur’an 53:13–18** describes the Prophet’s ascent into the heavens. A careful, literal reading of the text decisively contradicts this. The verses state:

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ
عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ
عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ
إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ
مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ
لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ
53:13 - 18

And he saw him/it in another descent.

By the Sidr Tree of the boundary.

At the Garden of Shelter.

When there covered the Sidr Tree that which it covered. The vision did not deviate, nor did it transgress. Indeed, he saw of the greatest proofs of his Lord.

The critical term here is نَزْلَةً (nazlah), literally “descent.” It explicitly indicates that something came down, rather than the Prophet ascending. The event is anchored on Earth: Muḥammad witnesses signs in a terrestrial location. The verse establishes that what was revealed to the Prophet was experiential and grounded in a physical, observable setting, not a mystical journey through the heavens.

This interpretation is further reinforced in 17:93, where sceptics demand evidence of a heavenly ascent:

أَوْ يَكُونُ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ رُّحُفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ تُؤْمِنَ لِرُقْيِكَ حَتَّىٰ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا
تَقْرُوهُ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا

“Or that you have a house of finery, or that you can ascend into the heavens. And we will not believe in your ascension unless you bring for us a book that we can read.” Say: “Glory be to my Lord. Am I anything other than a mortal messenger!”

Here the Qur’an emphasizes Muḥammad’s humanity: he is **a mortal messenger**, explicitly denying any claim of physical ascent. Any reading that attributes a literal celestial journey to him contradicts the Qur’an.

Therefore, verses 53:13-18 should be understood as referring to an actual location on Earth. From the Qur’anic text itself, a **set of cumulative, highly specific markers** emerges:

1. **A boundary location** – The term *Sidr al-Muntahā* (53:14) indicates a tree at a defined edge, suggesting the site lies at the extremity of a terrain, not in the middle of an urban or settled area.
2. **A Garden of Shelter (Jannat al-Ma’wā)** – The site is described as providing refuge and protection, implying a secluded, secure, and fertile environment.
3. **Sidr Tree:** covering some of the greatest proofs

We are told in **53:18** that Muḥammad was shown “*some of the greatest proofs of his Lord*” (لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ). This naturally raises a question: what precisely are these proofs? Does the Qur’an provide an identification?

Indeed, it does. The Qur’an clarifies in **18:9**:

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا 18:9

Did you think that the People of the Cave and the Inscription [Raqim] were of our wondrous proofs?

The Qur’an explicitly classifies the People of the Cave and the Inscription (**al-Raqīm**) as among the wondrous proofs of God. Having established that the People of the Cave and an Inscription are explicitly identified as extraordinary signs, the Qur’an provides precise environmental and topographical markers for this location.

18:17 وَتَرَىٰ الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزُورُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ تَقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِنْهُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا

And you see the sun when it rises, it inclines away from their cave to the right; and when it sets, it passes away from them on the left, while they are in an enclosure from it. That is from the proofs of God. Whoever God guides is the guided one, and whom He sends astray, you will not find for him any guiding ally.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَتَتْهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَزَّعُونَ مِنْهُمْ 18:21
أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُنْيَانًا رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا

And it was thus that We let them be found, that they would know that the promise of God is true and that there is no doubt regarding the Hour. They argued among themselves regarding them, so they said: "Erect a structure upon them, for their Lord is most aware of them!" Those who prevailed over their affair said: "We will take over them a place of worship [masjid]."

From these verses, the Qur'an provides cumulative, highly specific markers for the People of the Cave:

- **A boundary location** - suggesting the cave lies at the edge of a valley or cliff.
- **A place of worship** subsequently built over the site
- **A Garden of Shelter (Jannat al-Ma'wā)** - a protected, vegetated environment associated with concealment and refuge.
- **A Sidr tree** covering the entrance of the cave and the Inscription

THE PEOPLE OF THE CAVE AND THE FURTHEST PLACE OF WORSHIP

We learned that the People of the Cave and the Inscription constitute one of God's explicitly identified proofs (18:9). A *masjid*, a place of worship, was later built **directly over or upon** the site where these proofs were located.

This detail becomes crucial when read alongside another passage that describes the Prophet being taken to a place of worship explicitly for the purpose of witnessing God's proofs:

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَرَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ 17:1
مِنْ ءَايَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

Glory be to Him who led His servant by night from the inviolable place of worship (Masjid Al-Haram) to the furthest place of worship (Masjid Al-Aqsa), which We blessed round about, that We might show him some of Our proofs! He is the Hearing, the Seeing.

The Qur'an here specifies both the destination and the purpose of the journey. The Prophet is taken to *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* in order to be shown *āyāt*, the same term used in 18:9 to describe the People of the Cave and the Inscription.

The term *aqṣā* literally denotes extremity or distance, and when combined with the Qur'an's reference to a boundary *location* –*Sidr al-Muntahā* (53:14), it implies a location situated at the periphery.

When read internally, without importing later assumptions, the Qur'an presents a consistent picture: the furthest place of worship (Masjid Al-aqsa) is linked to the site where the People of the Cave were located, where a masjid was established, and where the Prophet was shown some of the greatest proofs of his Lord.

Crucially, the widespread assumption equating al-Masjid al-Aqṣā with the later mosque in Jerusalem finds no support in the Qur'an itself. Historically, the mosque in Jerusalem, was constructed years after the Qur'anic revelation, making it impossible for the verse to have originally referred to that structure.

The Qur'an, instead points us to a pre-existing, remote site characterized by:

- a clearly boundary,
- a garden of shelter (Jannat al-Ma'wā),
- a cave,
- and later crowned by a place of worship.

Using satellite imagery and Google Maps, I identified a site that corresponds closely with the environmental and spatial markers described in Qur'an 18:17.

The location lies at a clear boundary and aligns with the cumulative indicators presented in the surrounding verses.

However, I have not visited the site in person. I therefore cannot confirm or deny the physical presence of the cave itself or the existence of the associated Inscription (*al-Raqīm*) for this reason, the identification remains provisional.

If present, the Inscription would be of particular significance. The Qur'an assigns it a central role alongside the People of the Cave, and its content may bear relevance to verses such as 4:159, 43:61 and 61:9, potentially linking it to 'Isa.

Although I would have wished to investigate this location on site myself, I do not possess the expertise required to read or analyze ancient inscriptions. I therefore consider that this aspect of the discovery is not intended for me to pursue directly. The identified location will

instead be forwarded to qualified specialists, so that it may be examined responsibly and preserved with the care such a site warrants.

This section will be revised if on-site investigation confirms the presence of a cave and inscription, or removed entirely if no supporting evidence is found.

The first habitation

After following the verses, one by one, everything converges at the same place. Different narrations, different messengers, yet all of them point towards Petra.

At this point, a single question inevitably arises:

Why here?

The answer lies in a verse that started my entire investigation:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

The first habitation (bayt) established for humanity is the one in Bakka, blessed and a guidance for all worlds. 3:96

This verse speaks of **origination**: the *first bayt*, the first human dwelling placed for mankind.

The Qur'an often commands the audience to walk through the land and observe the fate of former peoples, to see what became of them.[3:137; 6:11; 12:109; 16:36; 22:46; 27:69; 30:9; 30:42; 35:44; 40:21; 40:82; 47:10] Their ruins remain as warnings, carved into the land itself.

But the Qur'an issues another command, one that is different in purpose.

Here, the instruction is not to observe destruction, but origination - to examine how creation itself began:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ 29:19

Have they not seen how God originates creation, then repeats it? That is easy for God.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ 29:20

Say: "Travel in the land and see how He originated creation; then will God produce the latter creation; God is over all things powerful.

This instruction assumes that creation, like destruction, left traces. That the origin of mankind is not only a theological statement, but something that can be recognized in the land itself.

If, as earlier evidence suggests, Petra is the location repeatedly highlighted by Qur'anic narratives, then these instructions apply directly here.

We now turn to the Qur'an itself to trace the description of mankind's origin, seeking both textual precision and physical correlation in the landscape.

THE MATERIALS OF CREATION

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that human beings are fashioned from the earth itself. Clay, mud, and dust are identified as the fundamental materials from which mankind was created:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَلٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ 15:26

And We created man from sounding clay, from altered black mud.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ 6:2

It is He Who created you from clay; then He decreed a term - and a stated term is with Him; then you doubt.

وَاللَّهُ أَنبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا 71:17

And God produced you from the land like a plant.

وَمِنْ ءَايَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ إِذَا أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ تَنْتَشِرُونَ 30:20

And of His signs is that He created you from dust; and behold, you become humans spreading out.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ 23:12

And We created man from an extract of clay;

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ 32:7

Who made good everything He created, and began the creation of man from clay;

Taken together, these verses establish a clear principle: human life is inseparable from the earth. Yet while they tell us *what* humans were created from, clay, dust, mud, these verses do not, by themselves, specify *where* this origin occurred.

TRACING HUMAN ORIGIN TO QATTAR AD-DAYR

The Qur'an however provides another verse that is often mistranslated or overlooked:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ 86:5
خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ 86:6
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ 86:7

So let man look from what he was created:

He was created from a gushing water,

That is issued from between hard bedrock (ṣulb) ¹⁷and soft sediment. (tarā'ib).¹⁸

Many conventional translations obscure the precision of this verse, rendering **ṣulb** as “backbone” and **tarā'ib** as “breastbone.” A careful examination of classical Arabic reveals a more geological interpretation.

Ṣulb (صُلْبُ) refers to hardness, rigidity, toughness, or robustness. In lexicographical usage, it denotes hard, stony ground or rugged, elevated tracts of land, extending between hills or forming the solid substratum of the earth.

Tarā'ib (تَرَائِبُ), the plural of a derivative of *turāb* (soil, earth, dust), retains its primary meaning as earth, sediment, or layered soil. While some classical lexica and later commentators occasionally offered anatomical interpretations, the Qur'an consistently describes human creation as originating from earthly materials—clay, mud, dust, and soil. The root *t-r-b* (ت-ر-ب) is repeatedly employed in the Qur'an to denote these physical, terrestrial substances, reinforcing that the intended meaning of *tarā'ib* in 86:6–7 is geological rather than anatomical.

Thus, the Qur'an is describing a process: water (mā' dāfiq) gushing forth from the interface of hard rock and softer soil or sediment, providing the necessary moisture for clay, mud, and dust to coalesce into the formative material of human life. The imagery is strikingly precise: creation is not abstract, but emerges from the very interaction of geological layers and subterranean water flow.

¹⁷ صُلْبُ Sulb

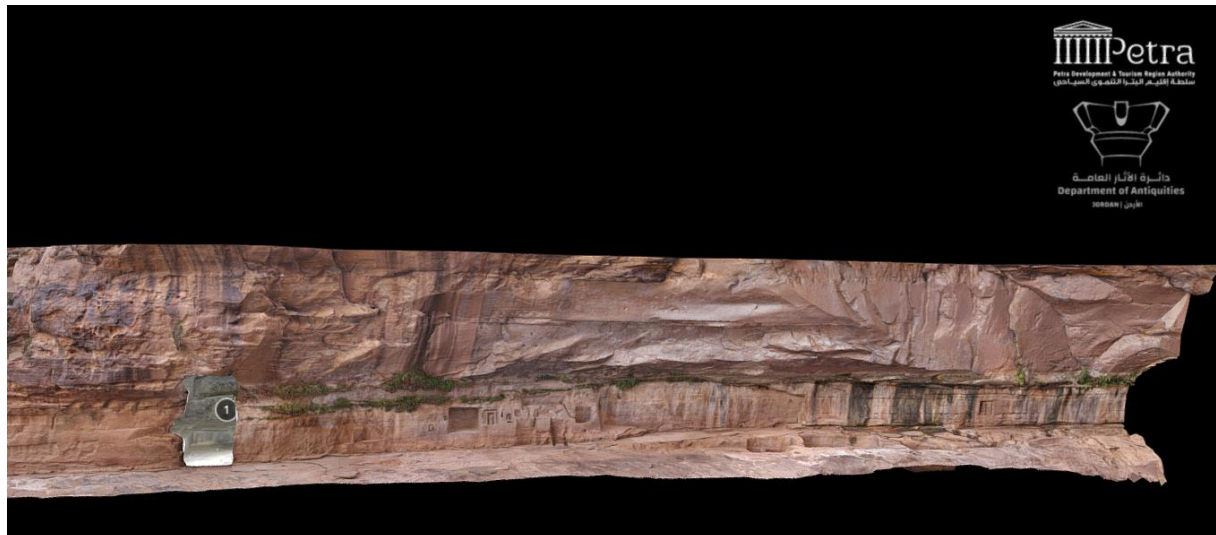
Hard, firm, rigid, stiff, tough, strong, robust, sturdy, or hardy; syn. شَدِيدٌ (S, A, M, sb, * K;); contr. of لَيِّنٌ (M, TA;); as also صَلِيبٌ (S, M, A, K) and صَلَبٌ (M;): pl. of the first or second, [accord. to analogy of the latter, and also of the last,] صِلَابٌ (M, A.)

[Hence,] صُلْبٌ and صَلَبٌ (K;), or مَكَانٌ صُلْبٌ and صَلَبٌ (M;), A rugged, stony place: (M, K; *) or صُلْبٌ signifies a rugged, extending place, of the earth or ground; and صُلْبٌ, a hard part of the earth or ground: (S;); or this last, a tract of rugged depressed land stretching along between two hills: (Sh, TA;); or the acclivities of hills; and its pl. is أَصْلَابٌ (TA;); or أَصْلَابٌ signifies hard, extending, [tracts of] ground: (As, TA;); or hard and elevated [tracts of] ground: (IAar, TA;); and مَكَانٌ صُلْبٌ, a rugged, hard place: (Msb;); the pl. (of صُلْبٌ, S) is صُلْبَةٌ (S, M, K;). One says of land that has not been sown for a long time, إِنَّهَا أَصْلَابٌ مُنْذُ أَغْوَامٍ ‡ [Verily it has been hard by lying waste for years]. (A, TA.)

¹⁸ ب (S, M, K;); aor. (يُتْرَبُ), (K;); inf. n. تَرَبٌ (M;); It (a thing) became dusted, or dusty; dust lighted upon it: (S, TA;); it (a place, M;); had much dust, or earth; abounded with dust, or earth. (M, K, TA.) تَرَبٌ and تَرَابٌ (Lth, T, S, M, A, M, sb, K) and تَرَبٌ (CK [but this I do not find elsewhere]) and تَرَبٌ (S, A, * K) and تَرَبًا (Lth, T, S, A, * K) and تَرَبًا (S, M, K) and تَرَابًا and تَرَابًا and تَرَابًا and تَرَابًا as will be seen below] and تَرَبٌ (S, M, K) and تَرَبٌ (M, K) accord. to MF تَرَبٌ, which is perhaps a dial. var., and accord. to some تَرَبٌ, and تَرَابٌ (TA;); signify the same, (Lth, T, S, M, A, K;); and are words of which the meaning is well known: (A, K;); [i. e. Dust: and earth: generally the former; i. e. fine, dry, particles of earth; as when we say, الرِّيحُ تَسُوفُ التُّرَابَ The wind drives along the dust: but we also use the expression تَرَابٌ نَدِ, meaning moist earth, the explanation, in Lexicons, of the word تَرَى is: تَرَى and when it ceases to be moist, it is still تَرَابٌ]

It is remarkable that in Petra, a specific location vividly mirrors the Qur’anic description of human creation: **Qattar ad-Dayr**.

QATTAR AD-DAYR



Sketchfab 3D model of Qattar ad-Dayr

<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/qattar-ad-deir-petra-jordan-2e60caffd43a467d8ca1df15e3536e08>



Along the right side of the stepped path leading to Ad-Dayr, the Monastery, lies a narrow gorge known as Qattar ad-Dayr. Here, water continuously drips from the rock, collected into four rock-hewn basins. The name itself likely derives from the Arabic qattar, meaning “to drip, trickle, or gush,”

The site also contains numerous betyls, inscriptions, and graffiti, alongside a sacred hall. A terrace approximately 70 meters in length was artificially leveled, smoothed, and prepared

by the Nabataeans as a sanctuary. Votive betyls carved into the rock mark this as a place of reverence and significance.

Most strikingly, the geology of Qattar ad-Dayr reflects the Qur'an's description in 86:5–7: water emerging from between hard rock and softer layers. The firm bedrock corresponds directly to **ṣulb** (صُلْب), while the adjacent softer sediment matches **tarā'ib** (تَرَائِب). This makes Qattar ad-Dayr a tangible, living illustration of the hydrogeological process described in the Qur'an as the origin of human life, clay and mud animated by gushing water between rock and sediment.

THE MEANING OF “NABATAEAN

Not only does Petra preserve the geological site that mirrors the Qur'anic description of human creation, it also preserves this origin in the very name of the civilization that ruled it.

The Nabataean kingdom was historically known as Nabaṭ (نَبَط). Historians themselves have long debated the meaning of this name. Ancient writers were uncertain whether it referred to ancestry, territory, or occupation. Yet classical Arabic lexicons provide a striking and consistent explanation.

Across the major authoritative dictionaries, the root ن ب ط (n-b-ṭ) is defined as “to gush out, to spout forth, to burst from concealment,”

The name Nabaṭ itself linguistically encodes the very process the Qur'an describes for the origin of mankind: life emerging from gushing water. The kingdom's name thus preserves a memory of beginnings.

At Qattar ad-Dayr, this process becomes physically visible. Here, water continuously gushes and drips from within the rock, emerging from between hard bedrock and softer sediment.

SKIN COLOR

Having traced the origin of humanity to Petra, the Qur'an's references to variation in human appearance take on an immediate, tangible significance.

وَمِنْ ءَايَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوُيُكُمُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ 30:22

And among His proofs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference in your tongues and your colors; in that are proofs for all mankind.

35:27 أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيَضٌ
وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَعَرَايِبُ سُودٌ

Have you not seen that God sends down water from the sky? With it We produce fruits of various colors. And in the mountains are streaks of white and red—varying in their hue—and pitch-black.

35:28 وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

And so are among men, beasts and cattle, different shades. Only those of His creatures fear God who have knowledge. Verily He is all-mighty and forgiving.

If, as our earlier discussion indicates, human life originated at Petra, these verses acquire an extraordinary literal resonance. The mountains and rock formations of Petra display a natural palette strikingly similar to the human spectrum:

- Pink and red hues: iron oxides in the sandstone.
- Yellow and ochre tones: weathered mineral layers, including goethite and other iron compounds.
- Brown shades: clay- and iron-rich deposits in the rock matrix.
- Dark/black streaks: manganese oxides and other dark mineral veins.

In this sense, human skin pigmentation is not abstract but a direct reflection of the origin site, the physical geology of Petra embedded in the first humans.

Petra is a living, observable demonstration of the Qur'an's statement on diversity. Just as God produces fruits of different colors from the same rain and soil, the very landscape of Petra demonstrates why humans differ in color: the origin of mankind is inseparable from the material and mineral diversity of their birthplace.





ADAM

Any serious discussion of human origins in the Qur'an must eventually confront the figure of Adam. Yet much of what is commonly assumed about Adam, his supposed descent from heaven and the nature of the garden, is not derived directly from the Qur'anic text, but from later theological constructions layered onto it.

When the Qur'an itself speaks, it does so with remarkable precision.

The Qur'an introduces Adam not through a narrative of descent from heaven, but through a declaration of appointment in the land:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةًۭۙ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِیْهَا مَنْ یُّفْسِدُ فِیْهَا
وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَۙ قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَۙ

And when your Lord said to the Malaika: "I am placing in the land a successor," they said: "will you place therein one who will do harm therein, and shed blood, while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" He said: "I know what you know not."

This opening statement is decisive. Adam's role begins in the land, not in heaven. The location is explicit: al-arḍ.

The key term here is khalīfah (خليفة). Linguistically and Qur'anically, a khalīfah is one who succeeds, inherits, or replaces what already exists. A successor does not inaugurate an empty stage; he follows something prior.

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Throughout the Qur'an, khilāfah consistently denotes:

- inheritance after others,
- replacement following previous occupants,
- succession within an already-established domain

The Qur'an explicitly confirms that other beings existed **before** humans:

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ 15:27

And the [Jaan] We created before, from the fire of scorching wind.

The Qur'an is unambiguous on chronology: creation on earth preceded Adam. While this study does not attempt to define the precise nature or appearance of the jinn or the Malaika, the chronological point is clear. Adam was introduced into a pre-existing environment.

The Qur'an itself provides internal evidence that the garden Adam inhabited was not an eternal Paradise, but a terrestrial garden.

The decisive clue appears in Shaytan's temptation:

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى 20:120

Then the shaytan whispered to him, saying: "O Adam: shall I direct you to the Tree of Eternity and a dominion that decays not?"

This proposal only makes sense if Adam was not already in an eternal realm. Eternity cannot be promised to someone who already possesses it. Nor can an imperishable dominion be offered within a realm defined by permanence.

The logic of the verse presupposes:

- mortality,
- limitation,
- temporality.

These are conditions of earthly life, not of the final Garden.

The Qur'an elsewhere describes the eternal garden in unmistakable terms

لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ 56:33

Unending, unforbidden

In the eternal Garden, nothing is prohibited. The presence of a forbidden tree in Adam's location therefore immediately distinguishes it from the eternal Garden.

The Qur'an further seals this conclusion:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً يَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 32:17

And no soul knows what has been hidden for them as a comfort of the eyes as reward for what they did.

The statement is universal. **No soul** includes Adam. If no soul knows the reality of the eternal Garden, then Adam could not have been dwelling in it.

A LINGUISTIC LINK BETWEEN ADAM’S GARDEN AND THE DWELLING OF THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL

The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes that it is a *clear* book, one that explains matters through deliberate patterns and recurring language. One such pattern appears in the vocabulary used to describe two seemingly distinct narratives: the dwelling of Adam in the garden and the settlement of the Children of Israel.

In the account of Adam, the Qur’an states:

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ

And We said: “O Adam: dwell you and your pair in the garden, and eat thereof freely wheresoever you will; but approach not this tree lest you be of the wrongdoers.” 2:35

Later, addressing the Children of Israel, the Qur’an uses the same phrasing:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا أَدْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَأَدْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ
نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And when We said: “Enter this city, and eat freely of it wheresoever you will. And enter the gate in submission, and say: ‘Absolution [hita]!’¹⁹ We will forgive you your offences, and will increase the doers of good.”

The correspondence is exact. The key expressions رَغَدًا (freely, abundantly, without restriction) and حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ (wherever you will) appear in both passages. The Qur’an deliberately describes both locations, Adam’s garden and the location of the Children of Israel, using the same formula of unrestricted sustenance.

The connection deepens with the use of the verb اهْبِطُوا (ihbiṭū) — “descend”.

After Adam’s transgression, the Qur’an states:

¹⁹ but they changed this saying, (Fr, Sgh, K,) using for it a Nabathean expression; (Fr, TA;) saying هِطَى سُمَهَانًا, i. e. “red wheat,” (Sgh, K,) accord. to Es-Suddee and Mujāhid; or, accord. to IAar, حِنْطَةٌ سُمَقَانِيَا,

فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ۖ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا²⁰ بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

Then the Shaytan made them slip therefrom, and got them out from that in which they were. We said: "Get you down(Ahbitu), an enemy to one another. On earth will be a dwelling place for you and an enjoyment for a time.

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
We said: "Get you down from(Ahbitu) it all together. And if there comes to you guidance from Me, whoso follows My guidance: no fear will be upon them, nor will they grieve. 2:38

The same verb is later used when addressing the Children of Israel:

إِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا
وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصِلَهَا ۖ قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ ۚ اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ
لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمْ ۖ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ
يَأْتِي اللَّهُ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ يَغْيِرُ الْحَقُّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

And when you said: "O Musa: we will not endure one food, so call to your Lord for us that He bring forth for us of what the earth grows of its green herbs, and its cucumbers, and its garlic, and its lentils, and its onions." He said: "Would you exchange for what is worse what is better? Descend(Ahbitu) [Msr - مصر] , and you will have what you have asked." And humiliation and wretchedness were pitched upon them; and they incurred wrath from God, for it is that they denied the proofs of God! And they killed the prophets without cause, for it is that they opposed and they exceeded all bounds! 2:61

The Qur'an does not say *go, travel, or enter*. It uses **اهبطوا** again - *descend*. Linguistically, this verb denotes movement from a higher place to a lower one, or from an elevated state to an inferior one, physically or situationally.

By repeating the same vocabulary: dwelling, free provision, and descent, the Qur'an explicitly links the location of Adam's garden with the location of the Children of Israel. The Qur'an explains itself through repetition and pattern. Here, it uses language to anchor Adam's garden within the same earthly logic as the settlements of the Children of Israel. The connection is embedded in the text itself, for those who read it carefully.

²⁰ هَبَطَ (S, Msb, K,) aor. { هَبَطَ } and { هَبَطَ }, (Msb, K,) but the latter is of rare occurrence, (Msb,) inf. n. هَبِطَ (S, K,) of that whereof the aor. is { هَبَطَ }, and of that whereof the aor. is { هَبَطَ }; (TA;) or of the latter only, that of the former being هَبِطَ; (Msb;) He, or it, (said of water &c., Msb,) descended: (S, Msb, K:) and هَبِطَ he descended, or went down, or went down a declivity; and it sloped down; syn. انْخَدَرَ (TA;) and انْهَبَطَ signifies the same as this last; or † he became lowered, or degraded; syn. انْخَطَ (K;) being quasi-pass. of أَهْبَطَ (S, TA,) and it may be also of هَبِطَ, as is said in the M. (TA.) You say, هَبِطْنَا فِي حُدُورٍ صَعْبَةٍ [We descended a difficult declivity]. (A, in art. حدر.) And هَبِطَ الْوَادِي (Bd, ii. 58, and Msb,) [as though it were trans., for فِي الْوَادِي] inf. n. هَبِطَ (Msb,) We descended into the valley. (Bd, Msb.) And هَبِطَ مِنْهُ He came forth from it. (Bd, ubi supra.) It is said in the Kur, ii. 58, اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا Descend ye into Misr: (Bd:) accord. to one reading, اهْبِطُوا (Bd, TA.) You say also هَبِطَ بَلَدٌ كَذَا He entered such a town or country. (K.) And هَبِطْتُ مِنْ مَوْضِعٍ إِلَىٰ مَوْضِعٍ removed him from a place to a place. (Msb.)

THE PLACE OF RETURN

We can now understand why Petra is central. It is not merely the setting of past civilizations. It is identified because creation itself began here. This also explains why hajj is directed to this location. It is not an arbitrary site chosen without reason. It is a place of return. Humanity journeys back, to where it first emerged:

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ

“And when We made the dwelling a mathābah²¹ for mankind...” (2:125)

Modern translations frequently render *mathābah* as “a place of gathering.” This rendering is lexically inadequate and obscures the primary meaning of the term.

According to Lane’s Arabic–English Lexicon, drawing on early Arabic authorities, *mathābah* is defined as:

“A place to which people return; a place of repeated return.”

The core semantic field of *mathābah* is return, not mere assembly. While gathering may occur incidentally, it is not the defining meaning of the word.

Petra is not chosen because of later tradition. It is identified because the Qur’an consistently points to it when speaking of beginnings. It is the place from which humanity emerged, and therefore the place to which humanity is commanded to return.

It is a return to the point of origin - back to where life began, where human creation was first set in motion, and where the signs of that beginning still are visible.

Legends of the former people

Throughout the Qur’an, a consistent pattern appears. A messenger warns his people repeatedly, yet the response is always the same:

إِنَّ هَٰذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“Nothing but legends of the former peoples.

[6:25; 8:31; 16:24; 23-83; 25:5; 27:68; 46:17; 68:15: 83:13]

²¹ مَثَابَةٌ (accord. to Aboo-Is-hák originally مَثَوْبَةٌ, T) *A place to which people return*, (ISh, Aboo-Is-hák, T, S, Msb,) or *to which one returns*, (ISh, S, Msb,) *time after time*; (S;) and مَثَابٌ signifies the same: (Aboo-Is-hák, T;) and the former, *a place of assembly or congregation*: (ISh;) or *a place where people assemble, or congregate, after they have separated, or dispersed*; as also ↓ the latter word: (M, K;) and *a place of alighting or abode; an abode; or a house*; because the inhabitants thereof return to it (ISh, S) after having gone to their affairs

Now that multiple narratives, independently and consistently, have been traced back to Petra, a question naturally arises: **what will the response be this time?**

Will it again be dismissed, not because the evidence is lacking, but because the conclusion does not align with inherited geography and long-standing tradition?

The Qur'an anticipates precisely this reaction:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا آبَاءَنَا ۖ أَوَّلُوا كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ

And when it is said to them, "Follow what God has revealed," they say, "We will follow what we found our ancestors following." Even if their ancestors understood nothing, and were not guided? 2:170

The obstacle, then, is not a lack of signs, nor an absence of evidence. It is the refusal to depart from inherited assumptions. When tradition is treated as authority, and the Qur'an's own signs are overlooked, a deeper question must be asked: what is truly guiding us - and which account are we choosing to follow?

False assumptions passed down generation after generation, or the truth sent down from our Lord?

For those who refuse to question what they inherited, these accounts will remain "*legends of the former peoples*," not due to a lack of truth, but due to a refusal to see. The Qur'an did not fail to guide, the reader failed to follow.

The Examples

Now that we have traced every narration consistently back to Petra, one might think we could immediately begin the search for the true location of al-Masjid al-Haram. Yet, the Qur'an is a clear and detailed book (12:1; 16:89). It repeatedly emphasizes that it presents examples, elaborated in every form, to leave no room for doubt:

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ وَلَئِنْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُبْطِلُونَ 30:58

*We have cited in this Quran for people **every sort of example**. And even if you were to bring them a proof, those who disbelieve would say, "You are nothing but falsifiers."*

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ قَابِئِ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا

17:89 We have displayed for mankind in this Quran **every kind of example**, but most people insist on denying the truth.

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ ۚ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا

18:54 We have elaborated in this Quran for the people **every kind of example**, but the human being is a most argumentative being.

Clear proofs embedded in the text itself. These examples go beyond the narratives of the messengers; they reinforce, confirm, and illuminate the same reality again and again - the true location of the Masjid-Al Haram.

In the chapters that follow, we will examine these additional signs. Each is a confirmation, designed to remove uncertainty, and to guide those who reflect toward the Truth. The Qur'an does not leave its audience guessing; it provides repeated, tangible proofs for those willing to see.

Mother of city's [ام القرى]

The Qur'an repeatedly refers to the community the Messenger was sent to guide as **Umm al-Qurā**, "Mother of towns":

وَهَٰذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

And this is a Book which We have sent down, blessed, affirming what is between his hands, and that you may warn the mother of the towns and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and they maintain their connection. 6:92

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ۚ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ

And thus We have inspired to you a reading that is in Arabic, so that you may warn the mother of the towns and those around it, and to warn about the Day of Gathering that is inevitable. A group will be in Paradise, and a group in Hell. 42:7

Tradition has long assumed that **Umm al-Qurā**, the “Mother of towns,” refers to Mecca. Yet the Qur’an itself does not specify a particular city - it describes a **status**, a central, prominent settlement with a clear historical footprint.

Which city, then, actually carried such a title?

A remarkable answer comes from the **Petra Papyri**. In a study, *“The Titles of Petra in the Sixth Century: The Evidence from the Petra Papyri”* by Mohammed I. Al-Nasarat & Sa’ad A. Twissi, scholars analyzed Byzantine-era administrative documents from Petra. What stands out is how the city officially described itself:

- Imperial Colony Antoniana
- Distinguished
- **Holy**
- **Mother of the Colonies**
- Hadriana Petra
- Metropolis of Palaestina Tertia Salutaris

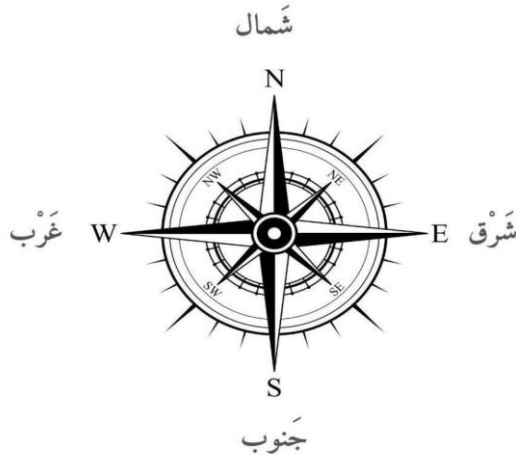
Petra was explicitly a mother-city, a regional capital and central hub, exactly the type of city the Qur’an calls “Umm al-Qurā.” By contrast, there is no historical evidence that Mecca ever held such a title.

The alignment is striking. Petra’s official status, recorded in its own documents, mirrors the Qur’anic description. While not a standalone proof, it is a compelling historical clue reinforcing Petra as the city referred to in the Qur’an, rather than the location inherited by later tradition.

Orientation in the Qur’an: East as the reference

Before analyzing the relevant Qur’an verses, it is important to clarify the Arabic terms for cardinal directions:

- **North**; شمال (shamāl)
- **South**: جنوب (janūb)
- **East**: شرق (sharq)
- **West**: غرب (gharb)



In several verses, the Qur'an uses the words شمال (shamāl/north) and جنوب (janūb/south).

North:[18:17; 18:18; 34:15; 50:17; 56:41; 69:25; 70:37]

South: [3:191; 4:103; 9:35; 22:36: 32:16]

For example:

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ أَيْقَاظًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشَّمَالِ ۖ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ ۚ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمَلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعْبًا

You may have thought that they were awake, yet they were asleep. We made them turn right and north, while their dog lay with his forelegs stretched across the threshold. If you had looked at them you would have surely turned away and fled with horror at the sight. 18:18

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ ۖ جَنَّاتٍ عَن يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ ۚ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ ۚ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

There was for Saba a proof in their dwelling-place: two gardens, on the right and on the north "Eat of the provision of your Lord, and be grateful to Him. A good land and a forgiving Lord!" 34:15

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيهِ

But as for him who is given his book in his north, he will say, "I wish I was never given my book. 69:25

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Those who remember God while standing, and sitting, and on their south; and they reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, You did not create this in vain, glory to You, so protect us from the punishment of the Fire." 3:191

تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

Their south forsake their beds; they call to their Lord in fear and hope, and of what We have provided them they spend. 32:16

Yet many translations render these terms as “left” and “right.” Why?

The answer lies in **perspective**. If you face **east**:

- North (shamāl) naturally falls to your **left**.
- South (janūb) naturally falls to your **right**.

In other words, the Qur’an describes directions from the viewpoint of someone facing east. Translators used “left” and “right” to capture this relative orientation, but the cardinal reality is that **north = left, south = right**, looking east.

The Qur’an’s spatial language assumes an east-facing frame of reference. The directions make coherent sense only when read this way.

This mirrors ancient cartographic practice. The Madaba Map, a 6th-century mosaic discovered near Petra, preserves exactly this worldview: east at the top, north to the left, south to the right.

By contrast, no ancient map, inscription, or urban record from Mecca shows an east-oriented layout. Its historical spatial system does not align with the Qur’an’s directional logic.

The Qur’an’s directional references, therefore, correspond naturally to Petra and its surroundings, not Mecca. This is more than a minor detail, it is a structural clue reinforcing the alignment of Qur’anic description with Petra’s geography.



The Madaba Map

They ask you about the mountains

Certain verses in the Qur'an are often passed over as minor. They are recited, acknowledged, and left unexplored. Yet it is frequently these understated details that carry the most decisive clues - questions recorded not by chance, but because they reveal the lived reality of the people to whom the message was delivered.

Consider this carefully: if a messenger appeared in your city today, and you were granted the opportunity to question him, would you ask about mountains? Almost certainly not. You would ask about law, belief, salvation, destiny. Mountains would probably not even enter your mind, unless they defined your existence.

Yet the Qur'an preserves this exact question:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا
فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا 20:106
لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا 20:107

And they ask you about the mountains. Say, "My Lord will crumble them utterly." And leave it a level plain, with neither crookedness nor any curving to be seen therein'.

Why would such a question arise at all?

This inquiry only makes sense if the mountains were not distant scenery, but central to daily life. These were not people who merely lived *near* mountains, they lived *in* them. Their dwellings were carved into stone. Their sanctuaries, tombs, refuges, and places of worship were embedded in rock. The mountains sheltered them, protected them, and defined their civilization. To ask about the fate of the mountains was to ask about the fate of their homes, their cities, their very existence.

The Qur'an records this question because it reflects a concrete environment. It preserves the concern of a people whose world was inseparable from stone.

Once again, the Qur'an quietly but precisely points us to a specific setting: a civilization shaped by rock and rooted in mountains – Petra.

Dates, Grapes, and Agricultural Context

When the Qur'an refers to everyday practices, it does so within the environmental reality familiar to its first audience. Descriptions of food, agriculture, and production are therefore not abstract symbols; they presuppose landscapes where such activities were materially

possible and socially established. One such example is the Qur'anic reference to fruit cultivation and processing.

The Qur'an states:

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

And of the fruits of the date-palms and grapevines: you take therefrom an intoxicant, and goodly provision. In that is a proof for people who reason. 16:67

This verse assumes the regular cultivation of date-palms and grapevines, followed by systematic processing of their fruits. Grape cultivation in particular requires sustained irrigation, terracing, pruning, harvesting, and dedicated installations for pressing and collection.

In Petra and the surrounding Nabataean territory, archaeology preserves this exact agricultural framework. Researchers have documented over fifty rock-cut winepresses, often integrated into terraced hillsides. These presses are part of a broader system that includes channels, cisterns, dams, and runoff-capture installations, designed to support vineyards in a semi-arid environment. Together, they attest to large-scale grape cultivation and fruit processing over centuries.



Ancient winepress found near Petra

In contrast, archaeological investigations in and around Mecca have not identified comparable agricultural infrastructure from the relevant period. While the broader Hejaz contains rock art, lithic remains, and limited settlement traces, no winepresses, terraced vineyards, or rock-cut fruit-processing installations of similar scale and antiquity have been

documented. The environmental conditions and material record do not show evidence of sustained viticulture or grape-based production comparable to that seen in Petra.

The Qur'anic description in 16:67 aligns closely with an environment where date-palms and grapevines were cultivated and processed. On present archaeological evidence, Petra fits this description in a concrete and documented way, while Mecca does not provide corresponding material remains.

Tombs and Sepulchres

In three separate passages, the Qur'an describes people emerging on the Day of Judgment from أَجْدَاثٍ (ajdāth):

وَتُفَجَّ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ

And it is blown into the forms.”; and then from the sepulchres will they hasten forth to their Lord. 36:51

حُشَّعًا أَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُنتَشِرٌ

Their eyes humbled, they will come forth from the sepulchres like locusts spreading.54:7

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَى نُصُبٍ يُوفِصُونَ

The day they will come forth from the "sepulchres" in haste, as though towards an idol, running.70:43

These verses are often translated using the generic term *graves*. This translation, however, obscures a critical distinction present in the Arabic.

Classical Arabic already possesses a precise and common word for an ordinary grave: قَبْرٌ (qabr), referring to a simple burial pit in the ground. The Qur'an is fully aware of this term and uses it elsewhere. Yet in all three passages above, it deliberately avoids **qabr** and instead uses **ajdāth**.

Instead, it consistently uses أَجْدَاثٍ.

LEXICAL MEANING OF AJDĀTH

Classical Arabic lexicons define أَجْدَاثٍ as:

- burial places that are recognizable and marked,
- constructed or hewn sepulchres, not unmarked pits,
- resting places that are visible, sometimes monumental, and spatially distinct.

In short, ajdāth refers to tombs or sepulchres, not simple earth graves.

This linguistic choice matters. The Qur'an's imagery assumes the existence of tombs or sepulchres in the surrounding landscape.



Tombs in Petra

This raises a concrete geographical question:

Where do we find a landscape dominated by visible, constructed sepulchres rather than simple ground burials?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CORRELATION

Petra presents one of the most concentrated funerary landscapes in the ancient world. The city contains hundreds of rock-cut tombs, carved directly into sandstone cliffs, many of them monumental in scale and architectural complexity.

Among the most prominent are:

- the Urn Tomb,
- the Silk Tomb,
- the Corinthian Tomb,
- and the Palace Tomb.

By contrast, the Mecca region shows no archaeological evidence of “pre-Islamic” sepulchres.

Excavations and surveys in and around Mecca have not revealed:

- rock-cut tombs,
- monumental burial façades,

- or large-scale, permanent funerary architecture comparable to Petra.

Burials in Mecca appear to have been simple, consistent with qabr, not ajdāth.

The Qur'an's use of ajdāth presupposes a funerary environment defined by visible, constructed sepulchres. Petra's landscape fulfils this description directly and abundantly. Mecca's does not.

Garden beneath which rivers flow

The Qur'an promises the believers that in the Garden of Eternity they will have whatever their souls desire. Each soul receives what it longs for, shaped by its own experience and needs.

قُلْ أَذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ ۚ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَمَصِيرًا
لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ ۚ كَانَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَعْدًا مَسْئُولًا
25:15-25:16

Say: "Is that better or the garden of eternity that the righteous have been promised?" It is their reward and destiny. In it they will have what they wish eternally. It is upon your Lord a requested promise.

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِصِحَافٍ مِّنْ ذَهَبٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ ۖ وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ ۖ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ
43:71

There will be passed around among them platters of gold and cups, and they will find everything the self desires and the eyes wish for, and therein will you abide eternally.

Yet alongside this emphasis on individual fulfilment, the Qur'an repeats one **specific image** with striking consistency. More than thirty times, the Garden of Eternity is described as:

جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
"Gardens beneath which rivers flow."

[2:25; 2:266; 3:15; 3:136; 3:195; 3:198; 4:13; 4:57; 4:122; 5:12; 5:85; 5:119; 9:72; 9:89; 9:100; 13:35; 14:23; 16:31; 20:76; 22:14; 22:23; 25:10; 29:85; 39:20; 47:12; 48:5; 48:17; 57:12; 58:22; 61:12; 64:9; 65:11; 66:8; 85:11; 98:8]

The key word is ¹تَحْتِ, ²²meaning under, beneath, below. In classical Arabic, تَحْتِ indicates a vertical relationship, something physically beneath something else, not beside it, not running through it, not flowing nearby.

²² is the contr. of فَوْق (Msb, K:) and النَّحْتُ [signifying *The location that is beneath, below, or under,*] is opposed to الْفَوْقُ, and is used in relation to that which is separate from another thing;

This raises a structural question:

If each soul gets what it personally desires, why does the Qur'an return again and again to this one image? Why insist on rivers flowing **from beneath** the gardens?

The answer lies in the lived environment of the audience.

In Petra, water management was structurally central to urban survival. Archaeological research has documented an extensive network of subterranean channels, rock-cut conduits, underground pipelines, cisterns, and covered aqueducts, through which rainwater was collected, stored, and distributed beneath the city.

These systems were foundational, enabling sustained settlement in an otherwise arid environment. Accordingly, water flowing beneath the surface constituted the most secure and reliable form of provision available to the population. Subterranean flow minimized evaporation, reduced loss, and protected supply from environmental volatility.

Against this background, the Qur'an's repeated description "*gardens beneath which rivers flow*" (جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ) acquires a concrete semantic grounding.

The emphasis on *beneath* (تحت) reflects a vertical spatial relationship that closely corresponds to the audience's lived experience of water infrastructure.

The repetition of this imagery across many passages suggests it was intentional. The Qur'an presents ultimate abundance using a model of provision that its audience would have immediately recognized.

Thus, the description is grounded in the lived experience of a community whose survival depended on carefully managed subterranean water systems. The close correspondence between this imagery and Petra's known hydraulic infrastructure underscores how the Qur'an's language consistently reflects this specific environment.

We reduce the land from its edges

The Qur'an presents a striking image in two passages:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ
الْحِسَابِ 13:41

Do they not see that We come to the land and reduce it from its edges? And God gives judgment and there is none to override His judgment. And He is swift in reckoning.

أَنَا نَاتِي الْأَرْضِ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۚ بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ
أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ

But We gave these and their fathers enjoyment until life became long for them. Do they not see that We come to the land and reduce it from its edges? Is it then they who will be the victors?? 21:44

The key verb is يَرَوْنَ (yaraw) - “they see.” Classical Arabic, as explained in Lane’s Lexicon, makes clear that رَأَى (ra’ā) refers to actual sight, the physical act of seeing: “*The رَأَى of the eye; the sight thereof; literally, what can be observed with the eyes.*” This indicates that the Qur’an is describing an observable phenomenon, not an abstract metaphor.

Traditional commentaries often interpret “reducing the land from its edges” as the decline of kingdoms, the loss of territory, or diminishing power. While this interpretation has symbolic value, it does not account for the Qur’an’s explicit emphasis on visible observation.

Petra’s geography provides a striking, literal match. Geological and geomorphological evidence shows that the sandstone and limestone that form Petra’s cliffs and plateau are actively being eroded and worn down by natural processes:

- Petra’s defining geology is predominantly sandstone and related sedimentary rocks sculpted over millions of years by wind, water, and weathering. These processes continuously wear down cliff faces, ridges, and escarpments.
- Modern studies of Petra’s rock slopes observe instability and rockfalls triggered by rain, erosion along joints and bedding planes, and gradual breakup of cliff edges, processes that literally reduce the edges of the landscape over time.
- Climatic factors typical of arid rift environments, such as episodic intense rainfall, promote erosion and removal of material from rock faces, further retreating cliff edges and reshaping valleys.

This means the land at Petra literally changes shape, recedes, and diminishes from its edges through geological time, something an ancient observer could witness over generations.

By contrast, the geology around Mecca is fundamentally different from the easily eroded sandstone cliffs of Petra:

²³ رَأَى

is an inf. n. of رَأَى [q. v.]: (T, S, K:) [and is also a subst.: used as a subst.,] it means The رَأَى of the eye; (Lth, T, Msb;) i. e. the sight thereof; like رُؤْيَةٍ

- The rock formations around Mecca are dominated by Precambrian igneous and metamorphic basement rocks such as granodiorite, tonalite, and other crystalline rocks.
- These hard resistant rocks are far less prone to rapid, visible edge erosion compared to sandstone. Their weathering occurs much more slowly and typically doesn't create the dramatic cliff retreat and valley edge reduction seen in sandstone landscapes.

This means the Qur'anic image of "reducing the land from its edges" fits the type of landscape seen at Petra far more naturally than the terrain surrounding Mecca.

The Rose City

Petra is famously known as the "Rose City," a name derived from the red and pink hues of its sandstone cliffs. These colors result from **iron oxide within the stone**, which oxidizes over time, producing the distinctive rosy tint that has fascinated travelers for centuries. The natural color of the cliffs is not a fleeting phenomenon; it is a constant, defining feature of the landscape.



Could the Qur'an be alluding to this unique visual environment? Consider the verse:

فَإِذَا أُنشِقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ 55:37

Translations vary:

Saheeh International

And when the heaven is split open and becomes rose-colored like oil.

Shakir

And when the heaven is rent asunder, and then becomes red like red hide.

Hilali & Khan

Then when the heaven is rent asunder, and it becomes rosy or red like red-oil, or red hide.

Here we immediately notice a key issue: the Arabic words وَرْدَةٌ (wardah) and دِهَانٍ (dihan) are translated differently. Some translators describe the sky as “rose-colored” or “pink,” while others opt for “red” or “like red hide.”

Two words are central: وَرْدَةٌ (**wardah**) and دِهَانٍ (**dihan**). Consulting **Lane’s Lexicon**:

- **Wardah**²⁴: “A bright or reddish color inclining toward yellow, essentially a pinkish or rosy hue.”
- **Dihan**²⁵: “Red hide, oil used for anointing; can also refer to rain that moistens the earth.”

Notably, translating *dihan* as “oil” is misleading: oil is yellowish, not pink. Translating it as “red hide” emphasizes red, which conflicts with the rosy tone of *wardah*. However some classical sources link *dihan* to rain that moistens the surface, producing a slight shine or deepening of color.

Observationally, this aligns with Petra: after a light rainfall, the cliffs’ pink sandstone becomes more vivid, almost glowing. In other words, the verse may describe the sky’s hue in a way that mirrors the enhanced pink tones of Petra’s cliffs after rain.

²⁴ وَرْدَةٌ [A bright, or yellowish, bay colour;] a colour between that of a horse that is termed كُمَيْتٌ and that of one termed أَشْقَرٌ: (S, L:) or a red colour inclining to yellow. (L.)

²⁵ دِهَانٌ A red hide. (S, K. [See also دِهِينٌ.]) Hence, in the Kur [lv. 37], فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ, i. e. And shall become red, (S,) or of a rosecolour, (Zj, L in art. ورد,) or of a red colour inclining to yellow, (L in that art.,) like the red hide: (S, Bd, Jel:) or like the hide that is of a pure red colour: (TA:) or like that [oil] with which one anoints; see دُهْنٌ: or it is pl. of دُهْنٌ: (Bd:) [thus] it means, accord. to Abou-Is-hák [Zj], and shall become [red, &c., and] of various colours, by reason of the very great terror, like divers oils: or, accord. to Er-Rághib, like the dregs of oil, or of olive-oil; for this is another signification of الدهان. (TA.) Also ‡ Weak rain: (AZ, S:) or rain such as moistens the surface of the ground; (JK, K;) and so دُهْنٌ : (K:) pl. دِهَانٌ. (AZ, S, K.)

For listeners in Petra, who were intimately familiar with the cliffs' color changes, the description of a rose-colored sky would have been immediately recognizable, vivid, and meaningful.

It demonstrates how the Qur'an often draws on observable phenomena to communicate profound truths.

خسف الارض - When the earth gives way beneath them

The Qur'an repeatedly describes a form of punishment in which the earth itself collapses, swallowing those upon it. This phenomenon is referred to by the root **خ س ف**, appearing in multiple passages:

فَكَلَّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنبِهِ^ط فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ
الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ أَغْرَقْنَا وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

And each We took for his transgression; and among them was he upon whom We sent a storm of stones; and among them was he whom the Blast seized; and among them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow; and among them was he whom We drowned. And God wronged them not, but they wronged their souls.29:40

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ
Do those who scheme evils feel secure that God will not cause the earth to cave in with them, or that the punishment will not come upon them from where they do not perceive? 16:45

The Qur'an repeatedly warns that this is not a one-time occurrence:

[16:45; 17:68; 28:81; 28:82; 29:40; 34:9; 67:16; 75:8]

خَسَفَ denotes a **sudden, subsurface collapse**, a literal giving way of the land beneath structures or people.

Lexicons define **خَسَفَ** as:

- The ground giving way,
- Sudden subsidence where structures or inhabitants are swallowed,
- Collapse originating from the earth itself rather than from external forces.

GEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS IMPLIED BY خَسَفُ الْأَرْضِ

For such a warning to be meaningful to its first audience, the landscape must be one where this kind of collapse is imaginable. Certain geological conditions make حَسْفُ plausible as a real danger rather than an abstract threat.

Such regions typically share several characteristics:

- active or nearby fault systems,
- fractured or layered bedrock rather than massive solid shield rock,
- rock types prone to collapse or subsurface erosion, such as limestone or sandstone,
- underground voids, cavities, or weakened strata,
- seismic stress capable of triggering sudden ground failure.

These conditions create a tangible risk of the earth “giving way,” embedding the threat in lived experience rather than abstract imagination. Without such environmental reality, the Qur’anic warning would remain purely figurative.

COMPARING THE LANDSCAPES

The geological characteristics of Mecca and Petra reveal a striking contrast, one that directly impacts the plausibility of the Qur’anic description of حَسْفُ الْأَرْضِ, the earth giving way.

Mecca’s terrain is dominated by Precambrian and Paleozoic igneous and metamorphic rocks, forming a solid and stable geological shield. These formations are exceptionally resistant to erosion or subsurface collapse. The region experiences limited seismic activity, and there is no historical evidence of widespread ground subsidence, sinkholes, or other forms of land collapse. While Mecca contains some mountains, its solid bedrock and lack of layered, easily eroded strata make large-scale ground failure unlikely. Archaeological and geological surveys confirm the absence of features that could correspond to the Qur’an’s depiction of the earth literally swallowing what stands above it.

By contrast, Petra sits along the Dead Sea Transform fault system, one of the most seismically active regions in the area. The city is carved into sandstone and limestone cliffs, rocks that are deeply fractured by tectonic stresses and naturally prone to erosion. Its landscape is defined by narrow gorges, rock-cut terraces, and extensive underground cavities, and archaeological and geological studies provide clear evidence of historical collapses, subsidence, and ongoing erosion along cliff edges. Over centuries, sections of Petra’s cliffs and terraces have visibly worn away or given way, creating subsurface voids and areas where the land has literally collapsed.

For the inhabitants of Petra, these hazards were not abstract concepts but tangible, observable realities. They lived among cliffs that could crumble, terraces that could erode, and ground that could shift, making the Qur’anic imagery of حَسْفُ الْأَرْضِ immediately recognizable and meaningful. In Mecca, by contrast, no similar environmental or geological

context exists. The stable, resistant terrain would offer no such vivid reference for understanding the earth literally giving way.

Living among the dead

The Qur'an presents a striking image in 19:98:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

And how many a generation have We destroyed before them? Do you perceive any of them or hear from them a sound? 19:98

The emphasis on perception “do you perceive any of them, or hear from them” assumes that the audience could directly witness and experience the silence of the dead.

This imagery works only if the deceased were interwoven into the spaces of daily life. If tombs or graves were situated on the periphery, outside the center of the city, the verse would lose its immediacy.

In Mecca, burial grounds were outside urban centers. Residents would have been far removed from the graves; the dramatic power of 19:98, of the dead being present yet unreachable, would not resonate.

Petra, however, presents a radically different reality. Monumental tombs such as the Urn Tomb, Silk Tomb, Corinthian Tomb, and the Royal Tombs were integrated directly into the urban center, carved into cliffs that overlooked homes, streets, and public spaces.

Residents lived, traded, and moved daily in the shadow of these sepulchers. The dead were part of the city's architecture, shaping its streetscape and experience.

In addition to tombs, Petra preserves the scars of vanished generations. Collapsed structures from ancient earthquakes, entire ruined complexes testify to past catastrophes.

In this city, the silence of prior generations is tangible; their absence felt.

The Qur'anic phrase “do you perceive any of them or hear from them” achieves its full impact only in such an environment.

In Petra, life and death coexist in immediate proximity. The verse resonates because it describes a world where the traces of previous peoples are unavoidable, inseparable from the present, however unreachable.

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Iron

Petra is widely known as the “Rose City,” a name drawn from the striking pink, red, and reddish-brown hues of its cliffs and monuments. These colors are not incidental - they are the direct result of iron, an element that defines the region’s geology.

Petra’s rock-cut architecture is carved primarily from Nubian sandstone, which is naturally pale. The vivid reds, purples, and deep browns emerge when iron-bearing minerals in the sandstone oxidize, coating the grains and producing the dramatic banding seen throughout the cliffs and façades.

Where iron is abundant, the stone turns deep red; where it is less concentrated, softer pinks and yellows appear. Iron not only creates Petra’s distinctive color palette but also enhances durability. Oxidized iron forms stable mineral coatings that slow erosion, helping preserve tombs, façades, and monuments for millennia. In Petra, iron is not abstract - it is visible, tangible, and integral to the very environment its inhabitants interacted with daily.

SURAH AL-ḤADĪD

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

And We sent our messengers with the clear signs, and sent down with them the Book and the balance, that men uphold equity - and We sent down iron wherein is mighty power and benefits for men and that God might know him who helps Him and His messengers unseen; God is strong and exalted in might.

Positioned at the mathematical center of the Qur’an (chapter 57 of 114), this surah highlights the thematic and symbolic importance of iron. God describes iron as possessing both might (بأس شديد) and benefit (منافع), emphasizing not only its physical strength but its utility and role in human society.

In Petra, archaeological evidence confirms the material reality of this verse: iron was central to daily life. It was used in tools, utensils, construction, and structural reinforcement. Iron embedded in the sandstone enhanced both practical use and the durability of carved structures. The landscape itself; cliffs, monuments, tombs - is saturated with iron, making it a living, visible demonstration of the Qur’an’s reference.

IRON AS A SIGN

The verse concludes by stating that iron is a way God identifies those who support Him and His messengers. This statement becomes strikingly literal in Petra. The city's iron-rich landscape is everywhere apparent: in the stone, in the tools, and in the architectural infrastructure. If one were to follow God's guidance and the path of His messenger - the Qur'an's instructions, patterns, and signs - one would naturally be led to a place where iron defines the environment. Petra is that place.

In other words, adherence to God's message, manifested through observance of the Qur'an, automatically leads to Petra: a landscape traced with iron, matching the verse perfectly. The iron is the material proof, the physical sign; Petra is the location. God can "see" who truly follows Him through this correspondence: those who recognize the sign, who trace the guidance in the real world, are the ones the verse identifies.

STRENGTH, DURABILITY, AND CLARITY

The Qur'an's recurring references to iron: its strength, utility, and unmistakable presence, presume an audience already familiar with iron as a common, durable, and practically significant material.

قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا 17:50

Say: "Be you stones or iron

وَلَهُمْ مَقْعٌ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ 22:21

And for them are restraints of iron.

لَقَدْ كُنْتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنْكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ 50:22

"You were in neglect of this, so We lifted your screen from you, and your vision today is iron.

FAMILIARITY WITH IRON IN THE NABATAEAN WORLD

Archaeological evidence from Petra and its broader cultural sphere confirms that iron was familiar in everyday contexts. Iron implements and objects have been recovered from Nabataean contexts in and around Petra, illustrating that iron was used, circulated, and integrated into material culture:

- Excavations in Petra have recovered **iron tools and iron objects** used in construction and daily life: including iron nails, picks, and possibly dagger-like items, dating to the Nabataean period, showing that metalworking and iron use were part of ordinary practice.
- Metalworking traces and slag concentrations found in wadis near the ancient city suggest localized metal processing activities that produced iron and other metals,

indicating that the community engaged with ironworking technologies at least to the point of processing and working iron objects.

- Iron and copper fixtures have been found embedded in architectural contexts, showing iron's integration into structural and functional uses in Nabataean constructions.

These finds demonstrate that iron was materially present, worked, and used in Petra's environment.

The Qur'anic verses about iron presume that iron was a familiar, highly significant material for their audience, not a rare or obscure metal. Archaeological evidence from Petra and its vicinity supports this assumption: iron artifacts, architectural uses, and metalworking debris confirm that iron was visible, worked, and integrated into daily life. This material reality gives the Qur'an's references to strength, durability, and clarity in iron immediate, concrete resonance for a community living amid iron-rich stone and technology.

Tar (Qitrān)

The Qur'an often incorporates highly specific material details, details that its original audience would have immediately recognized. A striking example appears in the description of the garments of the inhabitants of the Fire:

سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِّنْ قِطْرَانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمْ النَّارُ 14:50

Their garments of Tar, and the Fire covering their faces.

The choice of qitrān (tar) is significant. Instead of using a generic term for burning or heat, the Qur'an specifies a substance widely known in the ancient Near East for its flammability, strong odor, and ability to inflict intense pain. It is a tangible material, culturally familiar to the audience.

CLASSICAL ARABIC LEXICONS PROVIDE PRECISE DEFINITIONS.

Lane's Arabic–English Lexicon records:

قِطْرَانٌ (S, Msb, K) and قِطْرَانٌ (Msb, K) and قِطْرَانٌ (K) [Tar, or liquid pitch;] what exudes from the tree called أَتْهَل, [or juniper, or the species of juniper called *savin*, both of which have this name in the present day,] (Msb, K, * TA,) and from the أَرْز [or pine-tree], and the like, (K, TA,) when subjected to the action of fire; (lit. when cooked;) used for smearing [mangy] camels, (Msb, TA,) &c.; (Msb;) i. q. هِنَاءٌ. (S.) [See also زُفْتُ.]

From this definition, several points are clear:

- Qitrān is a manufactured substance
- It is produced from local trees, including juniper, cedar, and pine.

JUNIPER AND THE PETRA REGION

Juniper species, notably *Juniperus phoenicea* and related varieties, are native to the highlands of southern Jordan and northwest Arabia, encompassing the Petra region. Archaeobotanical surveys confirm that these trees grew in semi-arid, mountainous zones, providing raw material for qitrān production within the Nabataean landscape.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF TAR IN NABATAEAN MATERIAL CULTURE

Archaeological findings further support the use of tar-based substances. A study titled: *“Analysis of resinous material present on an alabaster lid excavated from Nabataean Moa in the Arava Valley”*

identified resinous substances consistent with tar or pitch on a Nabataean artifact. Moa, a Nabataean station linked to Petra by caravan routes, demonstrates that tar was not only known but actively produced, handled, and applied in Nabataean society.

Rather than relying on abstract imagery, the Qur’an draws upon the tangible environment and practices of its first listeners.

In sum, the Qur’an’s reference to qitrān illustrates its consistent use of materially and culturally grounded imagery, linking teaching directly to the lived experience of its audience in the Nabataean and North Arabian context.

Ancient names of Petra

We all know the city as Petra, but most people do not know the meaning of its name. Its famous Greek name, *Petra* (πέτρα), literally means **“rock,”** a perfect description of the city’s defining feature: homes, tombs, and monuments carved directly into the mountains. The name emphasizes the material itself, the stone that shapes not only Petra’s buildings but its entire landscape and identity.

Remarkably, the Qur’an reflects the same reality. It refers to the people of Petra as Ashab al-Hijr, meaning **“the people of the rock”**:

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

The companions of al-Hijr denied the messengers. 15:80

The Arabic Hijr (حِجْر) literally means rock, stone, or rocky place. The text describes them carving homes from the mountains:

وَكَانُوا يَنْجُتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ الَّتِي هُمْ بِهَا آمِنِينَ

“They carved dwellings from the mountains, feeling secure. 15:82

It describes a population literally carving their homes from stone, exactly as Petra is known today.

Linguistically, the Qur'an preserves the Greek name's meaning;

- Greek: Petra = stone/rock
- Qur'an: Ḥijr = stone/rock
- Qur'an: Ashab al-Ḥijr = people of the stone place

But the story goes deeper. Petra's original Semitic name was *Raqmu* / *Raqēmō*, as recorded in ancient Nabataean inscriptions (rqmw / rqm). This was the city's own name, long before Greek influence renamed it Petra.

The Qur'an preserves this name as al-Raqīm in the story of the People of the Cave:

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ

"Did you think that the People of the Cave and the Inscription [Al-raqim] were of Our wondrous signs? (Qur'an 18:9)

Linguistically, the Semitic root r-q-m (ر-ق-م) relates to writing, marking, or inscribing. Petra provides a perfect real-world match:

- The city is covered with monumental inscriptions, carved directly into its rock façades.
- Thousands of Nabataean inscriptions remain, preserving the names and records of its inhabitants.
- The city's monumental tombs, façades, and carved spaces are literally marks in stone, echoing the meaning of Raqīm.

Through this, the Qur'an preserves both the material and inscribed identities of the city:

1. Petra / Ḥijr = "rock" / "stone" → emphasizes the material, physical reality of the city
2. Raqmu / Raqīm = "inscribed place" → emphasizes the cultural and monumental act of marking stone

The Qur'an's choice to preserve both names is striking. It embeds the location of the city linguistically, linking the narrative, the people, and the landscape. It provides a linguistic map to the true location.

Identifying the Qur'an's Audience Through Their Worship

To identify the community addressed by the Qur'an, it is not sufficient to examine geography alone. The Qur'an also speaks directly to the religious life of its audience. It criticizes specific forms of worship and concrete practices.

By observing what it condemns, we can infer what was materially present in the society it confronts. Earlier chapters have examined geography, environment, and history. This chapter adds a further dimension: cultic practice and its archaeological footprint.

If the Qur'an repeatedly denounces certain forms of worship, those practices must have been physically embedded in the audience's surroundings. This allows us to test candidate locations against material evidence. A landscape that preserves such remains will align naturally with the Qur'anic picture.

ALLĀT, AL-‘UZZĀ, AND MANĀT

One of the clearest cases is the Qur'an's explicit criticism of Allāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ
وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ

Have you seen Al-Lāt and Al-‘Uzzā, And Manāt the third, the other? 53:19-53:20

It then strips these figures of divine legitimacy:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۚ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ

They are only names you have named, you and your fathers, for which God sent down no authority. They follow only assumption, and what their souls desire; but there has come to them guidance from their Lord. 53:23

These verses assume that the audience is familiar with these figures not as distant myths, but as living objects of devotion. The Qur'an is not introducing unknown names; it is confronting an existing cultic environment.

This raises a testable historical question: where do we find material evidence for the active worship of these named deities?

PETRA: NABATAEAN EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The environment of Petra provides direct archaeological confirmation of the worship of Allāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt. Unlike later literary reconstructions, Nabataean inscriptions constitute contemporary primary evidence. As demonstrated by John F. Healey in *The Religion of the Nabataeans*, inscriptions carved in stone are the most reliable source for identifying Nabataean worship practises.

AL-‘UZZĀ

Al-Uzza appears in several inscriptions at Petra. One was discovered beside a niche on the way up to the Khubthah “High Place”.

*>lh nsyby >kz< wmr> byt>
<bd whb>lhy syr>*

These are the steles of al-‘Uzza and Mare Bayta (which) Wahballahi the plasterer/caravan-leader made.

The physical placement of this inscription beside a niche demonstrates that al-‘Uzzā was not merely known by name but actively venerated in Petra’s topography.

ALLĀT:

Allāt is also attested across Nabataean territory. At Wadi Ramm (‘Ayn esh-Shallaleh), a sanctuary dated to the late first century CE yielded inscriptions explicitly invoking her:

*dkyr hyn br <bd>lhy br
>bn<tmw qdm >ltw
>lht> dy b>rm <d <l(m)
Remembered be Hayyan son of son of ... before Allatu the goddess
who is in Iram, for ever.*

*dkrt >lt <ydw
bny> br >bslm btb
May Allat remember <Aydu the builder, son of Abshalam, for good*

These inscriptions provide direct epigraphic evidence that Allāt was recognized, named, and invoked.

MANĀT

Nabataean epigraphic evidence confirms that Manāt (written mnwtw in the inscriptions) was a known and worshipped goddess in the Nabataean world. She is attested in multiple tomb inscriptions from Madā’in Salih (Hegra), where studies document five inscriptions invoking her as part of standard Nabataean religious formulae.

In addition, a Nabataean inscription from Taymā mentions a goddess called mnwh, who is given the title *’lht ’lht’* — “*goddess of the goddesses*”. This is generally taken as an alternative spelling of Manāt, demonstrating her recognition across different Nabataean regions and her status as a deity of considerable importance.

These inscriptions provide direct epigraphic evidence that Manāt was venerated by Nabataean communities, alongside other deities such as Allāt, and al-‘Uzzā.

MECCA: ABSENCE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In contrast, Mecca presents no confirmed pre-Islamic archaeological evidence for the worship of Allāt, al-‘Uzzā, or Manāt.

All knowledge of their supposed Meccan cults derives from early “Islamic” literary sources, written centuries after the relevant period.

To date, no “pre-Islamic” temples, betyls, dedicatory inscriptions, or cultic installations have been archaeologically verified in Mecca itself.

This produces a stark asymmetry:

- In Nabataean regions, the worship of these deities is confirmed by contemporary inscriptions carved into the landscape.
- In Mecca, their worship is preserved only in later textual memory, unsupported by material remains.

‘ISA IBN MARYAM

One of the most persistent theological positions addressed by the Qur’an is the claim that God has taken a son. This is not mentioned once or twice in passing; it is a recurring assertion attributed to the audience themselves, and it is repeatedly corrected, rejected, and dismantled.

This alone tells us something important: The Qur’an is not debating an abstract doctrine, it is responding to a belief actively held within the community it addresses.

The Qur’an records:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ ۖ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

And they said: “God has taken a son!” Be He glorified. To Him is all that is in the heavens and the earth, all are dutiful to Him. 2:116

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةٌ ۖ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

The Originator of the Heavens and the Earth: how could He have a son when He has no companion, and He created all things? And He knows all things. 6:101

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ
سُلْطَانٍ بِهَذَا أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

They said: "God has taken a son." Glory be to Him! He is the Free from Need. To Him is what is in the heavens and the earth. Do you have proof for this? Or do you say about God what you do not know? 10:68

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ
رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا
لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ
وَكَيلٌ

O people of the Book, do not overstep in your way, nor say about God except the truth. The Messiah, Isa son of Maryam, was no more than a messenger of God and His word, which He cast to Maryam, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and do not say: "Three." Cease, for it is better for you. God is only One god, be He glorified that He should have a child! To Him is all that is in the heavens and the earth; and God is enough as a Caretaker. 4:171

ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ
مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ سُبْحَانَهُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ
وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

Such is Isa, son of Maryam, the word of truth concerning which they doubt. It is not for God to take a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a matter, He but says to it: 'Be,' and it is. And God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him. This is a straight path. 19:34-19:37

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

They take their rabbis and their religious scholars as lords rather than God, and the Messiah, son of Maryam and they were not commanded save to serve One God; there is no god save He. Glory be to Him above that to which they ascribe a partnership! 9:31

The Qur'an is repeatedly pushing back against the claims that God has a Son:

[18:4; 19:88; 19:91; 19:92; 21:26; 23:91; 25:2; 37:152; 39:4; 72:3; 112:3]

Such repetition only makes sense if the belief was widespread and influential. The Qur'an is not constructing a hypothetical opponent. It is addressing real claims circulating within its environment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE QUR'AN'S ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

These passages together reveal important features of the community the Qur'an addresses.

- 'Isa ibn Maryam was already known to them, not as a distant or foreign figure, but as someone whose status was actively discussed and disputed.
- Claims were being made that God had a son, indicating more than casual speculation; this was a position held strongly enough to warrant repeated correction.
- Certain groups within the audience elevated 'Isa beyond prophethood, assigning him a role or rank that the Qur'an explicitly rejects.
- These were living debates. The Qur'an speaks into an ongoing religious conversation, not into a cultural vacuum.

If the Qur'an is repeatedly engaging with debates about 'Isa ibn Maryam and the claim that God has taken a son, this theological environment should leave traces in the historical landscape. Religious ideas do not exist in isolation; they are embedded in institutions, buildings, inscriptions, and material culture.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Archaeological excavations at Petra have revealed a substantial and visible Christian presence. Multiple churches have been identified within the city itself, demonstrating that Christianity was institutionally established.



The Byzantine Church at Petra

Beyond formal churches, Christian symbols are widespread in Petra's built environment. Archaeological reports document numerous incised crosses carved into interior walls and www.quran-is-fully-detailed.com

architectural elements. Earlier Nabataean structures, including tombs and monumental facades, were reused and adapted. The carving of crosses into these older monuments shows that Christianity reshaped the religious landscape in a visible and lasting way.

INSCRIPTIONS IN THE NABATAEAN HINTERLAND:

The broader region surrounding Petra strengthens this picture. Inscriptions from northeastern Jordan explicitly invoke 'Isa. One reads:



O 'Isay ('sy), help him against those who deny you.

This inscription shows that 'Isa was not merely known as a historical figure but was addressed directly in appeals. He was part of lived religious practice, not an abstract theological concept.

Together, the churches, crosses, and inscriptions confirm that debates about Isa's status would have been unavoidable in Petra and its hinterland.

MECCA: LACK OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

In stark contrast to Petra, Mecca offers no direct archaeological or epigraphic evidence of the population acknowledging 'Isa. Excavations and surveys around Mecca have not uncovered any churches, chapels, or Christian sites. Unlike Petra, there are no repurposed structures with Christian symbols, crosses, or inscriptions. Mecca lacks rock inscriptions, graffiti, or epigraphic evidence showing that Isa was locally recognized or venerated.

Claims that Christian communities existed in Mecca rest entirely on later Islamic historiography, written centuries after the Qur'an. These reports are not corroborated by material evidence. From an archaeological standpoint, Mecca remains silent on the question of a local Christian presence.

The Qur'an addresses an audience for whom 'Isa ibn Maryam was a recognized figure. Archaeology shows that this description fits Petra and its surrounding Nabataean regions naturally. Christianity was present there in documentable forms.

In Mecca, by contrast, the material record provides no comparable context. Once again, the convergence is clear: the Qur'an's theological concerns align with the religious landscape preserved in Petra, not with the archaeological profile of Mecca.

God's Attributes in Nabataean Inscriptions

In the preceding chapter, we examined the forms of worship the Qur'an explicitly criticizes and tested whether those practices correspond to material evidence preserved in Petra.

This chapter reverses the direction of inquiry. Rather than focusing on what the Qur'an rejects, it asks whether the religious landscape of Petra preserves traces that resonate positively with the Qur'anic conception of God.

The Qur'an does not present God through a single name alone, but through a coherent system of attributes.

The guiding question of this chapter is therefore straightforward: do Nabataean inscriptions from Petra employ divine titles or attributes that correspond to those emphasized in the Qur'an?

If such parallels exist, they would further strengthen the case that the Qur'an emerged within the cultural and religious environment reflected in the Nabataean archaeological record.

DUSHARA - LORD OF SIRIUS

We have already examined the worship of Allāt, al-'Uzzā, and Manāt in the Nabataean world. Yet above all others stood the principal Nabataean deity: Dushara.

The name appears in Nabataean inscriptions as *dwšr'*, written in a consonantal script that does not preserve vowels. Modern scholarship commonly vocalizes this as *Dhū al-Sharā* (ذو الشرى), usually translated "He of Sharā" or "Lord of Sharā."

Traditionally, *Sharā* has been understood as a reference to the Shara mountain range southeast of Petra, a dominant geographic feature of southern Jordan. This interpretation is largely based on later Arabic historical tradition. The ninth-century writer Hishām ibn al-Kalbī, in *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* (The Book of Idols), records the name *Dhū al-Sharā* and associates the deity with this mountainous region.

However, it is methodologically important to recognize that no surviving Nabataean inscription explicitly defines *dwšr'* as "Lord of the Shara Mountains." The geographic interpretation arises from later sources and linguistic inference, not from a Nabataean

explanatory text. Some scholars have therefore proposed alternative meanings for Sharā, including associations with fertile wilderness or cultivated territory, indicating that the original sense of the name in Nabataean usage is not definitively settled.

However, because the Nabataean script did not record vowels, an alternative reading is possible: Dhū al-Shi'rā (ذو الشعرى) “Lord of Shi'rā,” potentially corresponding to the bright star Sirius. This resonates with the Qur'anic verse:

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشَّعْرَىٰ

“And He is the Lord of Sirius.” (Qur'an 53:49)

The similarity between ذو الشرى (traditional reading of Dushara) and ذو الشعرى (Qur'anic “Lord of Sirius”) is notable, particularly given the consonantal overlap (SR / ŠR). The overlap between ذو الشرى (Dhū al-Sharā) and ذو الشعرى (Dhū al-Shi'rā) raises the plausible hypothesis that the chief Nabataean god may originally have been associated with a celestial referent rather than a purely geographic one.

This hypothesis gains further context from the broader religious culture of the Nabataeans. Archaeological and architectural studies have demonstrated that Petra's monuments exhibit systematic astronomical orientations. Research by Belmonte and others (Light and Shadows over Petra) has documented alignments with solstices and equinoxes, indicating a pronounced interest in celestial order within Nabataean sacred architecture. Pilgrimage timing and monumental orientation appear to have been coordinated with astronomical phenomena, suggesting that the heavens played a significant role in Nabataean religious symbolism.

Taken together, the linguistic ambiguity of dwšr' and the astral orientation of Nabataean sacred space make a celestial interpretation of Dushara historically plausible.

Nevertheless, this observation alone does not constitute proof. Linguistic convergence must be tested against a wider body of evidence. For this reason, the following sections will examine additional Nabataean inscriptions and titles associated with Dushara

THE ONE WHO SEPARATES NIGHT FROM DAY

The Qur'an frequently emphasizes God's control over natural order, highlighting the alternation of night and day as a manifestation of divine authority:

يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ

He merges the night into the day and merges the day into the night.

(Qur'an 22:61; 31:29; 35:13)

This attribution is echoed in the material culture of the Nabataeans. A tomb inscription from Hegra reads:

1. Hhtry gwhy dy
2. hwšbw br npyw wcbd(?)lg:>
3. whbw bnwhy bny šhm
4. (p)y'cn prš lyly mn ymmř
5. mn dy ynpq ythm le

(1) These are the two burial-niches of (2) Hawshabu son of Nafiyu and cAbdalga (3) and Habbu his children, Sahmites. (4) **And may he who separates night (5) from day** curse whoever removes them forever (Healey 1993:81)

Here, the Nabataean phrasing “he who separates night from day” parallels the Qur’anic description of God’s governance over the cycles of night and day.

LORD OF THE WORLD(S)

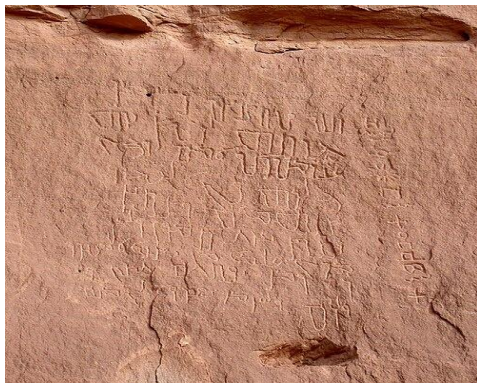
The Qur’an frequently highlights God’s sovereignty over the entire universe:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.” Qur’an 1:2

This notion of divine lordship finds a striking parallel. An inscription dated to A.D. 267 refers to Dushara with the title:

mry ‘lm
“Lord of the World”



The inscription demonstrates that Nabataean worship recognized Dushara as a deity whose authority extended beyond local or regional boundaries. Like the Qur’an’s depiction of God, the title conveys universal lordship, sovereignty over all that exists.

ILAHA, GOD

The Qur’an emphasizes **Allah (The God) as the singular, invoked deity**, worthy of worship and direct appeal.

Several passages highlight this core concept:

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اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

“Allah — there is no deity except Him.” (Qur’an 2:255)

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

“Say: He is Allah, the One.” (Qur’an 112:1)

Similarly Safaitic inscriptions (1st century BCE – 4th century CE) from surrounding regions use 'lh / 'l-'lh (“the God”) in prayers and dedications:

'l-'lh ḡfr — “May the God forgive”

w d' 'l-'lh — “And he called upon the God”

'l-'lh slm — “May the God grant peace”

“These inscriptions reveal that communities in the Petra region recognized and addressed 'lh - the God - in a manner consistent with the Qur’anic terminology for the divine.”



By {Bdh} and {he sought refuge} {in} {h- 'lh}

SiglumWH 3923

Ġabal Qarmah, WH Cairn 50, Al-Mafraq Governorate, Jordan

AHAD. THE ONE

The Qur’an uses the word أَحَدٌ (’ahad) in a theological context to affirm divine uniqueness:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

“Say, He is Allāh, the One” 112:1

Epigrapher Ahmad Al-Jallad has identified a rare Safaitic inscription that appears to include a divine invocation to a deity named ’ḥd (“the One”), alongside another deity (Allāt):



KRS 1131

Transliteration: l 'm[d] bn ḥd bn 'bgr bn 's'ḥr bn s'ḥtr w ḥl ṣyr h- dr m'dy w ḥrs 'hl -h ḥdr f h 'ḥd w h lt slm w ḡnmt l- ḍ d'y

Translation: By ['md] son of Ḥd son of 'bgr son of 's'ḥr son of S'ḥtr and he camped having returned to this place of water from a raid/having gone on a raid; and he kept watch for his family while camping near water so, **O 'ḥd** and **O Lt**, may he be secure; and may he who would read (this writing) have spoil.

Location: Al-Mafraq Governorate, Jordan

“The appearance of 'ḥd in local inscriptions underscores a clear semantic continuity between the religious vocabulary of the Petra region and the Qur'an's affirmation of God's absolute oneness أَحَدٌ ('aḥad).”

THE THRONE

The Qur'an repeatedly refers to God's "Throne":

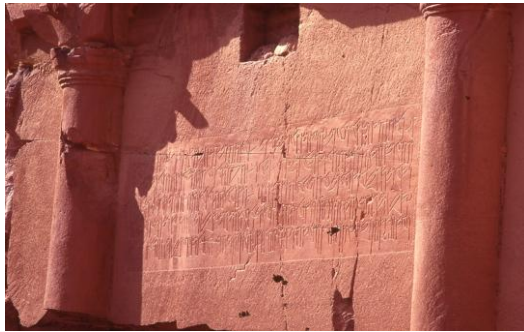
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

*If they turn away, say, 'God is enough for me: there is no god but Him; I put my trust in Him; He is the **Lord of the Mighty Throne.**' 9:129*

Other references occur throughout the Qur'an:

[7:54; 10:3; 11:7; 13:2; 17:42; 20:5; 21:22; 23:86; 23:116; 25:59; 27:26; 32:4; 39:75; 40:7; 40:15; 43:82; 57:4; 69:17; 81:20; 85:15]

In Petra, the Turkmaniyya tomb inscription explicitly associates Dushara with a throne. The text reads:



*"This tomb, along with the large chamber therein and the small chamber beyond, wherein are the burial places (in the form of) an arrangement of recesses, furthermore the enclosure in front of them, along with the facade and the buildings therein, and the tree pits and the banqueting site, the water cisterns, as well as the rock walls and the retaining walls, and all other things in this place, are sacred and consecrated to Dushara, the God of our Lord, **and his sacred throne** and all the deities. This is by virtue of instruments of consecration in accordance with their contents.*

*And so (it is) the responsibility of **Dushara and his throne** and all the deities to act in accordance with what is contained in these instruments of consecration; that nothing be eliminated from all that is therein, and that no person be buried in this tomb except the one who forever possesses a written burial permit in these instruments of consecration."*

Here, Dushara's association with a throne reflects the Nabataeans' conceptualization of divine authority, paralleling the Qur'anic depiction of God's Throne as a symbol of ultimate sovereignty, sacred power, and cosmic governance.

LORD OF THE BAYT

The Qur'an emphasizes God's authority over the sacred dwelling, the bayt:

قَلِّعْبُدُوا رَبَّ هَذَا الْبَيْتِ

Let them worship the Lord of this Bayt. 106:3

Similarly, Nabataean inscriptions repeatedly attribute a parallel title to Dushara:

mr byt'
"Lord of the Bayt"

This designation appears in multiple contexts, including:

- JS I, 213–16, no. 57 (Jabal Ithlib, Hegra)
- Zizeh near Madaba (RES 1284)

The repeated use of this title shows that Dushara was regarded as the guardian and master of a central sanctuary, closely paralleling the Qur'anic depiction of God as the Lord of the Bayt.

CONCLUSION: DUSHARA AND GOD MENTIONED IN THE QUR'AN

The cumulative evidence from Nabataean inscriptions around Petra demonstrates that Dushara was attributed with a remarkable range of divine qualities: lordship over the world, control of day and night, possession of a throne, sovereignty over sacred spaces, and inviolable sanctuaries. Titles such as mr byt' ("Lord of the bayt) and inscriptions invoking the deity as 'lh, 'hd, reveal a conception of divinity strikingly similar to the attributes ascribed to God in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an affirms that God may be invoked through His many beautiful names and attributes, a pattern that appears in the Nabataean religious landscape around Petra, where divine attributes were employed to describe and invoke God.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ ۚ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
To God belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call Him by them, and disregard those who blaspheme His names. They will be repaid for what they used to do. 7:180

The consonantal nature of the Nabataean script allows the name Dushara (DSR / dwšr') to be plausibly read as Dhū al-Shi'rā — "Lord of Shi'rā/Sirius", aligning with the Qur'anic description رَبُّ الشَّعْرَى (Rab ash-Shi'rā, Qur'an 53:49). This, together with the architectural evidence for celestial alignments in Petra, strengthens the possibility that Dushara may correspond to the God mentioned in the Qur'an.

Crucially, the Qur'an addresses an audience familiar with God, yet one that simultaneously ascribed partners to Him, for example, Allāt, Al-Uzza, and Manāt. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence from Petra and its hinterlands mirrors this pattern: worshippers invoked the one God (*dhul sha'rā*), while also dedicating objects or offerings to other figures. This aligns precisely with the Qur'anic critique of associating partners with the singular divine.

The Sea and Ships

The Qur'an repeatedly refers to ships, sailing, and the sea, addressing an audience for whom maritime activity was familiar and immediate. These verses presume real-world experience with navigation, trade, and the hazards of sea travel. By examining the Qur'anic imagery alongside historical and archaeological evidence, we gain insight into the regions and populations for which these descriptions would have been most meaningful.

Examples from the Qur'an:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ يَنْعَمَتِ اللَّهُ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

Do you not see that ships sail through the sea by the favor of Allah, that He may show you of His signs? Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful.” 31:31

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنشَآتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ

And His are the ships raised in the sea like banners. 55:24

هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرُكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَخَرَيْنَ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرَحُوا بِهَا جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِيفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ لَئِنْ أَنْجَيْتَنَا مِنْ هَٰذِهِ لَنُكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ

It is He who transports you across land and sea. Until, when you are on ships, sailing in a favorable wind, and rejoicing in it, a raging wind arrives. The waves surge over them from every side, and they realize that they are besieged. Thereupon they pray to God, professing sincere devotion to Him: “If You save us from this, we will be among the appreciative.” 10:22

رَبُّكُمُ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

Your Lord is who drives for you the ships upon the sea, that you might seek of His bounty; He is merciful towards you. 17:66

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

Do you not see that God made everything on earth subservient to you? How the ships sail at sea by His command? That He holds up the sky lest it falls on earth, except by His permission? God is Gracious towards the people, Most Merciful.22:65

WHAT THESE VERSES IMPLY ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

The Qur’an repeatedly depicts ships navigating the sea, describing maritime travel in vivid, technical, and contextually specific terms. These references presume familiarity with seafaring as a lived experience, not merely as metaphorical imagery. Ships are described in ways that would be instantly recognizable to those who observed or participated in maritime activity: their movement with favorable winds, the sudden danger of storms, and the economic purpose of voyages as a means of seeking provision and divine blessing. Travel over both land and sea is consistently presented within the same framework, implying practical knowledge of these environments. Economic activity “seeking His bounty” (17:66) is tied directly to maritime trade, suggesting that these passages would resonate most naturally with communities actively engaged in long-distance commerce rather than with purely inland populations without exposure to seafaring.

The Qur’an’s emphasis on the sea and ships therefore reflects a specific audience: one that understood the hazards of navigation, the techniques of sailing, and the opportunities for

economic enterprise that maritime networks afforded. This contextual reading has important implications for locating the historical and geographical setting of these narratives.

NABATAEAN MARITIME TRADE

While much attention is usually given to the Nabataeans' famous overland caravan routes, maritime trade also formed a meaningful part of their economic world, linking Petra to the wider ancient trading system.

The Nabataeans made use of several ports along the Red Sea, effectively connecting inland centers such as Petra with international sea routes. Chief among these was Aila (modern Aqaba), located at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba. Historical sources describe goods arriving at Aila by ship from Egypt, Arabia, and even India, before being transported inland through Nabataean-controlled routes.

The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, a first-century maritime guide, describes regular voyages through the Red Sea to ports such as Aila. It notes the use of advanced sailing techniques, including lateen-rigged vessels, well suited for navigating the difficult wind patterns of the Gulf of Aqaba. This confirms that Nabataean merchants were not only aware of seafaring but actively engaged in it.

Maritime transport played a key role in moving valuable commodities such as frankincense, myrrh, and other aromatics. Once these goods reached Nabataean ports, traders redistributed them through an integrated network of land and sea routes, making Petra a *central hub* in long-distance trade.

In contrast, Mecca's geography and historical infrastructure provide no evidence of comparable maritime activity, suggesting that the Qur'anic imagery of ships and seas was less relevant there and pointing toward the broader Nabataean context as the historically and geographically plausible setting.

Surah Al-Fajr / The dawn, the Ten Nights, and a forgotten calendar

Traditional Islamic understanding holds that the Qur'an prescribes a strictly lunar calendar, with months determined by the sighting of the crescent moon. Yet a careful reading of multiple verses suggests that another form of calendar may have been in operation, one that incorporates stars, solar cycles, and structured numerical periods.

12 MONTHS

The Qur'an first establishes the basic framework of months:

إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ ۖ حُرْمٌ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ الْقِيَمِ فَلَا تَظْلِمُوا فِيهِنَّ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَقَتِلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ كَافَّةً كَمَا يُقْتُلُونَكُمْ كَافَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

The number of months, according to God, is twelve months—in the Book of God—since the Day He created the heavens and the earth, of which four are inviolable. This is the correct way. So do not wrong yourselves during them. And fight the polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively, and know that God is with the righteous.

Here, the Qur'an affirms the existence of twelve months from creation, highlighting four inviolable months.

THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

The Qur'an repeatedly points to celestial bodies as instruments for time reckoning:

وَعَلَامَاتٍ ۚ وَبِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

16:16 - And marks; and by **the star are they guided**.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

*He it is that made **the sun an illumination, and the moon a light**; and He determined for it phases, **that you might know the number of years** and the reckoning. God created that not save in truth; He sets out and details the proofs for people who know.*

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا

*We have made the night and the day two proofs. We erased the proof of the night, and made the proof of the day visible, that you may seek bounty from your Lord, **and know the number of years**, and the calculation. We have explained all things in detail.*

These verses indicate that night, day, sun, and moon were used as observable markers for counting years and managing time, supporting precise calculation rather than relying solely on lunar crescents, while stars, in addition to serving as a means of navigation, were also used in ancient times as instruments to track and structure time.

SUMMER AND IN WINTER

The Qur'an also indicates that Quraysh²⁶ undertook journeys both in summer and in winter:

إِلَيْهِمْ رَحْلَةَ الشَّيْءِ وَالصَّيْفِ 106:2

Uniting them for the journey of the winter and the summer.

This verse suggests that the Quraysh's trade routes travel followed a fixed seasonal rhythm. If Hajj were determined strictly by a purely lunar calendar, its date would shift approximately 11 days earlier each year, making it impossible for them to consistently travel in both summer and winter seasons.

2 MONTHS EQUALS 60 DAYS

The Qur'an also provides insight into the precise length of months:

فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامَ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَتَمَاسَا فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَإِطْعَامُ سِتِّينَ مِسْكِينًا ذَلِكَ لِيُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 58:4

And whoso has not the means: — a fast of two months consecutively before they touch one another. And whoso is not able: — the feeding of sixty needy persons. That is that you might believe in God and His messenger. These are the ordinances of God. The rejecters will have a painful punishment.

This passage implies a clear equivalence: two consecutive months correspond to sixty days, suggesting a month length of thirty days.

CRESCENTS

The Qur'an shows that the crescent is mentioned in connection with Hajj, not for Ramadan, nor explicitly stated for defining months in general. The Qur'an states:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلَةِ قُلْ هِيَ مَوْقِيتٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا 2:189 وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى وَأَتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

They ask you about the crescents. Say, "They are timing for people, and for the Hajj." It is not virtuous that you approach the homes from their backs, but virtue is to be pious. So approach the homes from their doors, and observe God, that you may succeed.

The Qur'an also provides practical example of Hajj as a repeatable, rather than a single annual occurrence. Consider the story of Musa:

²⁶ قَرَشَ, aor. يَفْرَشُ, inf. n. قَرَشَ; and نَفَرَشَ and اقْتَرَشَ; He gained, acquired, or earned, and collected, for his family. (M.)

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُزَنِي تَمَنِي جَجٍ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ عَشْرًا 28:27
فَمَنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

He said, "I want to marry you to one of these two daughters of mine, provided you work for me for eight hajj. But if you complete ten, that is up to you. I do not intend to impose any hardship on you. You will find me, God willing, one of the righteous."

Here, Musa is required to work for **eight or ten Hajj**, for Musa to marry one of his daughters. If Hajj were strictly once per year, completing eight or ten Hajj would take nearly a decade - an impractical expectation, especially given the verse's explicit reassurance: *"I do not intend to impose any hardship on you."*

This makes much more sense if Hajj occurs multiple times(4x) per year, within the framework of the known months and the observed crescent:

الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَعْلُومَةٌ 2:197

The hajj is in known months.

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَفِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَةٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ 22:28
فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ

That they might witness benefits for them, and remember the name of God on known days over their provision of livestock cattle." So eat thereof, and feed the unfortunate poor;

The Qur'an refers to "known months" and "known days", in which the crescent serves as a signal for Hajj, rather than as the primary method for measuring months. These known months are understood to be the four inviolable months during which Hajj may be performed. Viewing Hajj as occurring in multiple months each year makes the account of Musa completing eight or ten Hajj periods both coherent and plausible.

10 DAYS

Another striking feature of the Qur'an is its frequent reference to periods of ten days.

فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۖ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ 2:196

...And whoso has not the means a fast of three days during the hajj, and seven when you have returned. Those are ten complete...

وَالَّذِينَ يُتَوَفَّوْنَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَذَرُونَ أَزْوَاجًا يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةَ أَشْهُرٍ وَعَشْرًا 2:234

And those of you who die and leave behind wives: they shall wait by themselves four months and ten.

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فَنَمَّ مِيقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً 7:142

And We appointed for Musa thirty nights, and completed them with ten; so he completed the time appointed by his Lord of forty nights.

These examples show that the Qur'an repeatedly treats ten-day periods as a meaningful unit of time rather than as random numbers. When these verses are read together, a coherent chronological framework begins to emerge. The Qur'an presupposes a calendar built on twelve months, it treats months as thirty-day units, it emphasizes ten-day divisions, and it grounds timekeeping in observable celestial markers such as the sun, moon, night, day, and stars.

Once this framework is recognized, an obvious question arises. If the Qur'an assumes a system built on twelve months, thirty-day units, and internal ten-day divisions, does such a calendar actually exist?

The answer is yes.

While examining ancient methods of astronomical timekeeping, a striking parallel emerges in one of the oldest known calendars of the ancient world: the star-based decanal calendar.

Some cultures kept track of time not just by the sun and moon, but by observing stars, especially bright stars that reappear predictably in the pre-dawn sky.

WHAT ARE DECANS?

The decans were 36 groups of stars. Each decan rose heliacally; that is, first becoming visible on the eastern horizon just before sunrise, after a period of being hidden behind the sun's glare. A new decan's heliacal rising occurred about every ten days, which is why the Greeks called them *dekanoi* ("tenths"). The heliacal rising of Sirius and the predictable sequence of decans made it possible to divide the year into consistent, observable blocks of ten days without reliance on lunar phases alone.

HOW THE DECAN SYSTEM WORKED IN PRACTICE

Ancient astronomers carefully observed the eastern horizon before sunrise, watching for the moment when a star reappeared after a period of invisibility caused by the Sun's glare. This first reappearance was known as the heliacal rising, and it functioned as a crucial seasonal marker in ancient astronomy.

In the decanal system, each group of stars was linked to a fixed ten-day interval. As one decan disappeared into the Sun's light, another emerged at dawn, creating a continuous sequence that structured the passage of the year. Time was therefore organized not abstractly, but through directly observable changes in the sky.

Once a star had its heliacal rising, it did not remain fixed. On each successive morning it became visible slightly earlier and slightly higher above the horizon before sunrise. This gradual shift allowed observers to track the steady movement of the seasons through the star's changing position in the sky.

The heliacal rising of Sirius held special importance. Because it occurred at nearly the same point each year, it served as a stable anchor for the wider astronomical calendar, around which the sequence of decans could be coordinated.

SURAH AL-FAJR

But does the Qur'an itself make any reference to such a structured, star-based calendar? At first glance, the answer might seem unclear. Yet when we examine Surah Al-Fajr (89:1–5), the verses reveal a precise pattern that aligns remarkably with the decanal calendar system.

وَالْفَجْرِ
وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ
وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسْرِ
هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرِ
89:1-5

*By the dawn. And ten nights.
And the paired²⁷ and the single²⁸.*

²⁷ *شَفْعٌ* contr. of *وَتْرٌ*; (S, Mgh, O, K;) i. q. *رَوْجٌ* [i. e., like *رَوْجٌ*, it signifies *One of a pair* or *couple*; and sometimes, but rarely, *a pair* or *couple together*; and sometimes, (see for instance *زَكَا*) *an even number*, *a number that may be divided into two equal numbers*]: (O, K:) also *one with which another is made to be a pair* or *couple*: (TA:) [and, as will be seen in what follows, *one with which an odd number is made to be an even number*:] pl. *شَفَاعٌ*, (TA,) and app. *أَشْفَاعٌ*, whence *الصَّلَاةُ بَيْنَ الْأَشْفَاعِ*, meaning *النَّزَاوِيجِ* [q. v. *وَجْهَةٌ*]. (Mgh.)

And the night when it travels.

Is there in this an oath for one endowed with understanding?

At first, traditional tafsīr commentary explains these verses metaphorically: the “ten nights” are linked to days during Dhul-Hijjah or the last ten days of Ramadan, the “single and the pair” represent moral dualities, and the night’s “journey” is allegorical for time passing. Yet careful examination raises questions:

- The final verse, هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِذِي حِجْرٍ, indicates a single oath
- The Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes ten-day periods elsewhere (e.g., 2:196, 2:234, 7:142), suggesting a deliberate structural unit of time.

When read in light of the decanal calendar, the sequence becomes strikingly concrete:

- **By the dawn (الفجر):** marks the heliacal rising of a star, signaling the start of a ten-day decan.
- **And ten nights (ليالٍ عشر):** the decan’s fixed ten-day period.
- **(الشفع والوتر):** In traditional star calendars, Sirius functions as a cosmological وَتْر - a singular fixed regulator of time, while the decans operate as شَفْع, paired stellar–solar relations through which time becomes measurable.
- **And the night when it journeys (الليل إذا يسر):** describes the star’s nightly drift across the sky,

Thus, rather than abstract metaphors, these verses encode an observable, star-based system of timekeeping, mirroring the structure of the decanal calendar.

PETRA: CELESTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Having shown that Surah al-Fajr can be read as a concrete celestial time structure, the question naturally arises: could such an astronomical conception of time have existed in Petra?

Archaeological research demonstrates that Petra, possessed advanced knowledge of celestial movements. Numerous temples, tombs, and monumental façades are deliberately oriented toward solar events such as solstices and equinoxes, indicating that the Nabataeans integrated astronomy into sacred architecture. Petra was not merely a city of stone, but a city in which cosmic order was physically inscribed into rock. Time, ritual, and architecture were coordinated through observation of the heavens.

²⁸ وَتْرٌ and وَتْرٌ (T, S, M, A, Msb, K, &c.), the former, [which is the more common,] in the dial. of Nejd, (Lh, M,) and of the tribe of Temeem, (T, S, M, Msb,) and of the people of El-’Āliyah, (ISk, as on the authority of Yoo, and S) or the latter in the dial. of the people of El-’Āliyah, (T, as on the authority of Yoo,) or of the people of El-Hijáz, (Lh, S, M,) *Single; sole; only; one, and no more:* syn. فَرْدٌ (T, S, M, A, Msb, K:) or مَا لَمْ يُشَفَّعْ (Mgh:) [and *an odd number:*] all [even and odd] numbers are termed [respectively] شَفْعٌ and وَتْرٌ, whether many or few. (T.) www.quran-is-fully-detailed.com

The closing phrase *hal fī dhālika qasamun li-dhī hijr* is traditionally rendered “*Is there in this an oath for one endowed with understanding?*,” since *hijr*²⁹ denotes intellect as that which restrains.

Yet it is also known that the ancient name of Petra is rooted in the same semantic field: *Petra* itself means “stone,” corresponding exactly to the Arabic *hijr*.³⁰ The use of the word *hijr* is unlikely to be accidental. The verse therefore operates on two levels simultaneously: it addresses the intellect, and at the same time carries a geographic resonance, effectively reading as “*Is there in this an oath for one of the stone?*” - that is, for one associated with the stone city, *Petra*.

Vegetation and Animals

The Qur’an frequently draws attention to the natural environment surrounding its narratives: plants, trees, fruits, and animals. These references are not incidental; they provide subtle but decisive geographical markers, helping identify the locations where the events occurred.

A simple but revealing question arises: Where do these plants and animals actually grow? Which landscapes match the Qur’anic descriptions of flora, fauna, and agricultural practices?

When we examine the archaeological and botanical record of Petra and its hinterlands, the alignment with the Qur’anic text is striking - far more so than with other traditionally suggested locations.

Petra’s valleys contain irrigated terraces, rock-cut winepresses, olive and fig cultivation, honey production, and rich biodiversity. By contrast, the Mecca region presents far sparser evidence for organized agriculture or sustained ecological diversity.

FIRE FROM GREEN TREES

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الشَّجَرِ الْأَخْضَرِ نَارًا فَإِذَا أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُ تُوقِدُونَ

²⁹ *Understanding, intelligence, intellect, mind, or reason:* (S, A, Msb, K:) so in the Kur lxxxix. 4: (S, Bd:) thus called because it forbids that which it does not behoove one to do. (Bd.) One says, *فِي ذَلِكَ عِبْرَةٌ لِّذِي حِجْرٍ* / *that is an admonition to him who possesses understanding, &c.* (A.)

³⁰ *حَجَرٌ* [A stone; explained in the K by *صَحْرَةٌ*; but this means “a rock,” or “a great mass of stone” or “of hard stone”]; (S, K, &c.;) so called because it resists, by reason of its hardness; (Mgh;) and *أَحْجَرٌ* signifies the same: (Fr, K:) pl. (of pauc., of the former, S) *أَحْجَارٌ* (S, Mgh, K) and *أَحْجَرٌ* (K) and (of mult, S) *جَجَارٌ* and [more commonly] *جَجَارَةٌ*, (S, K,) which last is extr. [with respect to rule], (S,) or agreeable with a usage of the Arabs, which is, to add *ة* to any pl. of the measure *فُعَالٌ* or of that of *فُعُولٌ*, as in the instances of *ذِكَارَةٌ* and *فَحَالَةٌ* and *ذُكُورَةٌ* and *فُحُولَةٌ*. (AHeyth.) And (metonymically, TA) ‡ *Sand:* (IAar, K;) pl. *أَحْجَارٌ*. (TA. www.quran-is-fully-detailed.com

The One Who has created for you fire from the green tree, so you kindle from it. 36:80

At first reading this verse might sound general, but closer attention shows that it refers to a very practical environmental detail: not every green plant yields fire easily. Efficient firewood, especially green that can be ignited, requires specific types of trees with dense, resin-rich wood that sustain a flame. Ordinary shrubs or ephemeral grasses typical of open desert do not produce firewood reliably.

Petra: The region naturally supports species such as terebinth (Pistacia), oak, and acacia, all known for producing durable firewood. Historical evidence and ethnobotanical studies confirm that these trees were routinely used for fuel. Fires could be lit easily and sustained efficiently using these local resources.

Mecca: By contrast, vegetation is sparse, limited mainly to desert shrubs and small, scattered plants. Such flora is unsuitable for reliable or large-scale fire production. Fires would be weak, inconsistent, and more difficult to maintain.

GRAPES, OLIVES, POMEGRANATES AND FIGS

The Qur'an repeatedly mentions specific plants: figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, and date palms:

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونَ

By the fig and the olive. 95:1

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَبَاتٍ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَرَاكِبًا وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ انظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

And He is the One who sent down water from the sky, and We brought out with it plants of every kind. We brought out from it a green from which We bring out heaped up seeds; and what is from the palm trees, from its sheaths hanging low and near; and gardens of grapes; and olives and pomegranates, similar yet different. Look at its fruit when it blossoms and its ripeness. In this are signs for a people who believe. 6:99

These verses are strikingly precise. They do more than mention plant species; they describe growth patterns and fruit maturity.

The Qur'an's language implies a cultivated environment:

Excavations and archaeobotanical studies in Petra and its surrounding valleys provide compelling confirmation of the Qur'anic descriptions:

- Cultivated crops: Grapes, olives, figs, and pomegranates have been identified through charred seeds, pollen analysis, and preserved plant remains.
- Irrigation infrastructure: Nabataean engineering included terraces, channels, and dams, allowing perennial crops to thrive in Petra's semi-arid environment.
- Agricultural output: The systems supported both local consumption and regional trade, including olive oil, wine, dried fruits, and seeds.

This evidence demonstrates that Petra's valleys were actively managed agricultural landscapes, perfectly matching the Qur'an's depiction of cultivated gardens with layered, productive plantings.

Comparison with Mecca

By contrast, the historical Mecca region lacks comparable archaeological evidence:

- Terraced agriculture or large-scale irrigation systems have not been documented.
- Vegetation was sparse, and perennial crops such as grapes, olives, or pomegranates do not appear in the archaeological record.
- Fruit cultivation in Mecca was therefore limited, making the Qur'anic descriptions geographically incongruent with the traditional location.

MASAD (PALM FIBERS)

The Qur'an often refers to objects and materials familiar to its original audience, not abstract or symbolic notions. A striking example is **masad (palm fibers)**, mentioned in Surah Al-Masad:

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ

A rope made from [masad]³¹ palm fibre around her neck. 111:5

WHAT IS MASAD?

In classical Arabic, masad refers to tough, fibrous strands derived from palm trees as well as similar fibers from other plants. These fibers were:

- Pulled from palm fronds or sheaths
- Cleaned and combed
- Twisted or braided into cords, ropes, or other utilitarian items

³¹ The fibres that grow at the roots of the branches of the palm-tree; syn. **لَيْفٌ**: (S, A, L:) you say **حَبْلٌ مِّنْ مَّسَدٍ** a rope, or halter, of those fibres: (S, A:) also, **مَّسَدٌ** alone signifies a rope of those fibres: (S, M, L, K:) or, of those of the [kind of palm-tree called] **مُثَلٌّ**:

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CORROBORATION: NABATAEAN CORDAGE

The precision of the Qur'an becomes tangible in the archaeological record. A study by Orit Shamir, titled *"Nabataean Roman Basketry, Braiding and Cordage Discovered along the Incense Road,"* documents:

- Braided plant fibers used for ropes, cords, baskets, and other woven items
- Evidence of fiber processing, combing, and twisting techniques
- Materials sourced from local vegetation, including date palms

For example, bundles of knotted date-palm cords have been found at sites like 'En Rahel, confirming everyday use.

These finds are specific to Nabataean material culture, demonstrating that:

- People routinely used plant fibers for practical products
- Rope-making and weaving were integral to domestic and economic life
- Local vegetation provided reliable, fibrous raw materials

This aligns directly with the Qur'an's mention of masad: it is not symbolic, but a real, familiar object within the lived environment of Petra and surrounding Nabataean regions.

By contrast, around Mecca: Archaeological surveys have not documented systematic palm-fiber rope production or large quantities of associated woven plant materials from the relevant period.

The Qur'an did not have to name masad, yet it did. This demonstrates a broader pattern:

- Ordinary, everyday objects are described with linguistic precision
- The descriptions match observable reality and local material culture
- Petra and the Nabataean hinterland consistently align with these references, unlike Mecca

Masad is therefore both linguistically and materially specific, reflecting real practices in a real landscape, grounding the Qur'anic narrative in the lived environment of its audience.

HUNTING

The Qur'an's regulations concerning hunting, assume an environment where animals are a lived reality. The text presupposes that people encounter wildlife directly, that hunting is a tangible activity, and that humans sometimes train animals or birds for this purpose.

Consider the verses:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ ٱللَّعْنِ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي
ٱلصَّيْدِ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ

O you who believe, fulfill the contracts. Permitted for you are the livestock animals, except that which is recited to you, hunting not being permitted when you are under restriction. God decrees as He pleases.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ ٱلْطَّيِّبُتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ مِّنَ ٱلْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا
عَلَّمَكُمُ ٱللَّهُ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَٱذْكُرُوا ٱللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ وَٱتَّقُوا ٱللَّهَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ سَرِيعُ ٱلْحِسَابِ

They ask you what was made permissible to them, say: "All the good things have been made permissible for you, and what the birds of prey and trained dogs catch, you teach them from what God teaches you." So eat from what they have captured for you and remember the name of God upon it, and be aware of God. God is swift in reckoning.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ ٱللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ ٱلصَّيْدِ تَنَٱلَّهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ ٱللَّهُ مَن
يَخَافُهُ ٱلْغَيْبِ فَمَن أَعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

O you who believe, God will test you with some game coming within reach of your hands and your spears, so that God will know who reverences Him while unseen. Whoever transgresses from now on, then he will have a painful retribution.

SO WHAT DOES THE LANDSCAPE OF PETRA AND MECCA TELL US?

PETRA

When we examine the topography and ecology of Petra, the Qur'anic scenario comes to life. Petra lies along a key segment of the Eurasian-African bird migration route, a natural corridor funneling hundreds of thousands of birds across southern Jordan twice annually. Here, migratory and resident species are readily visible, forming a dynamic and rich ecosystem. Observers, travelers, and modern wildlife surveys confirm the presence of numerous animals, including rabbits, wild cats, wolves, ibex, and deer. These creatures would have been abundant enough to serve as practical targets for hunting and observation.



MECCA

Contrast this with the region surrounding Mecca. The environment here is far more arid, primarily desert, rocky plateaus, and urbanized zones. While some species are native to the broader Arabian Peninsula, foxes, hyenas, and small rodents—these animals are sparse and rarely observed in sufficient density to make hunting a practical, regular activity. Migratory birds do traverse the region, but the number and accessibility of these species are far lower than in Petra. For someone living in or near Mecca at the time of the Qur'an's revelation, the direct engagement with wildlife described in these verses would have been less observable, if not entirely impractical.

Interestingly, when we examine Mecca, we see a markedly different picture. Actual images show that the region is prone to locust swarms, rather than abundant, accessible wildlife.



Critically, the Qur'an provides the definitive lens through which to view this phenomenon. In Sūrah al-A'rāf, locusts are not described as provision or game, but as affliction:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ

So We sent them the flood, and the locust, and the lice, and the frogs, and the blood; all detailed signs; but they turned arrogant, they were a criminal people. 7:133

This invites reflection: why does the Meccan region experience such swarms? Could it be, as in the time of Fir'awn, a form of divine affliction, a reminder of the consequences of disbelief?

Major Lunar Standstill and Surah Al-Inshiqaq (84:16–19)

In Surah Al-Inshiqaq, we encounter a remarkable and unusually precise oath:

قَلَّا أَفْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ
وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ
وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ
لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ

*"I swear by the sunset glow,
And by the night and what it envelops,
And by the Moon when it reaches its full order,
You will climb from stage to stage." (84:16–19)*

At first glance, classical and modern commentators often read these verses metaphorically: the shafaq is rendered simply as "sunset," the night as abstract darkness, and the Moon's ittasaq as mere fullness. The final verse, "You will climb from stage to stage," is frequently interpreted as a moral or spiritual metaphor, disconnected from tangible phenomena.

Yet the Qur'an's linguistic precision invites a closer look - particularly when examined in light of Petra's topography and recent astronomical observations.

A PHENOMENON WITNESSED IN PETRA

On the night of December 5–6, 2025, Petra's Siq - the narrow rose-red sandstone canyon leading to the Treasury (Al-Khazneh) - witnessed a rare astronomical alignment: a major lunar standstill coinciding with a supermoon.

Unlike a typical full Moon, a major lunar standstill occurs once every 18.6 years, when the Moon reaches its maximum declination relative to Earth's equator, rising and setting at extreme points on the horizon. This produces unusual rising angles, prolonged visibility, and dramatic apparent motion - Phenomena that would have been highly visible and meaningful to ancient sky-watching cultures.

AT PETRA:

- Twilight left a residual reddish glow along the cliffs.
- Darkness gradually collected in the canyon, layering shadows over terraces and rock faces.
- The Moon rose from the canyon floor, climbing progressively along the walls of the Siq.

- Successive geological and architectural layers were illuminated in turn.
- The Moon finally crowned the Treasury façade, perfectly aligned with the canyon's axis.

This sequence; twilight, darkness, staged lunar ascent, strikingly mirrors the Qur'anic oath.

SHAFaq (الشَّفَق) — THE SUNSET GLOW

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ — “I swear by the sunset glow.”

- In classical Arabic, shafaq refers not to sunset itself, but to the residual reddish glow that lingers after the sun has set.
- At Petra, the rose-red sandstone cliffs amplify and prolong this glow, filling the Siq with a radiant, lingering light that extends beyond twilight.

WASAQA (وَمَا وَسَقَ) — NIGHT ENVELOPING THE CANYON

وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ — “And by the night and what it envelops.”

- The verb wasaqa primarily means “to gather, load, or heap,” with a secondary meaning: to enshroud or envelop.
- In the Siq, darkness does not fall uniformly. It gradually collects and spreads, layering itself over terraces, walls, and shadows.

ITTASAQ (إِذَا اتَّسَقَ) — THE MOON IN FULL ORDER

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ — “And by the Moon when it ittasaqa.”

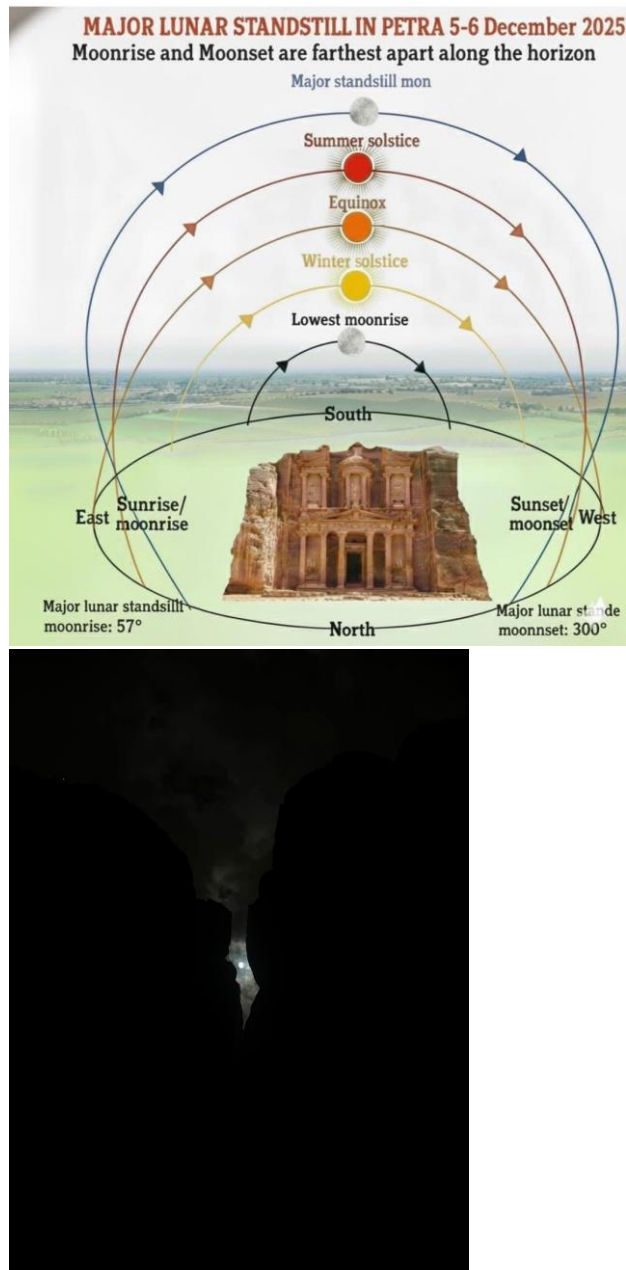
- Root: ق-س-ق (w-s-q). Classical lexicons define ittasaq as:
 - To become complete
 - To gather into order
 - To harmonize or reach full coherence

Early commentators often render ittasaq as “the Moon when full,” yet *badr* is the proper term for a full moon. *Ittasaq* instead conveys maximal order, alignment, and structured coherence, describing the Moon in a rare, highly ordered astronomical state rather than just fullness.

This perfectly aligns with a major lunar standstill, a rare event occurring once every 18.6 years, when the Moon reaches its maximum declination, rising and setting at extreme points on the horizon. During this alignment, the Moon's motion, apparent height, and visibility are highly structured, predictable, and striking, producing a visual coherence unparalleled in ordinary full moons.

LATARAKABUNNA TABAQAN ‘AN TABAQ (لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ) — CLIMBING STAGE BY STAGE

- Observationally, the Moon literally ascended stage by stage, illuminating terraces, rock layers, and architectural elements in sequence.
- Symbolically, this motion mirrors human development: just as the Moon climbs in stages, humanity progresses step by step.



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Social media accounts — radiojordan963 (Instagram) and Ammar Sakaji (Facebook) — reported the supermoon rising along Petra's Siq using language that mirrors the Qur'an: lingering twilight, night enveloping the canyon, and the Moon climbing progressively.

This confirms that the Qur'an's oath describes a literal, observable phenomenon, not a purely abstract metaphor. For the original audience, these verses would have been vivid, memorable, and directly relatable.

Earthquakes

When the Qur'an speaks of divine punishment, earthquakes and violent ground movement are recurring motifs. These descriptions are not isolated; they appear consistently across different narratives.

Examples from the Qur'an:

SURAH AL-ZALZALAH 99:1

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا

When the earth is shaken with great shaking,

SURAH AL-A'RAF 7:78 (PEOPLE OF SALIH)

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

So the earthquake seized them, and they lay lifeless in their homes.

SURAH AL-'ANKABŪT 29:37 (PEOPLE OF SHU'AYB)

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

Then the earthquake seized them, and morning found them fallen in their dwellings.

Across these passages, the Qur'an uses concrete imagery of ground rupture and collapse. A similar violent earth movement appears in the narrative of the raised mountain (Tur).

THE RAISED MOUNTAIN (TUR)

Several verses recount the covenant with the Children of Israel under a mountain:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَادْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

2:63 — "And when We took your covenant and raised the mount [Tur] above you: "Hold fast what We have given you, and remember what is therein, so that you might remain conscious.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ

2:93 — "And when We took your covenant and raised the mount [Tur] above you: "Hold fast what We give you...

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِيثَاقِهِمْ

4:154 — And We raised above them the mount [Tur] for their covenant...

وَاخْتَارَ مُوسَىٰ قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا لِّمِيقَاتِنَا ۖ فَلَمَّا أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ
وَإِيَّايَ أَتُهْلِكُنَا يَوْمَ فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا ۚ إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۚ أَنْتَ
وَلِيُّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ۚ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ

7:155 — And Musa chose from his people seventy men for Our appointment. When the tremor shook them, he said, “My Lord, had You willed, You could have destroyed them before, and me too. Will you destroy us for what the fools among us have done? This is but Your test—with it You misguide whomever You will, and guide whomever You will. You are our Protector, so forgive us, and have mercy on us. You are the Best of Forgivers.”

The clearest description appears in 7:171:

وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُ ظُلَّةٌ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

And when We raised (نَتَقْنَا) the mountain above them as if it were a canopy: and they thought it was about to fall upon them. Hold fast what We give you; and remember what is therein, so that you might remain conscious. 7:171

The key verb here, نَتَقْنَا (*nataqnā*), is crucial for understanding the physicality of the description:

The root ن-ت-ق denotes the pulling of a thing, its shaking, convulsion, and uprooting from its origin.

This carries the sense of:

- pulling something suddenly,
- shaking it violently, and
- uprooting it from its fixed position.

It expresses violent physical force applied to something normally solid and immovable. Other classical lexicons confirm this meaning, describing نَتَقْنَا as loosening what was firmly fixed or pulling it from its base.

It does not mean:

- to raise gently,
- to lift symbolically, or
- to elevate metaphorically.

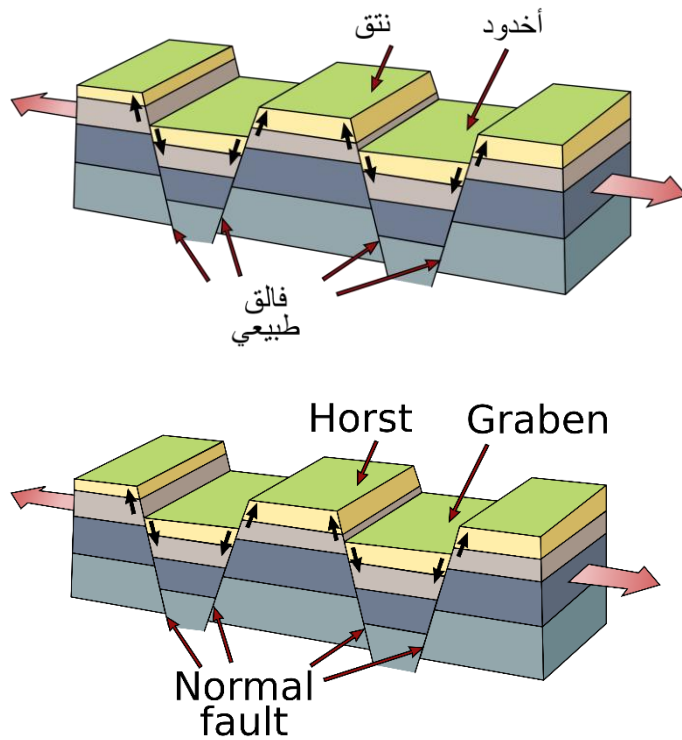
The word describes violent displacement.

What is remarkable is that modern Arabic geological terminology employs the same root. In geology:

- صدوع النَّتْق (horst faults) describe blocks of the Earth’s crust torn upward between two faults, while surrounding land drops down.
- This process involves:
 - violent tectonic stress,

- earthquakes and ground rupture, and
- the terrifying illusion that a mountain is “rising” and may collapse.

Horst uplift occurs along tectonic plate boundaries, not randomly. Fault movement can literally raise or tilt mountain masses relative to neighbouring terrain, producing a dramatic sense of imminent collapse.

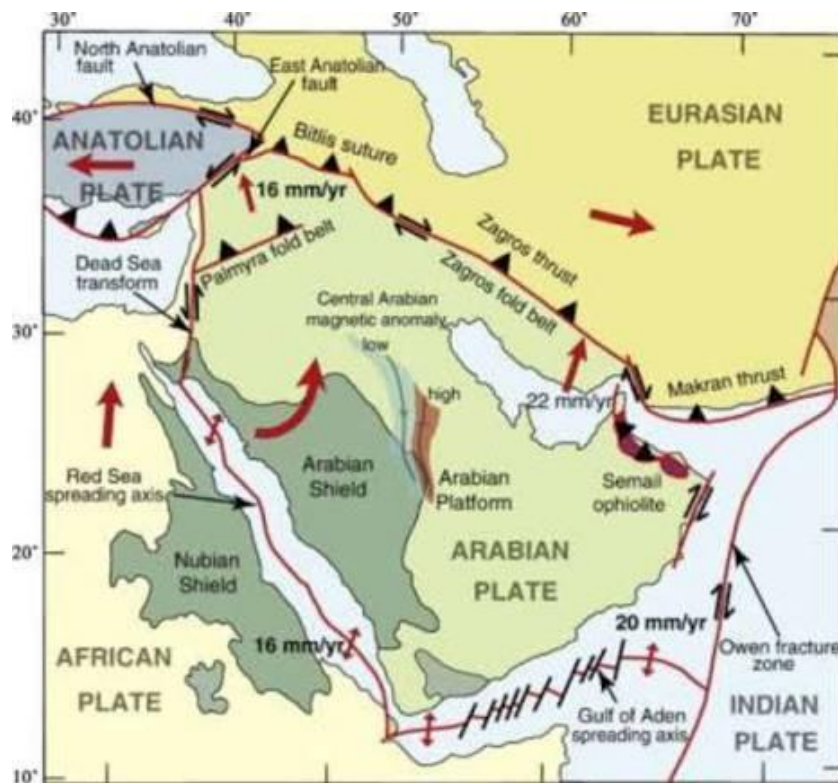


Thus, when the Qur'an says:

وَإِذْ نَتَقْنَا الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ — “When We *nataqnā* the mountain above them...”

...it describes precisely the physical action of a mountain mass violently displaced, creating the fear that it may fall. This is not metaphorical; it corresponds directly to tectonic forces capable of moving mountains.

If this scene reflects an actual experience, it could only plausibly occur in a landscape subject to seismic activity.



When the Qur'an describes mountains being "raised" or cities destroyed by earthquakes, it is not using vague or symbolic language. The verbs and imagery convey dramatic physical movement: the earth convulses, rock masses shift, and mountains appear to threaten collapse.

For such phenomena to occur, they must take place in a geologically unstable landscape, one shaped by tectonic stress, faulting, and the potential for sudden uplift or ground rupture. Stable plateaus or non-seismic regions cannot produce mountains that "shake" or appear to rise above the land. Likewise, populations living in calm, tectonically inactive areas would have no direct experience of such convulsions, and thus such imagery would be abstract rather than observable.

This requirement immediately eliminates many candidate locations. Mount Sinai in Egypt, sits on relatively stable bedrock with minimal seismic activity. Similarly, Mecca lies far from active plate boundaries, with no documented history of destructive earthquakes capable of convulsing mountains or toppling cities.

By contrast, Petra lies directly on the Dead Sea Transform (DST) fault system, one of the most seismically active zones in the Levant. This fault system marks the boundary between the African and Arabian plates and has produced repeated tectonic stress, earthquakes, and vertical displacement for millennia.

KEY GEOLOGICAL FACTS ABOUT THE PETRA REGION:

- **Uplifted blocks and grabens:** The region exhibits horst-and-graben topography, where blocks of rock are lifted while adjacent areas drop down, producing dramatic vertical relief.
- **Historical earthquakes:** Petra and surrounding areas have been repeatedly affected,

- **Visible structural evidence:** Collapsed buildings, fractured cliffs, and displaced rock formations remain observable today, providing a tangible record of past seismic events.
- **Cultural and experiential impact:** Earthquakes are part of the lived and remembered reality; the fear of mountains shifting or ground collapsing is directly grounded in local experience.

In Petra, the descriptions of mountains being ‘raised’ and cities shaken by the earth are grounded in reality. The region’s active tectonics, clearly visible fault lines, and historically documented earthquakes create a tangible, observable context for the imagery used in the Qur’an.

هذا البلد الأمين — This secure land

Surah At-Tin opens with an oath:

وَالَّتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونَ
وَطُورِ سِينِينَ
وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

*By the fig and the olive
And Mount [Tur] Sīnīn
And this secure land. 95:1-3*

At first glance, translators often disperse these elements across different regions: Jerusalem for figs and olives, Sinai in Egypt for the mountain, and Mecca for the “secure land.” Yet the Qur’an’s oath is not fragmented; all elements point to a single, coherent location.

FIGS AND OLIVES

Figs and olives are indicators of the region’s ecology and agricultural capacity:

- Archaeological evidence shows extensive fig and olive cultivation in Petra and its surrounding wadis.
- The Nabataeans implemented advanced terrace farming and wadi-based irrigation, supporting orchards on the slopes and valleys.
- By contrast, Mecca and its surrounding region lack evidence of fig and olive cultivation in antiquity, making it an implausible candidate.

MOUNT SĪNĪN

The Qur’an also swears by **Mount Sīnīn**, traditionally associated with Sinai in Egypt. However, this identification is inconsistent with both **tectonic reality** and narrative analysis:

- Stable geology: Sinai's mountains are largely tectonically inactive; they cannot exhibit the seismic convulsions or uplift implied in Qur'anic depictions of mountains being "raised."
- Narrative coherence: The narrative of Musa and the children of Israel, when examined closely, align with Petra rather than Egypt.
- Mount Sīnīn, therefore, finds a much better fit in Petra, where mountains are tectonically active, uplifted, and historically shaped by earthquakes

THE SECURE LAND

Finally, the Qur'an swears by **"this secure land" (al-balad al-āmīn)**. This is not a vague or shifting concept:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ

And when Ibrahim said: "My Lord: make this land secure and preserve me and my sons from serving idols. 14:35

This same secure valley is referenced repeatedly throughout the Qur'an. It is the location where not only Ibrahim and Muḥammad lived, but also all the other messengers whose narratives we have examined. Across generations, it is consistently portrayed as a safe and protected.

When read in sequence: figs and olives, Mount Sīnīn, and the secure land, the oath in Surah At-Tin converges on a single, coherent geographic location: Petra.

- Ecology: Figs and olives cultivated with advanced Nabataean terrace farming and wadi-based irrigation.
- Mountains: Tectonically active, matching Qur'anic depictions of mountains being "raised".
- Security: Naturally sheltered valley, repeatedly associated with the presence of messengers, providing protection, sustenance.

The Qur'an's oath is therefore not dispersed across multiple lands. It points to a single Land - Petra.

The Material World of the Hereafter

A careful reading of the Qur'an reveals another striking feature: the descriptions of the Hereafter are consistently concrete, material, and experiential. Gold and silver, silk and brocade, fragrant oils, fine vessels, fruits, spices, flowing drink, and cultivated abundance recur throughout the text. These are not abstract symbols detached from lived reality. They are recognizable goods, drawn from the material world of the Qur'an's first audience.

The Qur'an speaks in terms immediately intelligible to those who first heard it. Reward is expressed through the highest forms of wealth, comfort, refinement, and pleasure known to them. The imagery assumes familiarity. It presupposes a society that knew these goods not as distant fantasies, but as tangible markers of prosperity.

To understand the Qur'an's original audience, we need only ask where these goods; gold, silk, spices, and other symbols of wealth - were used, traded, and widely known.

Archaeology makes this question tangible, revealing a consistent pattern pointing to a regions where such abundance was a lived reality.

SILK AND BROCADE (18:31, 76:21)

Petra lay directly along caravan routes that transported silk from the East. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence confirms that luxury textiles passed through Petra, were stored, exchanged, and used locally. Nabataean tombs and artistic representations attest to familiarity with elite fabrics and refined dress.

Silk was a trade-specific commodity, concentrated in hubs like Petra that connected distant production centers to regional elites. Mecca, by comparison, has yielded no material or textual evidence demonstrating sustained engagement with silk trade at this level.

FRAGRANCES AND MUSK (83:26)

Archaeological excavations have documented incense presses, storage vessels, and facilities associated with the processing and trade of aromatic resins such as frankincense and myrrh. These substances were among the most prestigious commodities of the ancient world. Petra's wealth and ritual life were inseparable from aromatics. These were not marginal goods; they were economically foundational and culturally elevated, matching the Qur'an's presentation of fragrance as a supreme delight of the Hereafter.

GRAPES AND WINE (47:15)

Petra's hinterlands preserve extensive evidence of rock-cut winepresses, terraced slopes, irrigation channels, and storage installations. These features reflect systematic, large-scale production rather than sporadic cultivation. No comparable archaeological evidence for large-scale production exists for Mecca.

OLIVES AND DATES (55:68)

Archaeobotanical studies and landscape archaeology show the cultivation of olives, dates, grapes, and other fruit trees in Petra's valleys, sustained by sophisticated hydraulic engineering. These crops supported both subsistence and trade. Whereas Mecca lacks similar evidence for large-scale cultivation or processing.

POTTERY AND VESSELS (76:15) AND SPICES (76:5 / 76:17)

Petra was renowned for its ceramic production, producing storage jars, serving vessels, and containers for trade goods. These material remains attest to a culture familiar with refined domestic and ceremonial objects.

Spices and flavoured drinks further reinforce this picture. Petra's role in the spice and incense trade is archaeologically secure, placing such commodities within everyday economic reality rather than distant imagination.

When the descriptions of the Hereafter are read alongside the archaeological record, they resolve into a coherent picture. The promised delights are not vague metaphors; they are the highest expressions of value within a specific material world.

Tracing where these goods were cultivated, produced, processed, and exchanged leads repeatedly to Petra. The Qur'an does not name Petra by name. Instead, it calls its audience to observe, reflect, and reason. When this invitation is taken seriously, the convergence between Qur'anic imagery and Petra's material culture becomes difficult to dismiss.

Legal System

The Qur'an provides detailed, practical legislation governing everyday life: inheritance, marriage, financial transactions, contracts, testimony, and written documentation.

Among the most prominent examples are:

1. WILLS AND INHERITANCE (QURAN 2:180)

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ إِن تَرَكَ خَيْرًا الْوَصِيَّةُ لِلْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۚ حَقًّا عَلَى الْمُتَّقِينَ

Prescribed for you when death is present with one of you, if he leaves wealth: the bequest to parents and relatives according to what is fitting, is binding on all who are conscious of God.

2. MARRIAGE AND DOWRIES (QURAN 4:4)

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۚ فَإِنْ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا

And give the women their gifts willingly; but if they remit to you anything of it voluntarily, then consume it with satisfaction and pleasure.

3. FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND TESTIMONY – EMPHASIZING WRITTEN RECORDS, WITNESSES, AND HONESTY IN CONTRACTS (QURAN 2:282)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا تَدَايَنْتُمْ بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ وَلْيَكْتُبَ بَيْنَكُمْ كَاتِبٌ بِالْعَدْلِ وَلَا يَأْبَ كَاتِبٌ أَنْ يَكْتُبَ كَمَا عَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ فَلْيَكْتُبْ وَلْيُمْلِلِ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا يَبْخَسَ مِنْهُ شَيْئًا فَإِنْ كَانَ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِ الْحَقُّ سَفِيهًا أَوْ ضَعِيفًا أَوْ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُ أَنْ يُمِلَّ هُوَ فَلْيُمْلِلْ وَلِيُّهُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّنْ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى وَلَا يَأْبَ الشُّهَدَاءُ إِذَا مَا دُعُوا وَلَا تَسْأَمُوا أَنْ تَكْتُبُوهُ صَغِيرًا أَوْ كَبِيرًا إِلَى أَجَلِهِ ذَلِكُمْ أَفْسَطُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَأَقْوَمُ لِلشَّهَادَةِ وَأَدْنَى أَلَّا تَرْتَابُوا إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً حَاضِرَةً تُدِيرُونَهَا بَيْنَكُمْ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَلَّا تَكْتُبُوهَا وَأَشْهِدُوا إِذَا تَبَايَعْتُمْ وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَلَا شَهِيدٌ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلُوا فَإِنَّهُ فَسُوقٌ بِكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

O you who believe: when you contract a debt together to a stated term: write it down, and let a writer write it down between you justly; and let not a writer refuse to write it down as God has taught him; so let him write, and let the debtor dictate, and let him be aware of God, his Lord, and diminish nothing thereof. But if the debtor be incompetent, or weak, or unable to dictate himself, then his ally shall dictate justly. And call to witness two witnesses from among your men; but if there be not two men, then a man and two women among those you approve as witnesses, that should one of them err, one of them might remind the other; and let not the witnesses refuse when they are called. And be not weary of writing it, small or great, with its term (that is more just in the sight of God, and more upright for witness, and likelier that there will be no doubt between you) save if it be present trade that you transact among you; then you do no wrong that you write it not down. And take witnesses when you enter into contract. And let not a writer or witness be harmed. And if you do, then is it perfidy among you. And be aware of God. And God is teaching you; and God knows all things.

Taken together, these verses form a coherent legal framework. They assume the presence of:

- literacy or access to professional scribes
- recognized witnesses
- enforceable contracts
- and a culture in which written legal documentation is normative rather than exceptional

THE PROBLEM OF MECCA

If these legal prescriptions were revealed to and practiced by a community centered in Mecca, one would reasonably expect at least some material trace of such legal activity: inscriptions, contracts, wills, marriage documents, or commercial records.

However, archaeological and epigraphic evidence from early Mecca is virtually nonexistent in this regard. To date, no published corpus of Meccan documents records:

- wills or inheritance disputes,
- marriage contracts or dowry agreements,
- written debt instruments,
- or formal commercial contracts with witnesses.

This absence is striking, particularly given the Qur'an's insistence that such practices are binding obligations upon believers. A society governed by these commands should leave documentary traces. In Mecca, those traces are absent.

PETRA AND NABATAEAN LEGAL PRACTICE

By contrast, Petra provides precisely the kind of legal environment the Qur'an presupposes. In 1993, archaeologists discovered a substantial archive of legal documents in a Byzantine church in Petra, now known as the Petra Papyri (also referred to as the Petra Rolls).

These documents date primarily to the 6th century CE and preserve the everyday legal and economic life of Petra's inhabitants.

The Petra Papyri include:

MARRIAGE, DOWRIES, AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

Several documents detail marital property arrangements, dowry obligations, and disputes between spouses. They demonstrate that marriage in Petra was not merely a social bond, but a legally regulated contract with enforceable financial terms, closely paralleling Qur'an 4:4.

FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND DEBT AGREEMENTS

The papyri record:

- loans and credits,
- repayment schedules,
- interest arrangements,
- and named witnesses.

These documents strongly resemble the procedural requirements outlined in Qur'an 2:282, including written contracts, testimony, and safeguards against injustice.

Multiple papyri list witnesses who formally attest to legal agreements, reflecting a well-established culture of documented testimony consistent with Qur'anic legal norms.

Beyond papyrus, Petra and its surrounding region preserve thousands of Nabataean inscriptions carved into rock, façades, tombs, altars, and public structures. These inscriptions provide an independent and complementary body of evidence for Petra's legal and administrative culture.

The inscriptions attest to:

- Ownership and property claims, including names, lineages, and rights associated with tombs, land, and monuments.

- Legal prohibitions and penalties, particularly in funerary inscriptions that warn against unauthorized use or violation of burial spaces, often invoking fines or divine accountability.
- Dedications and contractual language, indicating formalized obligations between individuals, families, and deities.
- Administrative titles and offices, revealing an organized civic and legal hierarchy.

THE CONTRAST WITH MECCA BECOMES EVEN SHARPER:

- **Mecca:** no surviving corpus of legal papyri, contracts, or stone inscriptions documenting wills, dowries, loans, or testimony from the relevant period.
- **Petra:** extensive legal documentation preserved both in archives (the Petra Papyri) and in situ inscriptions carved into the landscape itself.

The alignment between Qur'anic legal expectations and Petra's documented legal culture is cumulative and compelling. When assessed alongside the archaeological silence of early Mecca, the evidence strongly favors Petra as the legal and social environment within which the Qur'anic discourse operates.

The Sunnah of Allah: The Unchanging Pattern

The Qur'an presents a clear, consistent, and methodical pattern in the way God deals with human communities after sending a messenger. This pattern: referred to repeatedly as the *Sunnah of Allah*—is described as immutable, unalterable, and universally applicable across time and place:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا

This is the way [Sunnah] of God with those who have passed away before, and you will not find any change in the way of God. 33:62

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا

Such was the way (Sunnah) of those whom We had sent before you of Our messengers. And you will not find any change in Our way(Sunnah).17:77

The Qur'an thus establishes a universal principle: God's treatment of communities is neither arbitrary nor situational. It follows a predictable sequence, repeatedly validated through the histories of earlier messengers. When these narratives are examined side by side, a precise and unmistakable pattern emerges.

1. THE RARE EXCEPTION: COLLECTIVE BELIEF

In the entirety of the Qur'an, only one nation is depicted as collectively repenting and thereby escaping destruction: the people of Yunus. The Qur'an explicitly states:

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ غَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

If there was any town that benefited from its belief, then that was the people of Yunus. When they believed, We removed from them the retribution of disgrace in this worldly life, and We let them enjoy until a time. (10:98)

This is the only example of an entire community being saved through collective belief. It serves as the sole exception that confirms the general rule.

2. THE GENERAL PATTERN: PERSISTENT REJECTION AND DIVINE PUNISHMENT

In every other case, the Qur'an presents a consistent sequence:

1. A messenger is sent
2. People reject him.
3. He warns them of imminent punishment.
4. That punishment occurs

Examples include:

- **Nuh:** His people persisted in denial despite repeated warnings. They were drowned in a massive flood. (11:44)
- **Hud:** His people rejected his message and were destroyed by a violent, roaring wind. (69:6–8)
- **Salih:** His people ignored his warning and were struck by a sudden earthquake. (7:78)
- **Lut (Lot):** His people persisted in sin and denial, and were destroyed by a rain of stones. (54:34)
- **Shu'ayb:** His people rejected his call and were seized by a devastating quake. (7:91)

Across all these narratives, the pattern is unmistakable, consistent, and precise: rejection leads to real-world, observable destruction.

WHY THIS PATTERN MATTERS?

If God's Sunnah never changes, then the fate of the Prophets people must follow the same two outcomes that the Qur'an consistently describes for every nation warned by a messenger:

1. They believe in time, like the people of Yunus and therefore no punishment comes.
2. They persist in rejection and therefore earthly destruction strikes them.

The Qur'an explicitly tells us which outcome the Prophet's own people experienced.

THE MESSENGER'S TESTIMONY AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE

The Qur'an records the Prophet's testimony regarding his people on the Day of Judgment:

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا

And the Messenger will say: "O my Lord: my people took this Qur'an as a thing abandoned." 25:30

This statement confirms rejection, not acceptance.

The Qur'an also warns that persistent rejection triggers punishment comparable to the catastrophic fates of earlier peoples:

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ

Then if they turn away, say: "I warn you of a thunderbolt like the thunderbolt of 'Āad and Thamud," 41:13

Further verses reinforce the inevitability of this punishment:

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَأِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ

So be patient, for the promise of God is true. So, if We show you some of what We promise them, or We terminate your life, then it is to Us that they will be returned. 40:77

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيَّنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ
رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ
وَإِنَّا عَلَى أَنْ نُرِيَّكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَادِرُونَ

Say: "My Lord, if You show me what they are promised, then do not place me among the wrongdoing people. And We are fully able to show you that which We promise them." (23:93–95)

And again:

إِنْ يَتَوَلَّوْا يُعَذِّبْهُمْ اللَّهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

If they turn away then God would afflict them with painful punishment in this world and the next; and none will they have on the face of the earth to protect or help them. 9:74

The Qur'an establishes a consistent and undeniable principle: every community that rejected a messenger faced real-world, tangible punishment. The pattern is observable in history and narrative.

If the warnings were indeed addressed to the people of Mecca, as traditional Islamic historiography claims, then a direct historical question arises:

WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE OF THAT DESTRUCTION?

The answer is stark: there is none. Absolutely nothing.

- No early sources record an earthquake striking Mecca.
- No seismic shock obliterated the unbelievers.
- No town collapsed under divine wrath.
- No catastrophic event left ruins or remnants that later generations could recount.

The silence is deafening.

Why does Islamic tradition preserve no memory, no trace, of the kind of annihilation the Qur'an repeatedly promises for communities who rejected the message?

The Qur'an itself anticipates this very human tendency to inherit stories without scrutiny. On the Day of Judgment, people will confess the truth of their misguidance:

بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّهُتَدُونَ

*The truth is, they say: "We found our fathers upon a community, and we in their footsteps are guided."*43:22

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا

*And they will say: "Our Lord: we obeyed our masters and our great men, but they led us astray in the path."*33:67

The lesson is clear: people accepted the story because it was handed down, not because it corresponds to the Qur'an. Tradition replaced evidence. Inherited narratives became accepted history, despite contradicting scripture.

The conclusion is inescapable: the traditional Meccan narrative is false. It cannot be reconciled with the unchanging Sunnah of Allah. It collapses the moment one examines the Qur'an.

This is why Mecca carries no memory of destruction:

- Because the story is fabricated.

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- Because Mecca was never the site of the Qur'anic warnings.
- Because the real location, where the warnings were fulfilled - lies elsewhere, a place subjected to violent, unforgettable destruction, and remembered in history.

Petra however endured massive, well-documented destruction, including the catastrophic earthquake of 551 CE that devastated the city and its surroundings. Unlike Mecca, Petra offers:

- A tangible historical record of catastrophic events.
- Ruins and remnants that testify to seismic and violent destruction.

In every respect - historical record, destruction pattern, and topography - Petra aligns with the Qur'an. **Mecca, in contrast, aligns with nothing.**

Early Qibla Orientations

Another independent line of evidence comes from architecture itself.

Researcher Dan Gibson conducted a large-scale study of early mosque orientations, examining the qibla directions of dozens of the oldest surviving mosque. His work relied on satellite imagery, on-site measurements, and architectural plans, allowing precise reconstruction of qiblas based on mosque walls and mihrab alignments.

In total, Gibson analysed approximately sixty early mosques, when these orientations were plotted geographically, a clear pattern emerged.

His findings can be summarized as follows:

- The earliest group of mosques, consistently align northward, converging on Petra, not Mecca.
- A second group, from a slightly later period, shows transitional directions, no longer pointing precisely to Petra but not yet aligned with Mecca.
- Only later mosques, built generations afterward, show a consistent and precise orientation toward Mecca.

This progression is not random. It forms a chronological sequence:

Petra → transitional orientations → Mecca.

Such a pattern is difficult to explain if Mecca had always been the established and universally recognized location of al-Masjid al-Haram. If the Masjid-Al-Haram were already fixed in Mecca during the Prophet's lifetime, the earliest mosques should reflect that with clarity and consistency. Instead, the architectural record suggests that the earliest builders oriented their worship toward a different focal point.



Examples of early mosques align with Petra

This pattern is not based on a single mosque, but on a body of early architecture distributed across the Near East.

Among the mosques Gibson identifies as aligning toward Petra in their earliest construction phases are:

- The Ali Shrine Jarash Mosque
- The Mansouri great Mosque
- The Malek Mosque
- The early phase of al-Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem)

These structures span different regions yet display a shared directional logic in their earliest layouts. The consistency of this alignment, followed by a gradual and traceable shift in later generations, suggests not accidental error but a changing reference point.

Within the framework established throughout this study, these early qibla orientations serve as converging material evidence, coherently reinforcing the Qur'an's own geographic, environmental, and linguistic indicators rather than standing in isolation.

They reinforce the conclusion already suggested:

The Masjid al-Haram referred to in the Qur'an was not the later mosque in Mecca, but an earlier sacred center - one that aligns geographically with Petra.

Resources for independent verification:

Qibla Tool

https://nabataea.net/explore/founding_of_islam/qibla-tool/

Research Paper (free download):

<https://nabataea.net/shop/history/let-the-stones-speak/>

These tools allow readers to examine the raw directional data themselves and assess the pattern independently.

The 78 AH Inscription at Hima al-Nomoor

A further I indicator appears in an early Arabic rock inscription discovered at Ḥimā al-Nomoor, west of Tā'if, Saudi Arabia. The inscription is securely dated to 78 AH (697–698 CE).



شهد الريان بن عبد الله أنه لا إله إلا الله
 و شهد أن محمداً رسول الله
 ثم هو يدمي من أتى أن يشهد علي
 ذلك رحم الله الريان و
 غفر له و استشهد به إلي صراط الجنة
 و أسأله الشهادة في سبيله أ
 مين كتب هذا الكتب
 عام بني المسجد الحرام
 لسنة ثمان و سبعين

The translation of the inscription reads:

- Al-Rayyān b. ‘Abdullāh testifies that there is no god but God.
- and testifies that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.

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- *then reiterates to those to come to testify to*
- *that, God have mercy on al-Rayyān.*
- *May He forgive him and cause him to be guided to the path of Paradise*
- *and I ask him for martyrdom in his path. A-*
- *-men. **This was written in***
- ***the year the Masjid al-Ḥarām was built***
- ***in the seventy eighth year.***

The decisive term is بُنِيَ (buniya) - “*was built.*”

The inscription does not say *rebuilt, expanded, repaired, or renovated*. Classical Arabic possesses clear verbs for those meanings, yet none of them are used here.

Later commentators have attempted to reinterpret this wording as referring to a renovation or expansion of an already existing structure, usually in order to preserve the assumption that the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca existed as a complex from the Prophet’s lifetime. However, this interpretation is not supported by the inscription itself.

The Qur’an speaks of al-Masjid al-Haram as an already established reference point. The inscription, however, records the building of a Masjid al-Haram in 78 AH, decades after the Qur’an was revealed.

The simplest and most textually faithful conclusion is not that the inscription is mistaken, nor that its language is imprecise, but that: **the Masjid al-Haram referred to in the Qur’an is not identical with the mosque complex constructed in Mecca in 78 AH.**

Masjid al-Haram and the meaning of shatr

Having identified the location of the first Bayt, the first dwelling, as Petra, the next question necessarily follows: where, within Petra, is al-Masjid al-Haram itself?

To determine which structure within Petra corresponds to al-Masjid al-Haram, it is first necessary to clarify what Petra itself represents. Petra is frequently mischaracterized in popular imagination as a single monument, most commonly the Treasury (al-Khazneh). This reduction is misleading and obscures the true nature of the site.

In reality, Petra is an immense sacred and urban landscape extending across several square kilometers. It contains hundreds of rock-cut tombs, temples, high places, water systems, processional routes, and ritual complexes. Archaeologists agree that only a fraction of the city has been fully excavated, while large sectors remain unexplored or insufficiently studied.

Just as the identification of Petra itself required the accumulation of multiple Qur’anic indicators rather than reliance on a single verse, the identification of al-Masjid al-Haram likewise demands a cumulative method.

The Qur’an provides a set of defining characteristics by which the sanctuary may be distinguished from other monumental remains. The task, therefore, is to examine Petra’s architectural landscape through this textual framework and to determine, step by step, which location best satisfies the Qur’anic description.

The method remains consistent throughout this study: the Qur’an establishes the criteria, and the material evidence is then evaluated in light of those criteria.

We now turn to the verses that explain how orientation toward al-Masjid al-Haram is to be understood. These directives, repeated throughout Sūrah al-Baqarah, revolve around a pivotal term whose interpretation is crucial for the argument that follows: **شَطْر** - *shatr*

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ 2:144

We see the shifting of your face in the sky; We will set for you a focal point (Qibla) that will be pleasing to you: “You shall set your face sh-t-r/شَطْر the Masjid-Al Haram; and wherever you may be, you shall all set your faces sh-t-r/شَطْر it.” Those who have been given the Book know it is the truth from their Lord. And God is not unaware of what you do.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَإِنَّهُ لَلْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ 2:149

And from wherever you go out, you shall set your face sh-t-r/شَطْر The Masjid Al-Haram; it is the truth from your Lord; and God is not unaware of what you do.

وَمِنْ حَيْثُ خَرَجْتَ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۚ لِيَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَيْكُمْ حُجَّةٌ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِي ۚ وَلَئِمَّ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ 2:150

And from wherever you go out, you shall set your face sh-t-r/شَطْر the Masjid Al-Haram. And wherever you may be, you shall all set your faces sh-t-r/شَطْر it; that the people will have no room for debate with you, except those of them who do injustice. You shall not be concerned by them, but be concerned by Me; so that I may complete My blessings upon you and that you may be guided.

Several features of these verses demand close attention:

1. ORIENTATION IS CONTINUOUS, NOT OCCASIONAL

A striking aspect of these verses lies in what they do not say. Nowhere do they mention any specific ritual action. Instead, the language is deliberately broad and all-encompassing:

- “Wherever you are”
- “From wherever you go out”

The command is continuous, not momentary or ceremonial. The Qur’an presents this orientation as a permanent alignment.

Many modern translations add phrases such as “direction of prayer,” but these words are absent from the Qur’an. They reflect later interpretive traditions rather than the Qur’an’s own wording. In the text itself, the emphasis is on constant orientation.

2. SHATR - شَطْر

The entire instruction hinges on the term *shatr* (شَطْر). It is commonly translated as “toward,” but this rendering is imprecise and incomplete.

Classical Arabic lexicons, define *shatr* primarily as:

- a half
- a division into two equal parts
- something cut through the middle
- a midpoint or bisecting line

Shatr denotes the point that lies at the middle of something, not merely its general vicinity. This is crucial; the Qur’an does not say “face the Masjid al-Haram” using a neutral preposition such as *ilā* (to). Instead, it consistently uses *shatr*, a term that implies a midpoint, a bisected center.

شَطَرَ *ṣaṭara u (ṣaṭr)* to halve, divide into two (equal) parts, bisect, cut through (▲ s.th.); to cut off, sever (▲ s.th.); — شَطَرَ بَصْرَهُ (*baṣaruhū*) u شَطُور (*ṣuṭūr*) to be squint-eyed; — *ṣaṭara u* (شَطُور *ṣuṭūr*, شَطُورَة *ṣuṭūra*, شَطَاة *ṣaṭāra*) to withdraw, separate, disassociate o.s. (عن from); — *ṣaṭara u*, *ṣaṭura u* (شَطَاة *ṣaṭāra*) to be sly, cunning, artful, shrewd; to be clever, smart, bright, skillful, adroit II to halve, divide into two (equal) parts, to bisect, cut through (▲ s.th.) III to halve, share by halves, share equally (▲ with s.o., s.th.), go halves (▲ with s.o.); to participate, take part (▲ in s.th.), share (▲ s.th.) | شَاطَرَهُ آراءَهُ, فَارَاحَهُ (*ārā'ahū, faraḥahū*) to share s.o.'s

Although the verses do not yet specify which structure in Petra corresponds to the Masjid al-Haram, they establish a clear standard: the true point of orientation lies at its very center.

3. THE CRITERION OF AN UNMISTAKABLY MONOTHEISTIC FOCAL POINT

Verse 2:150 provides a decisive principle regarding orientation toward the center of al-Masjid al-Haram. The Qur'an emphasizes that the correct direction is so clear, so evident, that no fair-minded person could reasonably question it. It says that those who might disagree do so only because of injustice.

In other words, the focal point is meant to be unmistakable, leaving no room for sincere doubt.

For many, including myself, this raises a deeply personal struggle. For the last couple of years I faced the heavens rather than any manmade structure, because facing the sky, the sun, the stars: the creation of God - felt like the truest expression of monotheism. Facing what God Himself has made seemed more natural, more pure, than turning toward a stone-built structure.

Yet the Qur'an makes it unmistakably clear: within this sacred location, al-Masjid al-Haram, there exists a focal point that would please me more. Anyone seeking the truth, approaching with honesty, would recognize it as the correct orientation.

This standard leaves no room for ambiguity. A direction that could reasonably be criticized as resembling stone-veneration or idol-like focus cannot meet the Qur'an's criterion. The focal point must be inherently monotheistic, a marker that draws attention solely to God.

Understanding Qibla

The Qur'an repeatedly addresses the concept of qibla, often translated as "prayer direction". Conventional understanding treats it as the physical direction Muslims face in prayer, usually toward the Kaaba in Mecca. Yet, a closer reading reveals a subtler nuance.

The term qibla (قِبْلَة) linguistically refers to a "direction" or "orientation" in Arabic, it can denote a "facing, aspect, or turning toward a specific point," often with connotations of focus, centrality, or reference. It is not inherently geographic; the root concept emphasizes where one directs attention or aligns oneself, not merely a cardinal point.

The Qur'an makes this explicit in 2:142–145:

سَيَقُولُ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَ النَّاسِ مَا وَلَّهُمْ عَن قِبْلَتِهِمُ الَّتِي كَانُوا عَلَيْهَا قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ
وَالْمَغْرِبُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

The foolish from among the people will say: "What has turned them away from the qibla/focal point that they were on?" Say: "To God is the east and the west, He guides whomsoever He wishes to a straight path."

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا
جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً
إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَّءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

And as such, We have made you a balanced nation so that you may be witness over the people, and that the messenger may be witness over you. And We did not make the qibla/focal point that you came on except that We may know who is following the messenger from those who will turn on their heels. It was a hard thing indeed except for those whom God had guided; God was not to waste your belief. God is Merciful and Compassionate over the people.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ
وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ
بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

We see the shifting of your face in the sky; We will set for you a qibla / focal point that will be pleasing to you: "You shall set your face sh-t-r the Masjid Al-Haram; and wherever you may be, you shall all set your faces sh-t-r/ it." Those who have been given the Book know it is the truth from their Lord. And God is not unaware of what you do.

وَلَيْنُ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَبِعُوا قِبْلَتَكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَتَهُمْ وَمَا بَعْضُهُمْ
بِتَابِعٍ قِبْلَةٍ بَعْضٍ وَلَيْنُ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And if you come to those who have been given the Book with every proof they will not follow your qibla / focal point, nor will you follow their qibla / focal point, nor will some of them even follow each others qibla / focal point. And if you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you would be one of the wrongdoers.

These verses explain it very clear: The qibla is not about facing east, west, or any specific geographic coordinate. It is about orientation toward a spiritually valid focal point, unmistakably aligned with God.

10:87 shows the same principle applied to the homes of Musa's people:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَأَخِيهِ أَنْ تَبَوَّءَا لِقَوْمِكُمَا بِمِصْرَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَأَجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قِبْلَةً وَأَقِيمُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And We inspired to Musa and his brother: "Settle your people in the great town (misr) in houses; and make your houses to be a qibla/ focal point, and hold the Connection. And give good news to the believers.

"Designate your homes as a qibla / focal point." The emphasis is not on a geographic direction, but on orienting oneself toward God, establishing a spiritual axis within a particular space.

This reflects a consistent Qur'anic principle: true submission is expressed by turning the face and heart toward God, not by aligning the body toward a physical structure:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Verily, whoso submits his face to God and is a doer of good, he has his reward with his Lord; and no fear will be upon them, nor will they grieve.

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا

And who is better in the way than he who submits his face to God, and is a doer of good, and follows the creed of Ibrahim, inclining to truth? And God took Ibrahim as a friend.

وَمَنْ يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

And whoso submits his face to God, and is a doer of good, he has grasped the most firm handhold; and to God is the final outcome of matters.

IMPLICATIONS FOR AL-MASJID AL-HARAM

From these verses, the conclusion is unavoidable: whatever constitutes the central point of al-Masjid al-Haram, it must be unmistakably monotheistic, clearly directing attention to God. Its purpose is to orient the heart, spirit, and mind. Any structure that risks being interpreted as an idol or object of material reverence fails this requirement.

The qibla is therefore a focal point, a divine orientation, a reference to God's light and presence.

Physical Descriptions: Searching for the Qibla

Having established that the focal point must lie at the center of a structure, I pursued two complementary approaches to identify it. The first involved examining every documented structure in Petra to determine each building's central point. The second drew upon clues within the Qur'an itself, verses that point to the physical characteristics of such a site.

While I couldn't recall any verse giving detailed architectural descriptions of al-Masjid al-Haram, there are verses that provide important clues about its location within Petra:

RAISED SPACES FOR REVELATION

Consider Sūrah 'Abasa (80:11–16):

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ
قَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ
فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ
مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ
بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ
كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ
80:11-80:16

*No, indeed! It is a reminder,
So whoso wills might remember it
In honoured pages
Raised and purified
By the hands of scribes*

Noble and virtuous.

The term مرفوعة (marfū'ah) is noteworthy. While many translations render it as “exalted,” in all other Qur’anic instances it carries a literal sense of “raised” [52:5, 56:34, 88:13]. If the pages themselves are physically raised, where would this take place? Logically, a physically elevated sanctuary - a location where the Messenger could sit, read, teach, and share revelation. (62:2; 2:151; 7:204)

Traditionally, some interpretations have assumed that the “scribes” (سَفَرَة) mentioned in the verse, described as noble and virtuous (كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ), are angelic beings entrusted with recording revelation. However, the Qur’an itself does not specify their nature beyond this description; there is no textual basis for identifying them as angels.

A more grounded reading considers the historical and archaeological context. In Petra, scribes and record-keepers were known to exist, and their presence is archaeologically documented. This suggests a plausible, human context for the verse, focusing on real activity in a raised, functional space where revelation could be recited, taught, and recorded.

ELEVATED ROADS AND TOPOGRAPHY

This notion of elevation is reinforced in Sūrah al-Balad (90:8–11):

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ
وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ
وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ¹
فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ

*Have We not made for him two eyes,
And a tongue, and two lips,
And guided him on the two elevated roads^{32?}
But he has not attempted the steep path.*

The term نَجْد (najd) is explicitly concrete in classical Arabic:

- An elevated or conspicuous road
- A road in a mountain or high terrain

Although many modern translations interpret *najdayn* metaphorically as “good and evil,” the immediate textual sequence points instead to a physical meaning. The Qur’an first introduces *al-najdayn* as two elevated routes, and then immediately follows this with the mention of *al-*

³² ¹ An elevated road: (S:) or an elevated and conspicuous road. (L, K.) A road in a mountain. (L.) [Hence طَلَعَ النَّجْدِ, expl. below, and in art. طلع.]

'*aqaba*, the steep ascent. Together, these form a coherent set of concrete topographical markers rather than abstract moral categories.

The imagery is unmistakably spatial:

- two raised paths or roads
- a steep ascent

This is the language of landscape. The ethical exhortations that follow do not cancel this physical reading; rather, they are layered onto it. The text moves from recognizable terrain to moral responsibility, using physical geography as the foundation for ethical instruction.

What remains constant in the passage is the emphasis on elevation, ascent, and defined routes of approach. These features anchor the verses in physical space, even as they are later employed to convey moral meaning.

Read alongside the verses describing raised pages (مرفوعة) handled by scribes, the implication becomes clear. Revelation was taught, recited, and written in a raised place, one that was physically elevated and reached by defined paths.

PLACE OF GATHERING

Beyond elevation and access, the Qur'an also describes the site as a place of assembly. Revelation was not delivered in isolation, but in a setting where people gathered, made space for one another, listened, learned, and were instructed when to assemble and when to disperse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَانْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ

O you who believe! When you are told to make room in your gatherings, make room; God will make room for you. And when you are told to disperse, disperse. God elevates those among you who believe, and those given knowledge among you in degree. God is Aware of what you do. 58:11

لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا بِالْحَقِّ لَتَدْخُلَنَّ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ مُحَلِّقِينَ زُيُوسَكُمْ وَمُقَصِّرِينَ لَا تَخَافُونَ فَعَلِمَ مَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا فَجَعَلَ مِنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

God has confirmed the vision to His messenger in truth: “You will enter the inviolable place of worship (Al-Masjid Al Haram), if God wills, secure, shaven-headed and cut; not fearing.” And He knew what you knew not, and He appointed, besides that, a near victory. 48:27

Taken together, these verses describe a place where people physically gathered, and where entry itself is explicitly mentioned. The command that believers would enter al-Masjid al-Haram presupposes a defined structure and capacity.

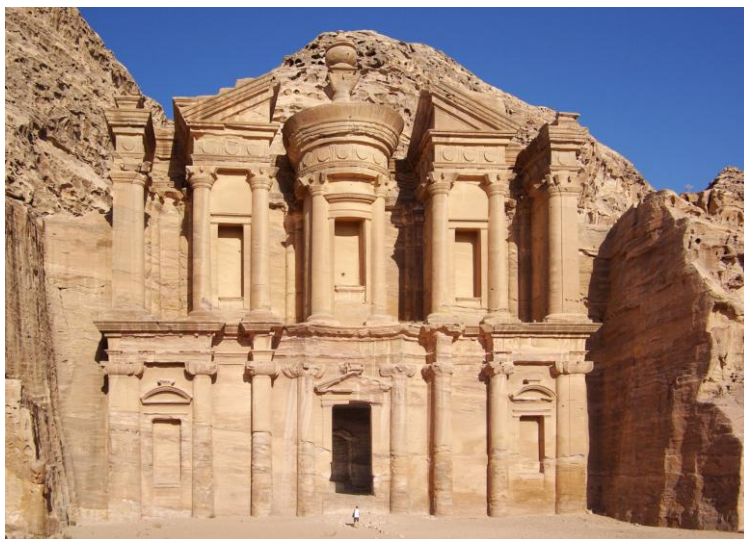
The task now is simple: does Petra contain a raised place of worship large enough to host regular gatherings? A place where the Qur’an could be recited and taught, removed from the noise and activity of a busy trade center. A location that is elevated, yet clearly accessible, reached by defined routes of approach.

Such a structure does exist.... The Monastery.

The Monastery

Among Petra’s structures, one stands out immediately: the Monastery (Ad-Deir). Elevated above the city and larger even than the Treasury, it is accessible via two distinct routes: a steep ascent of roughly 800 steps from the main city, and a longer, less direct path from the area of Siq al-Barid. Its elevation and multiple approaches correspond closely with the markers identified in earlier analyses.

It is also located in close proximity to Qattar ad-Deir, placing it within a clearly significant setting.



The Monastery

The exterior opens onto a broad, leveled terrace, formed by carefully cut and arranged stone. This platform appears intentionally designed for gathering, offering space for assemblies, ceremonies, or contemplation, and providing a commanding view of the western horizon.

Research shows that Ad-Deir was connected to a major Nabataean pilgrimage route. This route began at the city centre, passed by the Lions' Triclinium, and ascended to the Monastery. The path, with its monumental stairways and carefully leveled terraces, indicates that Ad-Deir likely functioned as a culmination point for ritual activity and celestial observation.

The critical point of inquiry now was the interior. Countless tourists and archaeologists had already entered the Monastery, yet I wondered: what would I truly see? What details might reveal themselves to me, unnoticed by others?

My focus was on the center of the structure. There, at its heart, lay the measure of my research - whether the patterns I had traced across the Qur'an and Petra would hold. Would the central space reveal a clear, unmistakable monotheistic orientation? Where did the qibla, the true point of focus, lie?

This moment carried the weight of confirmation or uncertainty. Observing the Monastery's core would either affirm the vision I had followed, or leave lingering questions, challenging the connections I had drawn between landscape and scripture.

Light upon light

Inside, the space is strikingly simple: a single large chamber, carved directly into the rock. There are no multiple rooms, no decorative distractions, no competing focal points. Light enters only through the doorway; the rest of the interior remains subdued. This architectural restraint forces the eye forward.

And there, precisely at the center of the far wall, is a single niche.



Unlike other niches found throughout Petra, which often appear in multiples or are embedded within decorative façades, this niche stands alone. There is nothing to rival it, nothing to divide attention. The entire geometry of the room directs the viewer toward this point. When one stands aligned in the space, vision settles naturally on the niche.

For decades, archaeologists have observed this niche, speculating about altars or betyls, yet its deeper purpose remained unseen. But the Qur'an tells us exactly what this niche, truly stands for:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۚ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ 24:35

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which there is a lamp, the lamp is encased in a glass, the glass is like a radiant planet, which is lit from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west, its oil nearly gives off light even if not touched by fire. Light upon light, God guides to His light whom He pleases. And God sets forth examples for the people, and God is aware of all things.

Suddenly, everything makes sense. God did not command us to direct our bodies toward a stone structure. Our true (qibla) focal point is the Light of God, which we face wherever and whenever we move through life.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ 2:144
وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ
يُغْفِلُ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

We see the shifting of your face in the sky; We will set for you a qibla / focal point that will be pleasing to you: "You shall set your face sh-t-r the Masjid Al-Haram; and wherever you may be, you shall all set your faces sh-t-r/ it." Those who have been given the Book know it is the truth from their Lord. And God is not unaware of what you do.

It was never about east or west. In every thought, every word, every act, I am called to turn toward the Light of God. This is the ultimate focal point, undeniable for any sincere seeker. He has drawn my gaze away from the heavens themselves, toward an even better focal point, the radiance of His Light. Light upon Light, guiding, illuminating, and sustaining all.

FROM DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT

It was always by following the Qur'an that God promised to bring us out of our darkness into the Light. Through His revelation, through His words, would the path towards his Light become clear:

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الظُّلُمَاتُ 2:257
يُخْرِجُونَهُمْ مِنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

God is the ally of those who believe, He brings them out of the darkness and into the light. As for those who reject, their allies are the evil ones, they bring them out of the light and into the darkness; these are the people of the Fire, in it they will abide.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُبِينًا 4:174

O people, proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a guiding light.

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ 5:15

O people of the Book, Our messenger has come to you to clarify for you much of what you were hiding from the Book, and to pardon over much. A light has come to you from God and a clarifying Book.

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ 5:16

God guides with it whoever follows His acceptance, to the ways of peace; and it brings them out of the darkness and into the light with His permission; and it guides them to a straight path.

الرَّ كُتِبَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ 14:1
www.quran-is-fully-detailed.com

ALR, a Book which We have sent down to you so that you may bring the people out of the darkness and into the light with the permission of their Lord, to the path of the Noble, the Praiseworthy.

أَقِمْنَ شَرَحَ اللَّهِ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قَوِيلٌ لِّلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُم مِّن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ 39:22
أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

If God comforts the chest of a person to submission, then he will be on a light from his Lord. So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembering God. They have gone far astray.

رَسُولًا يَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَبِينَاتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَمَن يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا

A messenger who recites to you the revelations of God, which are clear, to lead those who believe and work righteousness out of the darkness and into the light. Anyone who believes in God and does good works, He will admit him into estates with rivers flowing beneath them; abiding therein eternally. God has granted for him an excellent reward.

Yet there were those who sought to extinguish this Light by their mouths. They invented hadith, fabricated narrations, and twisted meanings - all to hide the Qur'an's Truth from us, to obscure its guidance, to put out the Light.

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّآ أَن يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ 9:32

They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God refuses such and lets His light continue, even if the rejecters hate it.

They tried. But God refuses and let his Light continue. And through our research, we have found it. We have found the path out of darkness. The Light of God shines still. It cannot be hidden. It cannot be destroyed.

And so we follow. Out of darkness, into the Light.

MAQAM IBRAHIM

It is also at the Monastery that the following verse comes vividly to mind:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أُولِمْتُ تُوْمِنَ قَالَ بَلَى وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبِي 2:260
قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ أَجْعَلْ عَلَى كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا
وَأَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

And Ibrahim said: "My Lord, show me how you give life to the dead." He said: "Do you not believe?" He said: "I do, but it is so my heart can be at rest." He said: "Take four birds, then, train them to come to you, then place the birds on each mountain, then call them to you; they will come racing towards you. And know that God is Noble, Wise.

Traditional interpretations often suggest that Ibrahim cut or killed the birds. But such a reading obscures the deeper meaning: he was not questioning life and death in a purely literal sense. When we consider the following verses, it becomes clear that “life” and “death” can be understood differently.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ ۚ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

O you who believe, answer the call of God and His messenger when he calls you to what will grant you life. And know that God comes between a person and his heart, and that to Him you will be gathered.

أَوَمَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّتَلَّهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Is he who was dead and to whom We gave life, and We made for him a light to walk with among the people, as he whose example is in darkness and he will not exit from it? It is such that the work of the rejecters has been adorned for them.

These verses reinforce the profound idea of revival through guidance: believers are not merely alive in body, but are “brought to life” in spirit, purpose, and understanding by responding to God’s call and walking in accordance with the Qur’an. Life here is not just existence, it is awakening, illumination, and alignment with the Light of God.

Just as Ibrahim trained the birds to return to him from four mountains, God has trained us through the Qur’an. By reading, reflecting, and following His guidance, we too are drawn back, from north, south, east, and west, to this focal point of Light.

Two Sunrises, Two Sunsets

It is exactly at the central niche of the Monastery (al-Deir) in Petra that a remarkable verse reveals its true meaning. The Qur’an declares:

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ 55:17

Lord of the two sunrises and Lord of the two sunsets.

Classical scholarship has generally interpreted this verse metaphorically, associating the “two sunrises” and “two sunsets” with the extremes of the sun’s apparent motion: the points on the horizon where the sun rises and sets at the summer and winter solstices. This explanation, widespread in tafsīr literature, emphasizes divine mastery over the cosmos rather than any particular terrestrial observation.

Yet, when one stands inside the Monastery, a strikingly literal dimension of this verse becomes visible.

Archaeoastronomical research conducted by Juan Antonio Belmonte, together with A. César González García, has demonstrated that the Monastery was deliberately oriented to interact with the winter solstice sunset. Their analysis shows that ad-Deir functioned as a major ceremonial destination, culminating a processional ascent and opening onto a vast forecourt suitable for large gatherings. Crucially, its architectural layout was designed to frame a specific solar phenomenon.

At the moment of the winter solstice, observers positioned within the vaulted niche of the Monastery witness a **double-sunset phenomenon**. The sun first sets along the principal axis of the monument, disappearing behind one segment of the mountainous western horizon. It then reappears briefly before setting a second time behind another horizon line formed by Petra's rugged topography.

The double-sunset phenomenon described here is visually documented in the published research itself. Belmonte and his colleagues include photographic evidence showing the precise moment of the double-sunset phenomenon inside the Monastery. Due to copyright restrictions, these images cannot be reproduced here. However, readers interested in direct visual confirmation can consult the illustrations provided in *Petra Revisited: An Astronomical Approach to the Nabataean Cultic Calendar*, where the phenomenon is clearly depicted and analyzed in detail.

The complementary "two sunrises" alignment has not yet been rigorously documented, but there is strong reason to consider it plausible. The Nabataeans were renowned for their meticulous solar and celestial alignments elsewhere in Petra, including tomb facades, temples, and other monumental structures designed to interact with the sun at solstices and equinoxes.

The Mountains they tried to erase

Some might ask: Would God not know that a future generation might try to move the Masjid Al-Haram, detach it from its mountainous surroundings, and place it in a setting that does not align with the Qur'anic descriptions?

Qur'an 14:46 offers a striking and precise response:

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَكْرُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ مَكْرُهُمْ لِتَزُولَ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ

"They devised their schemes, but their schemes are with God - even if their scheme were such that from it the mountains would vanish." 14:46

At first glance, this reads like metaphor: human plots are vast, but powerless against God. But if we look closer - The Qur'an repeatedly situates the Masjid in a valley enclosed by mountains. Deep valleys, towering cliffs, narrow passes. They describe a real landscape, Petra.

Mecca, by contrast, is a hilly region but lacks the dramatic, mountainous enclosure described. There are no cliffs of comparable scale, no valleys bounded on all sides.

Qur'an 14:46 suddenly makes sense in a harsher light: God knew the audacity of the scheme, knew the attempt to obliterate the mountainous setting, and frames it with the starkest image possible, a plot so extreme it would "vanish the mountains." Real mountains - Petra's mountains.

It was a scheme of enormous scale. To move the sanctuary from Petra to Mecca was to erase an entire geography from collective memory: towering mountains, enclosed valleys, carved rock, visible ruins of earlier peoples. It was an effort to make those mountains disappear and replace them with a fundamentally different landscape.

For a time, this scheme appeared to succeed. Later narratives and inherited traditions came to dominate interpretation, while the Qur'an was recited but not examined with sufficient care or independence. People followed what they had received from their forefathers, even as the text itself repeatedly warns against such uncritical inheritance.

Yet what those who initiated this relocation failed to grasp was that God had already anticipated it. As the Qur'an itself states, some hear the revelation yet do not truly perceive it (6:25). Embedded within the Qur'an are precise markers, details sufficient for sincere seekers, at the appropriate time, to rediscover the truth. When the Qur'an is read on its own terms, free from imposed narratives, the scheme begins to unravel. The verses realign. The geography returns. The mountains reappear. The sacred site stands once again where it had always been placed.

The scheme has not merely failed; it has been exposed, because God had already prepared for it.

وَيُحِقُّ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

And God upholds the truth with His words, even though the sinners detest it. 10:82

What was meant to be erased now stands clear - for all who are willing to see.

Hajj

While my research has focused solely on identifying the true Masjid al-Haram, reaching its location presented a dilemma: should I continue to investigate, tracing every detail of Hajj and its full timeline, or share what I had uncovered?

By this point, numerous indicators had already surfaced, from the seasonal movements of people mentioned in the Qur'an to the migratory patterns of birds, pointing toward a certain direction.

Yet just as multiple verses and signs converged on Petra as the correct location, it became equally necessary to ask a deeper question: why Petra was the place associated with the messengers mentioned in the Qur'an. This became my standard of inquiry: I can no longer ask only *when* Hajj occurs, but I also have to ask *why* it occurs at a specific time, *why* the inviolable months are designated as they are, and whether these matters ultimately trace back to verses concerning the creation of the heavens and the earth.

I cannot know how long it will take to fully comprehend all of this. What I do know is that carrying this understanding alone has weighed heavily on me, often keeping me awake at night. And in light of recent events in the world, the sense that this insight should not remain unspoken grew increasingly urgent. For that reason, I have chosen to present these findings now, aware that they are not yet complete.

Thus, this final section is neither fully conclusive nor exhaustive, but it is necessary. I anticipate many will ask:

- Where is the stoning of the devil?
- Where should we circumambulate?
- What are Safa and Marwa?
- Where is Arafat?
- What should we wear?

To be candid, most rituals traditionally associated with Hajj are absent from the Qur'an. Simply put, if it cannot be found in the Qur'an, it is not prescribed by God. But let us now examine some of the verses themselves:

ARAFĀT AND AL-MASH'AR AL-HARAM:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَإِذَا أَقَضْتُم مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِندَ
الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ وَأَذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا هَدَيْتُكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِّنَ الضَّالِّينَ

You do no wrong to seek favour from your Lord. And when you pour forth from 'Arafāt, then remember God at Al-Mash'ar³³ Al-Haram. And remember Him, how He guided you, for indeed you were before it among those astray.

³³ الْمَشْعَرُ q. مَعْلَم [meaning A place where a thing is known to be]. (TA.)

Traditionally, Arafāt is understood as a mountain called Arafat near Mecca, and Al-Mash‘ar Al-Haram as the site of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca. However, the Qur‘an itself provides no geographical identification, and notably, both terms occur only once in the entire Qur‘an. This invites closer lexical and contextual examination rather than reliance on later ritual geography.

The verse outlines a clear sequence:

1. a place called ‘Arafāt,
2. a commanded *descent* from it (*afaḍtum*),
3. remembrance at a marked sacred site (*Al-Mash‘ar Al-Haram*).

AL-MASH‘AR (المَشْعَر)

The term Al-Mash‘ar Al-Haram literally means “*the inviolable landmark, the place made known*”. Lexically, mash‘ar is a site of recognition, not necessarily a constructed building or mosque.

The verse directs attention to a visible, identifiable landmark where remembrance is enacted.

Within the scope of this research, Qattar ad-Dayr corresponds precisely to this description:

- It is a tangible, clearly identifiable landmark, long recognized and marked.
- It is the site where water emerges through rock, aligning with Qur‘anic descriptions of human origin from clay animated by water.
- It held historic sacred significance, evidenced by Nabataean construction of a ritual chamber, indicating longstanding recognition of the site as inviolable.

This establishes Qattar ad-Dayr not as a speculative location, but as a site that fits the lexical, functional, and historical criteria of *Al-Mash‘ar Al-Haram*.

THE DESCENT: FA-IDHĀ AFAḌTUM

The verse begins: “*when you pour forth (fa-idhā afaḍtum) from ‘Arafāt...*” The verb *afaḍa*³⁴ conveys a flowing downward in mass, not simply leaving a place. It is not a neutral term for departure, but one that presupposes descent from a higher point to a lower one.

If remembrance is commanded at Qattar ad-Dayr after a descent (*afaḍtum*), then the point from which that descent begins, ‘Arafāt, must lie above it. This excludes the possibility that ‘Arafāt refers to a separate, unrelated mountain elsewhere. Rather, it identifies ‘Arafāt as the elevated place already encountered in this study: the Monastery itself.

³⁴, *It (water) overflowed: poured out, or forth, from fulness: (Mgh:) it (water, S, O, K, or a torrent, Msb) became abundant, (S, O, Msb, K and flowed from [over] the brink of the valley, (Msb,) or so as to flow over the side of the valley, (S, O,) or so as to flow like a valley; (K;) and افاض signifies the same: (Msb, TA:) it (water) became abundant: (TA:) [contr. of غاض, aor. يَغِيضُ] it (water, and that of the eyes, and the like, M, or anything fluid, Msb) ran, or flowed: (M, Msb:) or it poured out, or forth; or poured out, or forth, vehemently; gushed out, or forth: (M:) and it (water, and blood,) fell in drops. (Msb.)*

This conclusion is not based on geography alone. When the linguistic dimension of Arafat is considered, the identification becomes even more precise:

ARAFĀT (عَرَفَاتٍ)

‘Arafāt derives from the root ‘-r-f, which in Arabic denotes knowing, recognizing, and becoming aware, specifically, recognition that follows prior ignorance and clarity that emerges after confusion. Across Qur’anic usage and classical Arabic, this root consistently conveys the process of coming to know through discernment and realization, not the designation of a physical landform.

Significantly, ‘Arafāt does not intrinsically refer to a mountain or any specific topographical feature. Rather, it designates a place defined by recognition and conscious awareness. Its meaning is functional, not geographical in the conventional sense.

Read in this light, ‘Arafāt in Qur’an 2:198 identifies the location where recognition occurs, where guidance becomes evident and the divine signs are consciously acknowledged after reflection.

When the verses examined throughout this study are read cumulatively, this place of recognition becomes identifiable. The Monastery (*al-Dayr*) gives tangible form to that moment of realization. As an elevated gathering place oriented toward illumination, aligned with what the Qur’an describes as the Light of God, it embodies ‘Arafāt not as a name imposed upon a site, but as a function fulfilled by it: the place of ‘*irfān*, where signs are perceived, understood, and affirmed through sustained engagement with the Qur’anic text.

ṢAFĀ AND MARWA

Ṣafā and Marwa are commonly understood today as two small hills in Mecca between which pilgrims are required to walk repeatedly, a practice traditionally linked to a narrative about Hājar searching for water. However, this entire narrative framework is absent from the Qur’an. The Qur’an neither places Ibrahim in such a setting, never even mentions Hājar, nor does it describe a desperate search for water between hills. These elements belong to later fabricated narrations.

Ṣafā and Marwa appear only once in the Qur’an:

إِنَّ الصَّفَا وَالْمَرْوَةَ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا ۚ وَمَنْ تَطَوَّعَ خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَاكِرٌ عَلِيمٌ
2:158

Indeed al-Şafā and al-Marwa are among the symbols of God. So whoever makes ḥajj to the dwelling(Bayt) or visits, there is no blame upon him that he yaṭṭawafa bihimā; and whoever volunteers good, God is Grateful, Knowing.

Notably, the verse does not issue a command. Instead, it uses the formulation “*there is no blame upon him*” (lā junāḥa ‘alayhi), an expression consistently employed to indicate permission, not obligation. Where God intends to mandate an act, the Qur’an does so unambiguously. Here, the language is explicitly permissive.

To understand what is being permitted, the terms themselves must be examined:

LEXICAL MEANING OF ŞAFĀ AND MARWA

ŞAFĀ (الصَّفَا)

Şafā derives from roots conveying:

- smooth, polished stone
- broad, flat rock surfaces
- hard, exposed rock upon which nothing grows

The term does not inherently denote a specific, named hill. Rather, it describes a type of terrain, smooth, bare rock formations.

MARWA (المروة)

Marwa refers to:

- flint
- small stones or pebbles
- stony ground or describing stony terrain

Again, this is not necessarily a proper noun, but a descriptive geological term.

Taken together, Şafā and Marwa describe contrasting stone features: smooth exposed rock and stony terrain. These are precisely the natural geological characteristics found throughout Petra’s valleys and rock corridors, where polished rock faces and stony terrain exist side by side.

WHAT DOES ṬAWĀF MEAN?

The verb used in 2:158 is *yaṭṭawafa*, derived from the root ṭ-w-f. While commonly translated as “circumambulate,” the Qur’an itself demonstrates that ṭawāf does not inherently denote a ritualized circular act.

For example:

يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَدَانُ مُخَلَّدُونَ 56:17

There will circulate (yaṭūfu) among them eternal youths.

Here, ṭawāf clearly means moving about, passing among, circulating freely, without a ritual implication.

Accordingly, *yaṭṭawafa bihimā* in 2:158 simply means:

- to move among them
- to pass through their vicinity
- to traverse their space

No repetition is specified.

No direction is imposed.

No number of passes is mentioned.

No ritual sequence is prescribed.

The Qur'an leaves the act entirely open-ended.

This reading is reinforced elsewhere in the Qur'an, where movement itself, without ritual formalism, is recognized and recorded:

وَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ 2:203
لِمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَتَقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

And remember God during a few number of days. Whoever hurries to two days, there is no sin upon him; and whoever delays, there is no sin upon him if he is being righteous. And be aware of God, and know that it is to Him that you will be gathered.

وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَ نَفَقَةً صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً وَلَا يَقْطَعُونَ وَادِيًا إِلَّا كُتِبَ لَهُمْ لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 9:121

Nor do they spend an expenditure, small or large, nor do they cross any valley, but it is recorded for them. So that God may reward them in accordance with the best of their deeds.

These verses emphasize freedom of movement and the liberty to choose the duration of one's stay, whether shorter or longer, without any prescribed choreography or rigid ritual.

Petra, with its stone corridors, smooth rock faces, and connected valleys, naturally reflects these Qur'anic principles. Moving through this landscape encourages observation, reflection, remembrance, and recognition of God's signs. This kind of engagement fits perfectly with the Qur'anic understanding of Ṣafā, Marwa, and ṭawāf, not as fixed rituals to be repeated mechanically, but as conscious movement and attentive interaction with one's surroundings.

WITNESSING BENEFIT, REMEMBRANCE, AND FEEDING THE POOR

After addressing places and movement, the Qur'an turns to purpose. It clarifies why hajj occurs at all and what is meant to result from it.

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُم مِّنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۖ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْفَقِيرِ

That they might witness benefits for them, and remember the name of God on days appointed over their provision of livestock cattle.” So eat thereof, and feed the unfortunate poor. 22:28

First, witnessing benefits. The Qur'an does not speak of performing rites, but of seeing what has been provided: sustenance, animals, resources, and the conditions that make life possible. concrete and observable benefits.

Second, remembrance on appointed days. Remembrance here is not defined as repeated formulae, but as conscious acknowledgment of God and of his guidance.

Third, eating and feeding the poor. The verse moves immediately from recognition to responsibility. Awareness of provision is inseparable from sharing it. Feeding the poor is not framed as an optional virtue, but as an expected outcome of remembrance.

The sequence is intentional: perception, awareness, action. The Qur'an presents the journey as a means of aligning understanding with conduct. What is witnessed is to be remembered, and what is remembered is to be acted upon.

This framing leaves little room for empty observance. A journey that does not sharpen awareness or translate into care for others has failed to meet the purpose the Qur'an describes.

RITUALS

Verse 22:29 is traditionally treated as the textual foundation for a detailed system of non-Qur'anic pilgrimage rites. Classical and later interpretations read it as authorizing a fixed sequence of actions, including shaving or shortening the hair, trimming nails, removing body hair, slaughtering sacrificial animals, casting pebbles, and completing prescribed ceremonial rites.

It is commonly translated as:

“Then let them attend to their persons, fulfil their vows, and circumambulate the Ancient House.”

Yet this reading assumes meanings that are not established by the Qur'anic language itself. A closer examination of the verse shows that these ritual prescriptions are not derived from the text, but imposed upon it.

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلِيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ 22:29

Then let them make an end of their tafath, and fulfil their vows, and yaṭṭawafū bi-al-bayt al-'atīq.

TAFATH (تَفَثٌ)

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ

In classical Arabic, *tafath* denotes a state, not a ritual act. Lexicons defines it as a condition characterized by:

- dust and physical alteration
- unkempt or matted hair
- lack of grooming or anointing
- neglect resulting from prolonged abstention from ordinary care

Tafath describes the physical condition of a person who has remained in a state of exposure, travel, or restraint. The verse does not specify actions required to end that condition.

Later tradition reinterpreted *ending tafath* as a collection of ritual acts, including shaving, trimming, sacrifice, and stone-casting. However, the Qur'an itself provides no such list.

The verse simply states:

"Then let them bring their tafath to an end."

This instruction is open-ended and condition-based. It addresses the state of the individual, not a prescribed ritual sequence.

This reading is reinforced by 2:196:

وَلَا تَخْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ

"...and do not shave your heads until the present reaches its place."

Here, shaving is mentioned only as a restriction, not as a command. The Qur'an never instructs shaving or shortening the hair as an obligatory rite; it merely regulates it under specific circumstances. Hair removal, as a ritualized practice, is not grounded in the Qur'anic text.

Vows (نُذُور)

وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ

The Qur'an commands the fulfillment of vows. But which vows can this refer to?

Many people, do not make personal vows at all. I try to avoid them deliberately, aware of my own limits and the seriousness of committing to something I may fail to uphold. If no explicit vow has been made, then what vow is one expected to fulfill? And how could such a vow be "fulfilled" at a specific place?

Actually, the Qur'an itself points to a single, fundamental vow, one that precedes all others, and one that everyone of us has taken.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۖ
شَهِدْنَا ۚ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ
أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ۖ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ

And your Lord took for the children of Adam from their backs, their progeny; and He made them witness over themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" They said: "Yes, we bear witness." Thus you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection that you were unaware of this. 7:173 Nor can you say: "It was our fathers who set up partners before and we were simply a progeny who came after them. Would You destroy us for what the innovators did. 7:172-7:173

This is the first vow humanity took: the acknowledgment that God alone is our Lord. Seen in this light, fulfilling vows in 22:29 cannot be reduced to a set of ritual actions or spoken pledges. It refers instead to the reaffirmation of this covenant. Each person who approaches the dwelling is called to remember and confirm what was already witnessed: recognition of God, acceptance of His guidance, and rejection of false authority. The vow is not newly made; it is restored.

To fulfill this vow is to return ourselves to a state of recognition, ending ignorance, setting aside inherited distortions, and consciously aligning oneself with divine guidance. It is the acknowledgment that one has not set up partners with God, neither in belief nor in direction.

By following the Qur'an's guidance and arriving at this place through recognition, the covenant becomes tangible. The vow is no longer abstract or forgotten; it is recognized, affirmed, and upheld in lived reality.

This is the fulfillment of the vow.

ṬAWĀF AT THE BAYT وَلْيَطُوفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ

This clause is commonly cited as proof of circumambulation around a cubic structure. Yet nothing in the verse itself supports that interpretation.

The verb ṭāfa / yaṭūfu simply means to move about, roam, pass among, or circulate within a space. The Qur'an uses this verb in non-ritual contexts (e.g., 52:24, 56:17), where it clearly does not imply circular motion around an object.

Similarly, the term bayt does not inherently denote a building. A bayt may refer to:

- a house or residence
- an inhabited area or settlement
- a domain defined by continuous life and activity

The Qur'an makes a clear distinction between masjid and bayt. In 5:2, al-Masjid al-Haram and al-Bayt are mentioned separately, showing that the two terms are not interchangeable.

This distinction is further reinforced by al-Bayt al-Ma'mūr (52:4), the "inhabited Bayt." The qualifier ma'mūr excludes the meaning of an empty monument or isolated structure; it describes a place defined by ongoing presence, movement, and life.

Accordingly, ṭawāf at the bayt cannot refer to circling a building. Rather, it describes moving within and through a living, inhabited domain, engaging with it, observing it, and participating in its reality. It is a dynamic, conscious movement, rooted in presence, awareness, and interaction with the space itself.

THE KA'BAH

For most people today, the word Ka'bah immediately conjures the image of a black, cubic structure in Mecca. This association has become so dominant that the term itself is assumed to describe a physical shape. Yet the Qur'an presents a different understanding:

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ
5:97

God has made the Ka'bah—the inviolable dwelling [bayt] a means of support for humanity;

The bayt referenced here, as clarified through earlier verses, is an inhabited dwelling, a lived domain, not an isolated structure. The Qur'an consistently distinguishes between bayt and masjid, indicating that the former refers to a space of habitation and life rather than a constructed monument.

To understand what Ka'bah truly signifies, we must return to the Arabic language itself.

The Root ك-ع-ب³⁵ in Classical Arabic

According to early authorities ك-ع-ب can mean:

- eminence
- nobility
- glory

Classical expressions preserve this meaning clearly:

أَعْلَى اللَّهُ كَعْبُهُ *May God exalt his glory!*

عَلَا كَعْبُكَ بِي *Thy nobility, or glory, hath exalted me.*

If the Qur'an intended "cube," Arabic already possessed a precise word: مُكْعَب (muk'ab), a cube, a cubical form. This word exists, is unambiguous, yet it is never used in the Qur'an for the sacred dwelling.

When the Qur'an says Ka'bah, it is not naming a shape. It is describing a quality of the dwelling. Once the bayt is recognized, through Qur'anic language, as an inhabited domain rather than a structure, Ka'bah follows naturally as its defining characteristic.

HAJJ IN THE QUR'AN

As seen from the verses examined, the Hajj described by the Qur'an bears little resemblance to what is practiced today in Mecca. Familiar rituals, stoning imagined devils, prescribed garments, compulsory head-shaving, rigid choreography, and other restrictions, have no Qur'anic foundation.

What the Qur'an presents instead is far more coherent and profound: Hajj is a journey of recognition, not ritual performance. It is not centered on stones, objects, or repetitive motions, but on awareness, remembrance, and ethical responsibility.

³⁵ Eminence, or nobility, and glory.

رَجُلٌ عَالِي الْكَعْبِ *A man eminent, or noble, and successful in his enterprises. (TA.)*

أَعْلَى اللَّهُ كَعْبُهُ *May God exalt his glory! (TA, from a trad.)*

لَا يَزَالُ كَعْبُكَ عَالِيَا *May thy glory not cease to be exalted!*

عَلَا كَعْبُكَ بِي *Thy nobility, or glory, hath exalted me. (TA.)*

The Qur'an: How to Read It Properly

The Qur'an itself teaches us how it should be approached. From its own verses, two foundational principles emerge clearly.

First, the Qur'an is fully detailed and complete, containing everything necessary for guidance. We are not required to rely on secondary narratives to understand God's message; He has already explained all essential matters within the Scripture itself:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

There is no creature on land, nor a bird flying with its wings, but are communities like you. We neglected nothing in the Scripture. Then to their Lord they will be gathered. 6:38

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَتَيْنِ ۖ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً ۖ لِّتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۚ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابِ ۚ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا

We have made the night and the day two proofs. We erased the proof of the night, and made the proof of the day revealing, that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and know the number of years, and the calculation. We have explained all things in detail. 17:12

DELIBERATE AND PRECISE LANGUAGE

The second principle concerns the nature of the Qur'an's language itself. Its words are deliberate and precise. This is powerfully expressed in the following verse:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا

Say, "If the ocean were ink for the words of my Lord, the ocean would run out, before the words of my Lord run out," even if We were to bring the like of it in addition to it. 18:109

The meaning is profound. If God's words cannot be exhausted, then the words He has chosen for the Qur'an are not random, incidental, or merely stylistic. Every phrase, every word, and even every letter is deliberately placed. The Qur'an is not a storybook with decorative passages or filler text; each expression serves a purpose and points toward guidance.

That the Qur'an is intentional in every word and phrase becomes clear through several observable patterns.

FOREWARNING OF FUTURE PRACTICES

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God knew that later generations would rely heavily on secondary sources, such as Hadith collections, including those widely regarded as authoritative like Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Yet the Qur'an directly challenges this practice by repeatedly asking:

"In which hadith after it will they believe?"

(45:6; 7:185; 77:50)

The Qur'an's deliberate use of the very word *hadith*, the same term later used for these fabricated narrations, is unmistakable. This linguistic choice functions as a warning: guidance is not to be sought in later narratives, but in the Qur'an itself.

INNOVATIONS NOT PRESCRIBED IN THE QUR'AN

God also foresaw that future generations would introduce practices not commanded in the Qur'an. A clear example is the concept of *hijab*. The Qur'an uses deliberately the word *hijab* in multiple verses (7:46; 17:45; 19:17; 33:53; 38:32; 41:5; 42:51), yet never to indicate a headscarf. Instead, it consistently refers to a barrier, separation, or partition.

Through this precise usage, the Qur'an itself clarifies which interpretations align with its language and which are later innovations.

MINOR BUT SIGNIFICANT DETAILS

Even seemingly minor narrative details: such as the pavilion in Sulayman's story (27:44) or Musa watering the animals before resting in the shade (28:22-24) may appear insignificant at first glance. Yet these details are often crucial. In my research, it was precisely such subtle signs, geographic markers, contextual movements, and descriptions, that ultimately revealed the truth of the location I sought.

Nothing in the Qur'an is incidental.

REPEATING SCENES WITH ADDED DETAIL

The Qur'an frequently repeats key narratives across different Surahs, yet each repetition introduces new elements or emphasis. Mount (*Tur*), for example, appears across multiple verses (2:63; 2:93; 4:154; 19:52; 20:80; 23:20; 28:29; 28:46; 52:1; 95:2) When these passages are read together, they form a detailed and coherent picture.

SHARED WORDS AND ROOT CONNECTIONS

In other cases, the Qur'an uses the same words or root words in passages that initially seem unrelated. Only careful and attentive reading reveals these deeper connections. One example is the repeated use of the word **اهبطوا** (*descend*) in the story of Adam and the Children of Israel (2:36; 2:38; 2:61; 7:24) Such linguistic parallels invite reflection and deeper study, revealing unity beneath apparent separation.

Together, these patterns teach us how the Qur'an is meant to be read. Engaging with it requires patience, focus, and reverence. Every letter matters. Every word carries weight. God repeatedly commands us to reflect, to ponder, and to read slowly and attentively.

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ

Do they not ponder over the Qur'an? (4:82)

Only through such deliberate and careful reading can the full guidance of the Qur'an be understood.

A FALSE APPROACH TO THE QUR'AN

After outlining how the Qur'an teaches us to read it properly, it is equally important to address a false approach, one I myself was guilty of in the early years of reading the Qur'an.

When I first sought answers, I approached the Qur'an selectively. When researching Hajj, I limited myself to verses that explicitly mentioned Hajj. When trying to understand Ramadan, I searched only for verses containing the word Ramadan. I assumed that the relevant answers must be confined to the verses that appeared, at least on the surface, to address those topics directly. This method hindered my understanding.

The Qur'an warns against this fragmented approach:

الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ

*Those who have made the Qur'an into parts.
(15:91)*

To divide the Qur'an into "obvious" verses on one side and "mere narrative" or secondary material on the other is a fundamental error. As this research has shown, it is often the smallest details, the brief descriptions, subtle movements, or seemingly incidental settings, that carry the greatest weight. Minor narrative elements frequently contain the keys to understanding broader themes, locations, and meanings. Ignoring them results in an incomplete picture.

This does not mean that I claim to understand the Qur'an completely. There remain subjects I feel compelled to pursue further. However, what has changed is my approach. Through this research, I learned that understanding requires patience, and attentiveness to the entirety of the text. Every detail matters, and every verse contributes to the larger whole.

The Qur'an must be read as a unified discourse, not dissected into isolated fragments. Only then can its guidance unfold as intended.

The Qur'an also issues severe warnings against believing in part of the revelation while neglecting or denying the rest:

أَفْتَوْمُنُونَ بِنَظَرٍ ۚ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ ۖ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۚ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

Do you believe in part of the Book and deny part? Then what is the reward of him among you who does that save disgrace in the life of this world? And on the Day of Resurrection they are sent back to the harshest punishment; and God is not unmindful of what you do.2:85

Likewise, it cautions against inventing falsehoods about God, denying His proofs, or uncritically repeating inherited claims without awareness or verification:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ
وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيِنَ شِرْكَائِكُمْ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ
ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ رَبَّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ

And who is more unjust than he who invents a lie about God, or denies His proofs? The wrongdoers are not successful. And the day We gather them all together, then will We say to those who ascribe a partnership: “Where are your partners that you claimed?” Then will their means of denial be but that they will say: “By God! Our Lord, we were not idolaters!” 6:21-23

And finally, it warns of those who are most lost in their efforts:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا
الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا
وَلِئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا تُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا

Say, “Shall We inform you of the greatest losers in their works?” Those whose efforts in this world are misguided, while they assume that they are doing well.” Those are they who deny the proofs of their Lord and the meeting with Him; so their works are in vain, and We will assign to them on the Day of Resurrection no weight. 18:103-105

Taken together, these verses underscore a central principle: the unexamined repetition of inherited narratives can lead one far from the truth, even while believing oneself to be rightly guided.

Ṣalāt

A personal note on ṣalāt: Throughout this paper, I have rendered the word ṣalāt as *connection*. By ṣalāt, I do not understand the ritualized prayer performed by millions of Muslims today, fixed movements, prescribed sequences, and repeated formulas often recited without comprehension.

In the Qur’an, I do not find instructions detailing such a ritual structure: no prescribed bodily positions, no fixed wording, no rigid format resembling what later tradition defined as prayer.

Moreover, the Qur’an repeatedly criticizes the uncritical following of forefathers. Given that even the location of the Masjid Al-Haram became distorted over time, it is reasonable to question whether inherited ritual forms escaped similar alteration.

If such a foundational element as place could be distorted, how can one assume that later-developed prayer forms remained untouched?

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THE MESSENGERS PRACTICE

What the Qur'an *does* describe consistently is something different. It repeatedly emphasizes that the Messenger:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

God indeed showed favour to the believers as He raised up among them a messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them, and teaches them the Scripture and wisdom; although before that they were in evident error. 3:164

This description suggests an active, conscious engagement with revelation. It does not depict a mechanical or purely ritual recitation, but a process of reading, teaching, explaining, reflecting, and understanding. The purpose was purification through comprehension and guidance, not repetition without awareness.

The Messenger faced people who altered meanings and took words out of their proper context, precisely the kind of distortion I have encountered repeatedly, both during this research and in everyday discourse:

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُؤُونَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ
مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكُذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And among them are those who twist the Scripture with their tongues, that you may think it from the Scripture, when it is not from the Scripture. And they say, "It is from God," when it is not from God. They tell lies and attribute them to God, knowingly. 3:78

فَبِمَا تَقْضِيهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا
دُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ قَاعَفْ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُحْسِنِينَ

Because of their breaking their pledge, We cursed them, and made their hearts hard. They twist the words out of their context, and they disregarded some of what they were reminded of. You will always witness deceit from them, except for a few of them. But pardon them, and overlook. God loves the doers of good. 5:13

These verses describe not the loss of the text itself, but the distortion of meaning, context, and intent. Words are shifted, emphasis altered, and understanding redirected.

History, it seems, has repeated itself. We were taught that Mecca, was the location of the Masjid Al Haram - yet it is not. This raises a more unsettling question: what else have we assumed to be in the Book that is not?

Together, makā' and tasdiyah describe a pattern of sound: *a repeated call followed by its echo, repetition upon repetition.*

Seen in this light, the verse presents a striking metaphor. It criticizes a form of ṣalāt reduced to repetitive vocalization, sound answering sound.

If ṣalāt is reduced to the repeated recitation of the same words, often without understanding, recited multiple times within a single prayer, and then repeated multiple times a day, does this fulfill the purpose intended by God? Or does it resemble precisely the kind of mechanical repetition the Qur'an critiques?

LINGUISTIC ROOT OF ṢALĀT: CONNECTION

Linguistically, ṣalāt (صلاة) is derived from the trilateral root ṣ-l-w (ص-ل-و), a root that recurs throughout the Qur'an in various forms.

Classical Arabic sources explain that this root conveys meanings of connection, linkage, communication, and staying attached. Words from this root can signify following closely, remaining connected, or maintaining a bond. In essence, the root itself emphasizes reciprocal relationship, not mere recitation.

Some related roots, such as w-ṣ-l (وصل), reinforce this idea of connection, producing terms like *ittiṣālāt* (communications) and *mawāṣalāt* (links, transport), which highlight the central notion of establishing a link or reaching out. Thus, even linguistically, ṣalāt is fundamentally about connection, not simply ritualized action.

This becomes particularly clear when the Qur'an contrasts ṣalāt with tawallā:

فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّى
وَلَكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى

"So he did not believe, nor did he establish connection (ṣalāt); but he denied and turned away (tawallā)." 75:31–32

By linking the linguistic roots to Qur'anic usage, it becomes evident: ṣalāt is intended as active connection, a mindful engagement with God and His guidance, rather than a series of motions or repeated recitations.

ṢALĀT AS THE TIME-ANCHORED BOOK

The Qur'an defines Ṣalāt in a way that leaves little room for misunderstanding. It is not described as a sequence of bodily movements, but as something directly tied to the Book itself:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقَعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا اطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا 4:103
 الصَّلَاةُ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْقُوتًا

“When you have completed the ṣalāt, remember God while standing, sitting, and on your sides. Then, when you feel secure/at ease, establish the ṣalāt. Truly, the salat is upon the believers a time-anchored book.”

This wording is decisive. Ṣalāt is described as a Book, one that is anchored in time. A Book is not performed; it is engaged with, read, reflected upon, and understood. Ṣalāt, then, is a structured, recurring engagement with God’s words throughout the day.

Connection is never one-sided. Throughout the day, I speak to God, through thought, intention, fear, gratitude, and hope. He hears what is within me. But true connection requires more than speaking; it requires listening.

Ṣalāt is the moment where I stop speaking and allow God to speak.

When I read the Qur’an attentively, I am opening myself to guidance, correction, and instruction. This is where God conveys what He wants me to understand. This is where the connection becomes complete.

ṢALĀT: ITS PURPOSE

Ṣalāt has a clear purpose...

أَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمُ الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

Recite what is revealed to you of the Book, and establish the Salat. The Salat prevents indecencies and perversity. And the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows what you do. 29:45

..to prevent indecencies and evil. But how could a traditional ṣalāt, with fixed movements and repeated Surahs, truly accomplish this? How would merely bowing, standing, or reciting teach you what is forbidden, or help you recognize wrongdoing?

“Only by engaging with the Qur’an, reading, reflecting, and seeking to understand God’s guidance, can one truly recognize what constitutes indecency and perversity. These principles are not invented; they are imprinted in our fitrah, our innate disposition. The Qur’an does not create morality but serves as a reminder, awakening and reinforcing what has always been within us.”

RITUAL MOVEMENTS?: SUJUD AND RUKU

To understand “ritual movements” such as sujud and ruku’, it is essential to examine the Qur’an itself rather than relying solely on later ritualized interpretations. Traditional practice often emphasizes bodily mechanics and repeated formulas.

And the star and the tree submit. [yasjudan]

This verse presents sujud as an act even performed by stars and trees. Since these entities cannot physically prostrate, the Qur'an is clearly conveying submission as a state of alignment or recognition, rather than prescribing bodily motion. Sujud is a conscious orientation toward God, a mental and spiritual act of humility and acknowledgment.

Let us examine another verse:

No! Do not obey him; but submit and come near.

Traditional interpretations often assume this verse commands physically lowering the head to the ground. Yet, if sujud were purely a physical act, would mere proximity of the body to the earth bring one closer to God? The Qur'an implies otherwise: spiritual proximity is achieved through conscious submission, understanding, and alignment, not mechanics.

Even in 48:29, the Qur'an speaks of the mark of submission on believers' faces:

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رَحِمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ
فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي
الْإِنْجِيلِ كَرَزِعٍ أُخْرِجَ شَطْطُهُ فَنَازَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى عَلَى سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيُغَيِّظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ
وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Muhammad is the messenger of God. And those with him are hard against the deniers, merciful among themselves — you see them humbled in submission, seeking favour from God and approval, their mark on their faces of the effects of Submission [Sujud] — that is their likeness in the Tawra. And their likeness in the Injil is like a seed that put forth its shoot, and strengthens it, and established itself upon its stem pleasing the sowers, that by them He might enrage the deniers. God has promised those among them who believe and do good deeds forgiveness and a great reward.

Here, the “mark on their faces” is often misunderstood in traditional commentaries as a physical trace from repeated prostration. Yet the Qur'an conveys something far deeper: a visible effect of inner submission. True sujud produces humility, gentleness, and moral alignment, which manifest outwardly in character and demeanor. The mark is ethical and spiritual, a reflection of inner surrender and alignment with God's guidance, rather than a literal physical imprint.

Sujud, therefore, is not rote movement; it is an act of awareness, presence, and intentional submission, an acknowledgment of God's authority and guidance, and a recognition of one's place in the cosmic and moral order.

RUKU

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ازْجَعُوا لَا يَزْجَعُونَ

"And when it is said to them, 'humble (irkao) yourself,' they do not humble (yarkioun)." 77:48

I see millions bowing every day, repeating the same motions, over and over. But do they truly bow in their hearts? Do they humble their minds, quiet their ego, or open themselves to God's guidance? Or is it merely a ritual, a sequence of movements performed out of habit, while the mind wanders and the heart remains closed?

Some who perform these repeated motions, the outward signs of devotion, often display arrogance, cruelty, or injustice in their lives. Mechanical bowing does not purify the heart. God is clearly speaking to something far deeper than the body: a genuine, conscious submission that transforms thought, intention, and action.

While it is not my intention to prescribe how or in what manner you should connect to God, each of us, speaking different languages, living in different countries, facing different circumstances, and carrying different states of mind, will experience connection, ṣalāt, uniquely. My aim is simply to encourage reflection: examine every action, every habit. Did God describe it, or are we merely following the practices of our forefathers without question?

Let the message speak

Although papers typically conclude with the author's name, I have deliberately chosen not to do so.

This decision is not intended to place the work beyond scrutiny. On the contrary, rigorous examination, critical engagement, and verification are actively encouraged. The Qur'an repeatedly invites reflection and careful consideration, and it is in that spirit that this work is offered. What I seek to avoid is the common tendency, evident throughout the Qur'an and history, to elevate individuals above the message itself. Acceptance or rejection of ideas should rest on evidence and argument, not on personal authority or reputation.

The Qur'an warns against such deference to personality, emphasizing instead the primacy of insight, observation, and understanding. Accordingly, this work stands or falls on its own merits, independent of authorship.

What you have read is the outcome of a personal search; an attempt to follow the Qur'an where it leads, with sincerity, restraint, and respect for evidence. It is offered in good faith, not as a final word, but as an invitation to think, to look again, and to reflect more deeply on what the Qur'an itself is saying.

We live in a time where anonymity is easily achieved, and I have chosen it deliberately. A small number of people know who I am, and I hope it remains that way. This work is not about me. It never was. It is about the Qur'an.

The intention is perhaps best captured by the following verse:

قُلْ مَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ فَهُوَ لَكُمْ ۖ إِنِ اجْتَرَىٰ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ
قُلْ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَٰمَ الْغُيُوبِ
قُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَمَا يُبْدِيُ الْبَاطِلُ وَمَا يُعِيدُ
قُلْ إِن ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَا أَضِلُّ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِي ۖ وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فِيمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ قَرِيبٌ

Say, "Whatever compensation I have asked of you, is yours. My compensation comes only from God, and He is Witness over all things." Say: "My Lord hurls the truth, the Knower of the Unseen." Say: "The truth has come, and falsehood had neither precedence nor will reappear." Say, "If I err, I err only to my own loss; but if I am guided, it is by what my Lord inspires me. He is Hearing and Near." 34:47-50

It is my hope that the reader will approach the Qur'an and this study with careful attention, reflection, and equitable judgment. The work is offered as an invitation to examine, question, and reflect upon the Qur'an's content.

Reflection

When I began searching for the real Masjid al-Haram, I never imagined the moment I would truly find it. I was so absorbed in research, so consumed by the words and signs, that the Truth struck me like a wave.

In the weeks that followed, I found myself moving between moments of immense joy and periods of deep, almost overwhelming emotion, aware of the gravity of what such a realization implies. Discovery brings light, but for me it also carried weight.

I felt a responsibility to share what I had found. Yet I have no desire to impose conclusions upon anyone. Take what resonates; question what does not. My only hope is that the Qur'an is approached with care.

Writing this has been both liberating and humbling. I have tried to be as clear as possible, because what I encountered felt natural, almost inevitable once seen. Still, belief is not mine
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to grant, nor rejection mine to prevent. Some will accept, others will deny, and that, too, is part of the path.

This work is only a first draft, written quickly to relieve the weight of holding these insights alone. As I close this chapter of my journey, I remain conscious of what has been uncovered. I leave these words not as a conclusion, but as an invitation: read the Qur'an slowly, reflect deeply, and allow God to guide you.

WHAT'S NEXT

I initially intended to publish by the end of December, but more verses, connections, and confirmations continued to appear. I hesitated, unsure whether my conclusions would be coherent to anyone beyond myself, and found myself adding more and more verses. After sharing this, I feel the need to step back and allow everything to settle.

I am genuinely curious what will follow, whether others will see what I have seen, or whether this will be dismissed entirely. God is the best of planners, and so I put my trust in Him.

If nothing else, I hope this work encourages a shift in the kinds of discussions we prioritize. Rather than endless debates over peripheral matters, what is permitted or forbidden in dress, music, or art, or the uncritical repetition of inherited narrations, I hope we can begin engaging more deeply with the Qur'an itself and the questions it raises. For example:

- The Qur'an repeatedly calls on readers to *look* at the land and observe the remnants of earlier peoples and look how creation was initiated, while elsewhere it commands us to *look* and see how God created the seven heavens (e.g., 71:15). The Nabataeans aligned their monuments with celestial phenomena, suggesting a level of cosmological awareness that may surpass our own. The Qur'an's repeated calls to *look* suggest that careful observation is essential. Perhaps the original audience perceived something we are missing, truths embedded in the heavens that remain for us to uncover.
- The similarity between the name *Hud* and *Yahud* in the Qur'an raises intriguing questions. What is the true origin and significance of the name *Yahud*?
- As previously discussed, Adam's Garden was on Earth, and Adam is depicted as showing/teaching the *malā'ika* (among them Jinn) (2:31–33). What, then, is the true nature of these beings?
- The meanings of *sanah* and *'ām* require further examination. Did Nuḥ truly live 950 years, or has a misunderstanding of these terms shaped that interpretation?
- The Qur'an repeatedly mentions the remnant of Luṭ's wife. Why is this detail emphasized so often? Does it also point to a physical trace?

- The verse describing seventy arms' length (69:32) is unusually precise. Could this detail also have a geographical or architectural correspondence, possibly even a link to Petra?

These questions represent only a small portion of what remains unexplored. If this work accomplishes anything, I hope it encourages readers to approach the Qur'an with renewed attentiveness and patience to discover its signs for themselves.

This is the end of the journey, at least for now. If I am granted a time of rest and reflection, I plan to focus on other aspects of the Qur'an that will demand my time and care and God willing I plan to visit Petra in April. Perhaps I may even have the chance to see some of you there.

For now, I leave this work as it is, placed not in certainty of acceptance, but in trust. Every verse, every sign, every subtle insight has reminded me that understanding unfolds slowly, it grows quietly, patiently; we cannot overrush it. Some truths may remain hidden, and some doors open only later. Yet even in the seeking, there is meaning, and in the striving, a nearness to God.

And through it all, one truth remains clear, one comfort that never fades:

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves: do not despair of God's mercy, for God forgives all sins. He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."39:53

References and Research Links

Before anything else, I thank God, above all and beyond all, for guidance. Whatever clarity exists in this work is not the result of insight alone, but of being led, step by step, through signs that were already present and waiting to be recognized.

This study is also built upon the labor of countless others: researchers, archaeologists, geologists, epigraphers, astronomers, historians, linguists, and independent scholars who devoted years, often entire lives, to observing, measuring, excavating, translating, and documenting the physical world and its traces.

The sheer breadth of references below reflects that reality. This work draws upon studies of Qur'anic language and morphology; ancient inscriptions and epigraphy; geology and seismic activity; archaeology and material culture; astronomy and calendrical systems; animal behaviour and migration; botany; metallurgy; trade networks; religious history; architecture;

hydrology; and orientation studies such as qibla analysis. Each discipline contributes a piece, and only when viewed together do the patterns begin to emerge.

If any coherence has been achieved here, it is because these researchers preserved evidence with care. I am indebted to them. The discovery presented in this paper stands upon these foundations, and without them it would not exist.

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Note: At this moment, I cannot recommend any single Qur'an translation without caution. For serious study, I recommend consulting multiple translations, examining root words, and using resources like Quran Morphology to see how words appear and are used throughout the Qur'an. Research carefully and draw your own conclusions about context and meaning.

PETRA

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTE AND STATEMENT

This research has made limited use of artificial intelligence tools strictly for redactional and editorial purposes, including language refinement, structural clarity, and stylistic consistency.

No analytical conclusions or substantive arguments were generated by artificial intelligence. All reasoning, synthesis, and conclusions presented here are the responsibility of the author alone.

It must be emphasized that this paper does not claim authority. It is not intended as a doctrinal source, nor as an independent foundation for belief. Its purpose is solely to present a line of inquiry and a set of observations derived from engagement with the Qur'an, alongside material evidence preserved in the physical and historical record.

The Qur'an alone is the ultimate and exclusive source of guidance. No text, research paper, scholar, or methodology can replace it or stand as an authority alongside it. Guidance belongs to God alone, and He directs whom He wills.

Any use of this research to override or distort the Qur'an's true meaning constitutes a misuse of its intent. Responsibility for such misuse rests entirely with the one who commits it.