



The Educational and Guiding Dimensions of Qur'anic Storytelling: An Analytical Study of Its Objectives and Contemporary Relevance

AbdulQadir Muhammad-Bello¹ / Muhammad Javad Eskandarlou² /

Muhammad Baqir Qayyumi³



Abstract

Research Article

Storytelling in the Qur'an serves as a powerful educational tool and a means of moral and spiritual guidance. Without any doubt, there remains a lack of comprehensive analysis on how Qur'anic stories are intentionally structured to educate, guide, and cultivate moral and spiritual values, particularly in ways that remain relevant to the challenges of modern societies. This study therefore investigates the educational and guiding dimensions of storytelling in the Qur'an, focusing on the underlying objectives of its narrative structure. The paper adopts a qualitative textual analysis of selected Qur'anic narratives, supported by classical and modern Tafsir literature and contemporary interpretive frameworks, aiming to identify their key educational and guiding themes. The findings show that Qur'anic stories are deliberately structured to reinforce faith in God, instill ethical values, and address both individual and societal challenges across time. The study concludes that these stories retain significant relevance in addressing modern-day issues such as identity crises, moral disintegration, and spiritual alienation. This highlights the enduring pedagogical wisdom of the Qur'anic narrative tradition.

Keywords: The Qur'an, Qur'anic Stories, Qur'anic Narrative Styles, Moral Education, Spiritual Guidance.

¹. PhD Candidate of Qur'an and Orientalists, Faculty of Qur'an and Hadith, Al-Mustafa International University, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria, mbabdulqadir@miu.ac.ir (Corresponding Author).

². Professor, Faculty of Quran and Hadith, al-Mustafa International University, Qum, Iran, Mj-eskandarlo@miu.ac.ir.

³. Faculty Member, Head of Department of Religions, Al-Mustafa International University, Qum, Iran, Mohammadbagher_Qayyumi@miu.ac.ir.



Introduction

The story has been influential and effective among different ethnic groups and cultures. One of the most important tools that have been and continue to be a source of lessons and guidance for mankind throughout human history is storytelling. In the Heavenly Books, especially the glorious Qur'an, storytelling is one of the most common and effective methods of conveying high divine concepts to society with the purpose of education, training, and guidance.

Given contemporary educational challenges and ethical crises, a re-examination of the Qur'an's instructional method through narrative is both timely and necessary. Despite the centrality of stories in the Qur'an, their pedagogical and formative dimensions have not been sufficiently analyzed within the framework of educational theory and narrative structure.

This study aims to address that gap by elucidating some Qur'anic stories and exploring their intended educational and guiding functions. It seeks to demonstrate how Qur'anic stories function as tools for moral instruction, spiritual development, and intellectual reflection, particularly in the modern era.

To achieve this objective, this research adopts a library-based method in its data collection and employs a qualitative, thematic, and analytical approach, which involves close textual analysis of selected Qur'anic stories, supported by classical and contemporary exegetical sources, and incorporates relevant hadith literature to identify the educational and guiding functions of storytelling in the Qur'an.

Conceptual Framework

The Arabic term *Qiṣṣah* [plural: *Qiṣaṣ*] (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 7:74), which is translated into English as “story; tale; narrative; narration; fiction; novel; account; report” (Ba‘labakī 2010, 862) etymologically derives from the root *Qa-ṣṣa*, which encompasses meanings such as “to report,” (Azharī 2000, 8:210) “to narrate,” or “to inform,” (Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 671) “to



follow,” or “to trace” (Qurashī Banā’ī 1991, 6:11; Ibn Fāris 1983, 5: 11), “to tell a story” (Qurashī Banā’ī 1991, 6:11).

Literally, *Qiṣṣah* signifies a report, narrative, or account, often involving successive events (Azharī 2000, 8:210; Mūsā 1989, 1:234; Zubaydī 1993, 9:335; Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 7:73; Rāghib Iṣfahānī 1991, 671). Interestingly, its derivatives such as “*Qaṣaṣ*” are used in the glorious Qur’an (Quran 3:62; 7:176; 12:3) in these meanings. In addition to the term “*Qaṣaṣ*” and its derivatives, other synonyms such as “*ḥadith*” (Quran 12: 111; 20: 9); “*naba*” (Quran 3:44; 5:27; 7:101, 175; 9:70; 10:71; 11:49, 100, 120; 12:102); and “*Mathal*” (Quran 16: 76; 43: 8; 14: 54) are also used in the glorious Qur’an with the same meanings (Ashrafī 2020, pp. 111-119).

Technically, the term “*Qaṣaṣ*” is defined to mean “an accurate narration of a current incident in accordance with reality through any means, such as reading or listening” (Muṣṭafawī 2009, 9:303) and “*Qiṣṣah*” as a narrative that follows one another about the ancients [the people or things or events of the past] (Ṭabarsī 1993, 5:416). According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, the term “story” is defined as follows: “a description of events and people that the writer or speaker has invented to entertain people; an account, often spoken, of what happened to somebody or of how something happened; an account of past events or of how something has developed; a report in a newspaper, magazine or news broadcast” (Hornby 2001, 1180).

In view of this, the term “*Qiṣṣah*” is an account or a narrative about the people or events of the past, which may either be real or imaginary. However, the Qur’anic story in contrast, is a narration of real and true events that are pursued based on knowledge about a specific purpose and message (Malbubī 1997, 94), or the accounts concerning the conditions of past peoples—nations and former prophets—and real events in the past, which contain lessons and admonitions for those who remain (Ma’rifat 2011, 7:444). Therefore, in contrast to general definitions of “story” in



English usage, the Qur'anic story is a narrative or an account that is real, factual, and based on divine revelation about the people and events that took place in the past with the sole purpose of guiding and training its audiences.

Literature Review

One of the earliest and most enduring attempts to explore the educational and guiding dimensions of Qur'anic stories originates from the efforts of classical Qur'anic exegetes. Through their engagement with the Qur'anic text, these scholars examined narrative structures, instances of repetition, and thematic emphases to infer the didactic functions of stories. However, such exegetical treatments often lack systematic depth, thematic coherence, and structured analysis.

A significant independent contribution to the field is the PhD dissertation titled *Al-Fann al-Qaṣaṣ fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [*The Art of Storytelling in the Noble Qur'an*], presented by Muḥammad Aḥmad Khalafallāh under the supervision of Amīn al-Khūlī at Cairo University in 1948, and subsequently published as a book by the American University of Beirut in 1950–51. Khalafallāh discusses the spiritual and moral dimensions of Qur'anic narratives, with particular attention to their intended objectives (Khalafallāh, 1950).

In 2004 (1425 AH), Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn, known as Sayyid Quṭb, published a work titled *Taṣwīr al-Fannī fī al-Qur'ān* [*Artistic Representation in the Qur'an*], which examines the artistic and thematic aspects of Qur'anic stories. The book emphasizes their role in ethical formation and the rhetorical power of narrative imagery (Quṭb, 2004).

A Master's thesis titled *Ab'ād-e Tarbiyātī-ye Qesseh-hā-ye Qur'ān* [*The Educational Dimensions of Qur'anic Stories*] was submitted by Aḥmad Behrouz at the Faculty of Theology and Islamic Studies, University of Islamic Studies, Qom, in 2010 (1389 Sh). This study analyzes the pedagogical elements of Qur'anic narratives across three



domains: theological (I'tiqādī), ethical (Akhlāqī), and social behavioral (Ijtimā'ī) dimensions (Behrouz, 2010).

In 2016, Akbar Ṣāliḥī published an article titled *The Role of the Qur'anic Stories and Parables in Islamic Education and Training* in the *Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture*, issued by the American Research Institute for Policy Development. The article assesses the efficacy of Qur'anic stories and parables in articulating complex ethical teachings and promoting moral reflection (Ṣāliḥī, 2016).

In 2021, Brady Stimpson and Isaac Calvert published a study titled *Qur'anic Educational Philosophy: Foundational Principles of Education in Islam's Holiest Text* in the journal *Religions*. The authors explore foundational educational principles within the Qur'an and highlight its embedded pedagogical philosophy, arguing for its relevance in modern educational theory (Stimpson & Calvert, 2021).

In 2023 (1402 SH), Muṣṭafā Fīrūzī and Muḥsin Zārī'ī Jīlīānī published a study titled *Naqsh-e Dāstān-hā-ye Qur'ānī dar Tarbiyat-e Akhlāqī wa Ravānshenāsī-ye Afrād-e Jāmi'eh* [*The Role of Qur'anic Stories in the Moral and Psychological Education of People in Society*] in the *Journal of Sexual and Psychological Disorders*. The research concludes that Qur'anic stories serve as effective tools for moral and psychological guidance, contributing to individual and societal development (Fīrūzī & Zārī'ī Jīlīānī, 2023).

The narrative dimension of the Qur'an has been studied from various angles—linguistic, theological, historical, and literary. However, the specific educational and guiding objectives of Qur'anic storytelling have not been given adequate focus in mainstream academic discourse.

The Status and Significance of Story in the Qur'an

Human life has never been devoid of stories. The story is an art that has been admired by mankind for a long time and has played an increasing role

in human history and culture, particularly when it is accompanied by the eloquence and miracle of revelation. The claim is that, this art [i.e., storytelling] has been recognized by religion and has been used to a significant extent in almost all the Heavenly Books, especially the glorious Qur'an, and if there have been any limitations in Islam concerning storytelling, it is related to the contents and the subjects of the story, but not the art of storytelling in itself (Naṣīrī 2008, 119).

The importance of storytelling is also revealed in the way it inspires people, as it appeals to their beliefs and feelings. It has a great attraction and the people are affected by it. For this reason, an important part of world literature is story. Therefore, a story can be a powerful tool of communication and it is considered more effective than most other means of relaying information. For this reason, as storytelling holds a lofty position in nurturing souls and refining hearts, many early scholars took an interest in it and engaged in narrating stories—sometimes in their pure form and at times mixed with *Isrā'īliyyāt*⁴ and myths (Ḥusaynī 1998, 10)

The story is an effective training and educational tool, which has a great impact on the human's thoughts and soul. Stories help us to understand others and ourselves better and the ability to learn about others and to find understanding and empathy for them and their situations. Sayyid Kamāl writes in this regard: "Stories and tales play an important role in man's education, for they depict the life of a nation and provide practical examples of an Ummah. History is a mirror that reflects the deeds of nations and the more we are acquainted with the story of our predecessors, the more we acquire the feeling of having lived their lives" (Faḳīh Īmānī 1997, 7:361)

⁴. The term *Isrā'īliyyāt* refers to a body of narratives, legends, and interpretations that were introduced into early Islamic literature, particularly in *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis) and historical accounts, through sources linked to Jewish and Christian traditions. These accounts were often transmitted by early Muslim converts from Judaism and Christianity, such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih (cf. Kalbāsī Iṣfahānī 2009, 22).



Storytelling is a widely used method in the Qur'an and it is believed by some Muslim scholars that the stories make up nearly one-third (Balāghī 2002, pp. 13-15) or one-fourth (Ashrafi 2020, 120; Qanādī 2010, 16) of the verses of the Qur'an. Without any doubt, the existence of various stories in the Qur'an is an indication of its unique status in Islam. Besides, many verses in the Qur'an (such as Quran 3:62; 7:176; 12:3,111; 60:4) indicate the significance and high status of stories. For instance, an instruction is given to narrate stories of the past nations so that it can be a source of lesson and admonition to others: *"So recount these narratives, so that they may reflect"*⁵ (Quran 7: 176).

There are also numerous hadiths in which some indicate that a significant part of the Qur'an is made up of stories, some indicate the goodness of the stories, and some indicate their general importance. For instance, it is narrated from Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (a) that he said: "The Qur'an was revealed in four quarters: a quarter is about us, a quarter is about our enemy, a quarter is stories and proverbs, and a quarter is about rulings. And for us, Ahl al-Bayt, are the virtues of the Qur'an"⁶ (Majlisī 1982, 92:74).

In sermon (110) of the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (a) described the Qur'an as the most useful and beneficial narration: "Learn the Qur'an for it is the fairest of discourses and understand it thoroughly for it is the best blossoming of hearts. Seek cure with its light for it is the cure for hearts. Recite it beautifully for it is the most beautiful narration"⁷ (*Nahj al-Balāghah*: Sermon 110).

⁵. «فَأَقْصِبْ قَصَصَ الْقَصَصِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ» (الأعراف / ١٧٦)

⁶. «نزل القرآن أربعة أرباع: ربع فينا، وربع في عدونا، وربع قصص وأمثال، وربع قضايا وأحكام، ولنا أهل البيت فضائل القرآن».

⁷. «تَعَلَّمُوا الْقُرْآنَ فَإِنَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْحَدِيثِ، وَتَقَقَّهُوا فِيهِ فَإِنَّهُ رَبِيعُ الْقُلُوبِ، وَاسْتَشْفُوا بِنُورِهِ فَإِنَّهُ شِفَاءُ الصُّدُورِ، وَأَحْسِنُوا تِلَاوَتَهُ فَإِنَّهُ أَنْفَعُ الْقَصَصِ».



The reason for the abundant use of stories in the Qur'an is its high capacity to influence human thought and soul (Balāghī 2002, pp. 13-14; Ṭālibī 2011, 29). It is also said that since human nature turns away [rejects] from direct advice, the glorious Qur'an has therefore presented its teachings indirectly in the form of stories. In essence, the story has a direct impact on the souls (Ma'rifat 2011, 7:444) and it is easily comprehended by every human being, but not all people have the ability to understand and comprehend rational and philosophical arguments. The influence of stories in human life is sometimes greater than those of rational and philosophical arguments; because man is immersed in sensual matters more than dealing with intellectual issues. It is on this basis that sometimes to explain rational arguments, sensory examples are used for a better understanding.

It is mentioned by the scholars of the Qur'an that the stories in the Qur'an can be generally classified into four categories (Naṣīrī 2008, 134). First, the stories that depict the lives of the messengers of God (peace be upon them) and their nations. The stories of Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Ibrahim, Moses, Jesus, etc., and their nations fall into this category. Second, the stories that have mentioned some of the instructive events of particular groups. The story of Companions of the Cave (Quran 18:9-26.), and the People of the Ditch (Quran 85:4-8) are in this category. Third, the stories that depict one of the positive or negative characters of history for educational purposes, such as the story of Ṭālūt (Quran 2:247), Dhul-Qarnayn (Quran 18:83), Qārūn (Quran 28:76), Luqmān (Quran 31:12), Bal'am Bā'ūrā, Mammonish Scholar (Quran 7:175). Fourth, the stories that deal with the incidents and events during the Prophet's mission in Mecca and Medina such as the story of the battles of Badr, Uhud, Hunayn, etc. (Naṣīrī 2008, pp. 134-135).

The Distinguished Features of the Qur'anic Stories

It is pertinent to mention that based on some verses of the Qur'an (such as Quran 12:111; 3:62; 6:66-67), it is established that the Qur'anic stories are



not fictitious or legendary; it is rather the facts and realities through which the wise are educated and the believers are guided aright. In addition, the styles and methods of presentation of the Qur'anic stories are not the same as the conventional storytelling methods; rather, they are presented uniquely based on their aims and objectives. In this regard, Ayatullah Ma'rifat writes: "The Qur'an did not present the story as a work of art, and to talk about the past for entertainment or amusement as the historians and storytellers do. Rather, the purpose of the story in the Qur'an was to achieve its religious and educational goals and purposes" (Ma'rifat 2011, 7:447).

Some features that distinguish the Qur'anic stories from the conventional stories have been discussed by the Muslim scholars of the Qur'an:

1. Divine Origin: One of the most important bases for understanding the Quran among Muslims, which has been proven in its place is its Divinely- revealed nature in its words and content ('Alawī & Eskandarlı 2023, 9). Likewise, a unique feature of the Qur'anic stories –compared to other stories- is its being revelation from Almighty God (Ashrafi 2020, 142). In other words, the sole author of every story mentioned in the Qur'an is God (Qur'an 18:13), the Omnipotent and Omniscient and without the interference of any human being, including the Holy Prophet (s). That is to say, Qur'anic stories are not the product of human imagination but are revealed by Allah: "*We will recount to you the best of narratives in what We have revealed to you of this Quran, and indeed prior to it you were among those who are unaware [of it]*"⁸ (Quran 12:3). In light of this, contrary to the conventional stories which have human authors, all the Qur'anic stories without any exception have a divine authorship. In verse 3 of *Sūrah Yūsuf*, the personal pronoun "We" and the

⁸ . ﴿نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ﴾ (يوسف/ ٣)



verb “revealed” are used to indicate the divine origin of the Qur’anic stories (Qarā’atī 2009, 4:148).

2. Truthful Narration: The Qur’an’s storytelling is grounded in truth, a truth that remains untarnished by any distortion or embellishment (Ma’rifat 2011, 7:464). This is because the objective of these stories is not merely to entertain but to guide humanity toward ethical and spiritual growth, with an unwavering commitment to reality. For instance, every personality such as Prophet Adam, Eve, Dhul Qarnayn, the Companion of the Cave, etc., and every incident and event such as the dispute between Abel and Cain mentioned in the Qur’an are not imaginary fictitious, or legendary. Sayyid Kamal, while referring to the story of Prophet Yusuf, writes: “Focusing our attention on the verses of this Sura reveals the fact that the holy Qur’an is a miracle in all its dimensions and the champions it presents in its stories are real, not imaginary and unique in their class” (Faqīh Īmānī 1977, 7:353-354).

Ayatullah Ma’rifat writes in this regard: “The story in the Qur’an is distinguished in two basic points: The first is that, it deals with reality and not just imagination. The second aspect is the goal and purpose for which the Qur’anic stories are narrated” (Ma’rifat 2011, 7:447). Therefore, contrary to the conventional stories which might be real or imaginary, fictitious, legend or myths, the Qur’anic stories are completely true and real. For instance, in the story of the Companion of the Cave, the Qur’an says: “*We relate to you their account in truth*”⁹ (Quran 18:13). The adjective “*ḥaqq*” [i.e., truth or real] is used to portray that the stories of the Qur’an are true and are neither fabricated nor mixed with superstitions or distortions (Qarā’atī 2009, 5:136-137).

3. Miraculous Nature: The miraculous nature of Quranic stories is one of the defining features of the Quranic narrative (Bayāt et al. 2019, 8). These stories are not merely historical accounts or mythological tales; they

⁹. «نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ» (الكهف/١٣)



are imbued with divine intervention and supernatural occurrences that demonstrate Allah's power and control over the natural world and human destiny. The miraculous elements of these stories are not meant to simply astound or entertain but to convey profound spiritual truths and affirm the divine guidance in all aspects of life. While explaining the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, Muṭāwī' writes: "The story was among the methods employed by the Qur'an in this regard, and therefore, we can only acknowledge that these stories are part of the Qur'an itself, and thus they share in all that applies to it, including the miraculous nature of its verses—containing the Qur'an's unique, inimitable illustrative style in a marvelous artistic unity" (Muṭāwī' 2006, 35).

The miraculous nature of Quranic stories is not merely a display of supernatural phenomena but a profound reflection of Allah's power, mercy, and wisdom. Through the miracles in the stories of the Prophets, the Quran provides clear signs of Allah's dominion over the natural world and human affairs.

4. Thematic Repetition: The Qur'an due to its divine objective gives a historical account of the past nations, particularly the messengers of God in different sections of the Qur'an (cf. Naṣīrī 2008, 166). For instance, the story of Prophet Moses (a), Pharaoh, and the children of Israel [*Banū Isrā'īl*] is one of the highly repeated stories in the Qur'an. His story is mentioned in 25 different sūras of the Qur'an (Kassis 1983, pp. 793-796). Similar scenarios are reported in the stories of some of the messengers of God (peace be upon them).

It should be mentioned that the repetition of some stories in the Qur'an is not due to forgetfulness, mistake, or for fun; rather, it is done for the sake of emphasis. It is written thus: "Therefore the repetition of this type is itself necessary from the point of view of guidance and it does not in any way mar the eloquence of Qur'an, rather it is counted as the beautiful discourse because it, first of all, becomes the cause of emphasis and effect" (Makārim Shīrāzī & Subḥānī 2019, 89). It is also added, "The Holy Qur'an



mentions for example the Bani Israel and the creation of Adam (a) in different places. On every occasion, it indicates towards a special part of the loftiness of this incident and desires that every time it should invite the attention of the people to a special aspect which has not been indicated other times” (ibid, 89).

5. Didactic and Purpose-Driven Nature: One of the most distinctive aspects of Quranic stories is their didactic (instructive) and purpose-driven nature. Every story in the Quran is not merely a recounting of past events but serves a specific moral, spiritual, or social purpose. These stories are designed to convey essential messages to humanity, aiming to guide individuals, shape societies, and encourage believers to uphold the tenets of faith. The Quran’s narrative approach is fundamentally teleological, meaning it is always directed towards a goal — whether to warn, instruct, uplift, or inspire. In this regard, it is said: “However, more important than anything else is that the message and purpose of the story hold a special prominence in the Qur’an. As such, the storytelling never gives the audience a sense of mere entertainment or time-passing. The use of eloquent expressions and artistic storytelling techniques never overshadows the intended goals and messages” (Qanādī 2010, 47)

The Qur’an itself is a Book of guidance (Qur’an 2:2), not a book of history. It is on this basis that every selected story in the Qur’an is presented to guide the people. In other words, the Qur’anic stories -just as the whole Qur’anic contents- are revealed for the people to take lessons and admonitions from them. It is categorically stated in the Qur’an thus: *“There is certainly a moral in their accounts for those who possess intellect”*¹⁰ (Quran 12:111).

In this regard, it said: “The Holy Qur’an is not a dry jurisprudence book or a classic that should present an analysis of intellectual problems and laws. The Holy Qur’an is a discourse, a book of religious propagation and

¹⁰. ﴿لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾ (يوسف/ ١١٢)



guidance whose aim is to enunciate the realities of human life and laws that are necessary to take humanity to perfection and they should purify the souls and thoughts of people and establish the proper social laws so that a society is established which would be perfect from the economic as well as the ethical point of view” (Makārim Shīrāzī & Subḥānī 2019, 88).

It is on this basis that the Qur’an only presented some aspects of the life accounts of the messengers of God (peace be upon them) or the stories of past nations that are a means of salvation to humanity. In a nutshell, the Qur’anic stories are neither purposeless nor based on non-divine purposes. That is, every story mentioned in the glorious Qur’an has a divine purpose, which is, the salvation of man.

6. Elimination of Non-Essential Details: One of the key characteristics of Quranic storytelling is the elimination of non-essential details. The Quran does not provide extraneous information or unnecessary elaborations. It distills the core essence of the narrative to convey its central message clearly and efficiently. This approach enhances the focus and impact of the stories, ensuring that the lessons and principles intended by Allah are easily understood and do not become lost in irrelevant details (‘Alīzādīh 2017, 38). For instance, while discussing the life accounts of the messengers of God (peace be upon them), the Qur’an does not give a comprehensive account of their lives from birth to death as found in the conventional stories and likewise, it does not present their life account in chronological order. Rather, it selects and presents at different portions some aspects of their lives that are a source of lesson and admonition to humanity. In this regard, Ali Naṣīrī writes: “Avoiding mentioning details is because the Holy Qur’an pursues its educational goals of narrating stories, and in this way, it considers mentioning of details useless...” (Naṣīrī 2008, 165).

7. Clarity and Eloquence: One of the most distinctive features of Quranic storytelling is its clarity and eloquence. The Quran’s ability to convey profound truths in a simple, accessible manner has made it an



enduring guide for billions across centuries. Despite the Quran's divine origins, its language is simple enough to be understood by ordinary people. This simplicity does not detract from the depth of meaning; rather, it ensures that the message is accessible to everyone, regardless of their intellectual capacity. While explaining the basic objectives of the Qur'anic stories and the manner of their presentation, Qanādī writes: "In the Quranic stories, the accounts of past peoples are presented in an attractive and pleasant manner, and the events are narrated beautifully, without flaw or tedium. The characters of the stories are depicted clearly and vividly. As such, the storytelling never gives the audience a sense of mere entertainment or time-passing. The use of eloquent expressions and artistic storytelling techniques never overshadows the intended goals and messages" (Qanādī 2010, 47).

The Didactic Objectives and Contemporary Significance of Qur'anic Stories

Quranic stories serve as powerful educational tools, in cultivating spiritual awareness, shaping moral character, instilling values, and guiding behavior through divine examples. Their unique features distinguish them from ordinary tales, making them central to Islamic education and personal development.

In today's rapidly evolving world, marked by moral ambiguity, ideological confusion, and spiritual disconnection, the stories of the Qur'an remain profoundly relevant. They serve not only to illuminate the path of righteousness but also to provide psychological comfort, moral clarity, and spiritual resilience in a world increasingly in need of divine guidance. Meanwhile, the following are some of the educational objectives and contemporary significance of the Qur'anic narratives:

1. *Tawhīd* and Spiritual Guidance

At the heart of all Qur'anic storytelling is the affirmation of the Oneness of God (*Tawhīd*) and the cultivation of spiritual awareness. This



foundational dimension underpins the entire Qur'anic worldview. The monotheistic worldview constitutes the coherent epistemic framework (paradigm) central to the teachings and mission of Jesus Christ (Ḥusaynuv 2025, 84).

The story of Prophet Abraham (a), particularly his intellectual journey from observing celestial bodies to affirming belief in the unseen Creator, showcases a model of reasoned faith (Quran 6:75-79). His rejection of idolatry and fearless challenge to his community, including his confrontation with Nimrod, exemplify both spiritual courage and rational inquiry.

On the Prophet Abraham's approach to establish the principle of monotheism through clear and logical reasoning, Ayatullah Makārim Shīrāzī writes: "Following the reproach that Abraham directed toward the idols, and the invitation he extended to Azar to abandon idol worship, in these verses God refers to Abraham's rational struggles with various groups of idolaters and describes how he arrived at the principle of monotheism through clear and logical reasoning" (Makārim Shīrāzī 1992, 5:308).

In today's secularized societies, where faith is often marginalized or questioned and spiritual disorientation is widespread, this message is vital for grounding individuals in a coherent faith identity that embraces both reason and revelation. The Qur'anic emphasis on *Tawḥīd*—belief in the Oneness and supremacy of God—offers a grounding spiritual framework. The story of Prophet Abraham (a) is particularly relevant as it models faith rooted in reason, courage, and independent inquiry. For contemporary audiences, especially Muslim youth navigating environments that often sideline religious belief, this dimension affirms the significance of divine purpose and moral orientation in the face of competing worldviews.

2. Moral and Ethical Instruction



One of the central dimensions of Qur'anic storytelling is the cultivation of moral and ethical character. The story of Prophet Joseph (a) offers a comprehensive example of moral excellence: resisting temptation, maintaining integrity under oppression, and forgiving those who wronged him (Quran 12:23,33,92). Through such stories, the Qur'an nurtures virtues such as honesty, chastity, patience, and forgiveness (Qurashī Banā'ī 1996, 5:74).

In a contemporary context, the Qur'an's moral narratives, such as the story of Prophet Joseph (a), remain deeply relevant in societies grappling with issues of integrity, sexual ethics, and emotional resilience. Joseph's rejection of temptation, his patience with injustice, and his eventual forgiveness provide a timeless moral compass. In contemporary life, where ethical standards are often blurred, these stories offer clear moral exemplars and provide guidance on dealing with social alienation, family conflict, betrayal, and the challenge of maintaining integrity in morally challenging environments.

3. Warning and Admonition

Many Qur'anic stories function as powerful warnings, designed to awaken the conscience and prevent spiritual complacency. The repeated narratives of past nations such as the people of Noah, 'Ād, and Thamūd emphasize the consequences of arrogance, moral corruption, and the rejection of prophetic messages. These narratives function not only as historical accounts but also as universal moral parables about the downfall of civilizations that defy divine guidance.

On the significance of taking lessons and admonition from the past nations, Allah says: *"Certain [Divine] precedents have passed before you. So, travel through the land and observe how was the fate of the deniers. This is an explanation for mankind and a guidance and advice for the God*



wary”¹¹ (Quran 3:137-138). While explaining the verses, Sayyid Kamāl writes: “Journeys with a definite goal and visiting the effects of transgressors together with contemplation can be the best class, the best teacher and the best trainee for human beings” (Faqīh Īmānī 1997, 3:302)

In a modern world marked by arrogance, environmental degradation, and injustice, the Qur’anic warnings directed at arrogant and morally corrupt societies—such as the communities of Noah, ‘Ād, and Thamūd—hold powerful lessons for the modern world. In an age marked by systemic injustice, environmental abuse, and the glorification of power, these stories serve as cautionary tales. They underscore the inevitable consequences of societal hubris and the neglect of moral accountability, urging a reevaluation of contemporary priorities before reaching a point of collective moral failure.

4. Social Reform and Justice

The Qur’an also employs stories as a tool for teaching social justice and the ethics of public life. The story of Prophet Shu‘ayb (a) and the people of Madyan serves as a case in point. Shu‘ayb condemned economic fraud, manipulation of weights and measures, and social exploitation (Quran 7:85-93; 11:84-95; 26:176-191). After calling his people to monotheism—the foundation of religion—Prophet Shu‘ayb gave two additional commands: to practice honesty in trade and avoid financial corruption, and to refrain from spreading corruption on earth after it has been set right. The earth’s restoration is both natural and moral: through God’s creation and through the human conscience (*fitrah*), which inspires people to maintain order and live prosperously (Ṭabāṭabā’ī 2021, 15:285). His call for honest trade, moral accountability in public dealings, and reformative

¹¹. «قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ * هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَ مَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ» (آل عمران/ ١٣٧-١٣٨)



engagement reflects a Qur'anic concern with building just and ethical societies.

In the face of today's widespread inequality and systemic corruption, these Qur'anic stories that highlight the need for economic justice, honest governance, and social responsibility, like that of Prophet Shu'ayb, are highly relevant in today's context of financial inequality and widespread corruption. These stories challenge oppressive systems and advocate for transparency and fairness. For modern Muslim communities, they offer a divine blueprint for reforming institutions and provide a divine framework for activism, reform, and social responsibility rooted in faith.

5. Perseverance in *Da'wah* and Struggle

The Qur'anic narrative provides models of resilience and steadfastness in the face of opposition, particularly in the context of *da'wah* (calling to God) and socio-political struggle. The story of Prophet Moses (a), especially his confrontation with Pharaoh, is emblematic of the moral strength required to challenge tyranny (Quran 7:103-105). Moses's mission was fraught with rejection, mockery, and threats, yet his unwavering trust in God and commitment to justice highlight the qualities essential for any *da'wah* effort.

In a time when faith-based advocacy is often met with hostility or marginalization, the steadfastness of prophets like Moses provides an empowering model. His persistent engagement with Pharaoh despite severe opposition speaks to activists, educators, and reformers striving to uphold truth and justice and remains deeply relevant for contemporary believers facing political oppression, Islamophobia, or moral backlash for upholding their values and contemporary movements that seek social reform, advocate for marginalized communities, or resist authoritarianism through prophetic ethics and divine reliance.

6. Divine Providence and Human Agency



Another profound theme in Qur'anic storytelling is the interplay between divine providence and human effort. The story of Mary (peace be upon her) and the miraculous birth of Jesus (a) illustrates this dimension beautifully (Quran 3:42-47). Despite her isolation, fear, and public scrutiny, Mary's unwavering trust in God and her dignified silence reflect a deep spiritual surrender.

In an era marked by existential anxiety and the struggle for personal agency, the story of Mary beautifully illustrates the balance between divine providence and human effort—a message particularly relevant in times of uncertainty, anxiety, and societal pressure, especially for women navigating modern challenges. In a world obsessed with control and outcomes, Qur'anic storytelling reminds individuals to trust in God's wisdom while doing their part. It offers spiritual relief and empowerment to those facing personal crises, reminding them that divine help often accompanies sincere effort and unwavering faith.

Educational and Guiding Dimensions of Qur'anic Storytelling

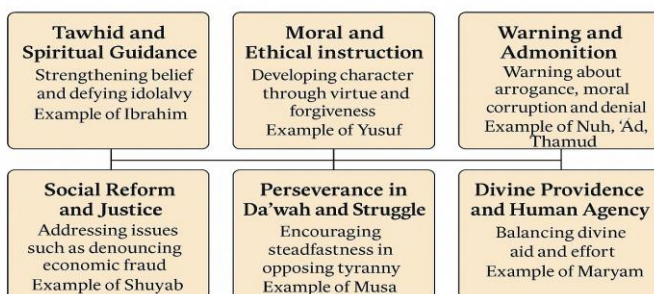


Figure 1: Educational and Guiding Dimensions of Qur'anic Storytelling

Conclusion

The Qur'anic use of storytelling is not a mere narrative device but a profound pedagogical and spiritual tool designed to educate, guide, and

transform the human soul and its immediate society. Each story in the Qur'an serves multiple layers of purpose—awakening spiritual consciousness, imparting ethical values, warning against transgression, advocating for justice, and nurturing resilience in the face of adversity. These narratives engage both the heart and the intellect, combining emotional resonance with deep theological and moral insights.

This study has explored how the Qur'anic stories are structured around six major dimensions—*Tawhīd* and spiritual guidance, moral and ethical instruction, warning and admonition, social reform and justice, perseverance in *da'wah* and struggle, and divine providence and human agency. Together, these themes constitute a holistic framework for character development, community reform, and spiritual awakening. The Qur'anic approach avoids abstract theorization; instead, it grounds guidance in the lived experiences of prophets and communities, making the lessons both timeless and accessible.

In our contemporary world, where individuals and societies face moral confusion, ideological fragmentation, spiritual emptiness, and socio-political oppression, Qur'anic storytelling offers an anchor. It connects believers to a sacred history that is rich in meaning and relevance, affirming that the human condition—though it changes in form—remains consistent in essence. Through these stories, the Qur'an speaks directly to today's challenges: identity crises, ethical relativism, the collapse of truth, and the struggle for justice and dignity.

Moreover, these stories transcend linguistic, cultural, and temporal barriers, offering universal principles rooted in divine wisdom. They not only provide guidance for individual conduct but also shape collective ethics, inspire social responsibility, and cultivate a deep sense of purpose and hope. For educators, preachers, reformers, and thinkers, Qur'anic stories are an invaluable resource for nurturing a morally conscious and spiritually grounded generation.



In a nutshell, Qur'anic storytelling is a powerful, divinely orchestrated means of communication that continues to educate and guide humanity. Its relevance does not diminish with time; rather, it becomes more essential as the world grows increasingly complex. Engaging with these narratives with sincerity, reflection, and critical insight can unlock transformative guidance that aligns the believer's journey with divine purpose.

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