

INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS IN QS. YUSUF VERSES 1–6: CONTEXTUAL REVIEW AND CLASSICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract

This study examines classical and contemporary interpretations and related literature on *Surah* Yusuf/12:1–6 to understand the meaning of Yusuf’s dream revelation and the ethical-pedagogical values embedded in the verses. Employing a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review design, this study analyzes selected interpretations, journal articles, theses, and books that directly discuss the verses. The data were examined thematically and comparatively to identify patterns of interpretation, the narrative function of the dream, and Qur’anic–biblical points of comparison. The findings indicate that Yusuf’s dream is positioned as a form of revelation and a prophetic sign that shapes his moral journey through patience, steadfast faith, and wisdom. Contemporary interpretations further emphasize the pedagogical function of the narrative for character education. The comparative analysis reveals narrative similarities between Qur’anic and biblical traditions, while also identifying differences in their theological emphases. This study concludes that Yusuf’s dream in *Surah* Yusuf/12:1–6 contains significant ethical and pedagogical values that remain relevant for contemporary character education. The study contributes to Qur’anic interpretation and Islamic education by offering a literature-based synthesis of dream revelation, prophetic morality, and character formation, with

implications for integrating Yusuf's values into character education programs and for guiding future empirical studies.

Keywords: *Surah* Yusuf; Dream Revelation; Prophet Yusuf; Qur'anic Interpretation; Character Education

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Prophet Yusuf in the Quran occupies a crucial place because it serves not only as a historical narrative but also as a medium for moral and spiritual education for readers. The Quran positions the story as a means of reflection, enabling humans to learn from the events recounted, rather than simply enjoying the storyline. In this context, Yusuf's story is often understood as one steeped in wisdom, particularly regarding patience, steadfast faith, and wisdom in facing life's trials (Purnama, 2021). Thematically, *Surah* Yusuf presents a series of events that form a complete narrative structure, starting with the Prophet Yusuf's dream, his exile by his brothers, his experiences with *Imra'ah al-'Azzīz*, and his imprisonment. Journal studies indicate that these four fragments constitute the core of a story also found in the biblical tradition, albeit with a different theological emphasis. This confirms that the story of Yusuf is not only of literary interest but also significant for comparative studies of sacred texts (Harun, 2019).

At the beginning of the story, the Prophet Yusuf's dream in *Surah* Yusuf: 4–6 is understood as a divine sign regarding his future position. The Prophet Jacob responded to the dream with caution, demonstrating the wisdom of interpreting prophetic signs. This narrative provides the foundation that the Prophet Yusuf's life journey from the beginning was directed toward a greater purpose set by Allah SWT. The story of Yusuf's exile by his brothers reveals the dimensions of family conflict, jealousy, and injustice that became the primary triggers for the subsequent series of trials. Some studies have viewed this episode as a crucial part of Yusuf's character development, as it was through suffering that he achieved spiritual and social maturity. Thus, suffering in this story is not presented as an end in itself, but as a process toward glory (Harun, 2019).

The story of Yusuf and *Imra'ah al-'Azzīz* is also a prominent part of the story, embodying themes of self-preservation, integrity, and moral fortitude. Recent research emphasizes the relevance of this episode for character education, particularly in the areas of honesty, trustworthiness, and the ability to resist destructive temptations. Therefore, the

story can be read as a model of personal ethics that remains relevant in various modern social contexts (Dita et al., 2026). The prison period in the life of the Prophet Yusuf demonstrates that injustice does not always lead to humiliation, but can become a space for the actualization of knowledge, wisdom, and leadership. In some analyses, his imprisonment actually emphasized Yusuf's capacity to understand, interpret, and provide solutions to human problems. It demonstrates that moral authority in the Quran is often built through patience under pressure, not through instant power (Asad, 2023).

Furthermore, a comparison of the story of Yusuf in the Qur'an and the Bible reveals similarities in four key episodes, but also differences in their emphasis. Journal articles indicate that the Qur'anic version emphasizes monotheism, moral education, and steadfastness of faith more strongly, while the biblical version has a different thematic emphasis. Therefore, an intertextual study of Yusuf's story is important to understand how the same character can be presented differently in the two scriptural traditions (Purnama, 2021). Based on this description, the story of the Prophet Yusuf deserves to be studied as a religious text that not only conveys the history of prophecy but also establishes a framework for ethics, spirituality, and character education. A scientific approach to this story allows researchers to explore universal values relevant to contemporary life, including fortitude, personal purity, and wisdom in decision-making. Thus, an academic reading of Surah Yusuf is crucial for strengthening the understanding that stories in the Quran always contain a profound pedagogical function (Khotimah & Santono, 2025).

Previous research on the dream of the Prophet Yusuf As shows that QS. Yusuf verses 4–6 are not just the initial narrative of the story, but contain prophetic meanings, dream interpretations, and divine signs that became the foundation of the Prophet Yusuf's life journey. Rohmah (2024) in a comparative study of *Tafsir al-Maraghi* and *Tafsir al-Azhar* found that Yusuf's dream about eleven stars, the sun, and the moon was understood as a true dream (*ru'ya shadiqah*) as well as inspiration from Allah, and emphasized that Ya'qub's command not to tell the dream to his brothers was related to the potential for malice and deceit. Sa'dah (2025a) through a study of *Tafsir Fi Zbilal al-Qur'an* emphasized that the dream in QS. Yusuf is part of a divine plan that contains spiritual, educational, and social values, and is the starting point for the formation of the character and strategy of the Prophet Yusuf's da'wah. Meanwhile, the study of the interpretation of the dream verses in the story of Yusuf from Nasef (2020) analyzed using a semiotic approach confirms that the symbols of the eleven stars, the sun, and the moon represent the brothers, father, and mother of the

Prophet Yusuf, so that the dream has a strong symbolic meaning and is proven historically in QS. Yusuf verse 100. In line with that, the study of the interpretation that discusses QS. Yusuf verse 6 emphasizes that Allah specifically chose Yusuf and taught *ta'wil al-abadith*, so that the dream of the Prophet Yusuf cannot be understood as an ordinary dream, but as part of revelation and confirmation of prophethood.

METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a systematic literature review design to explore and synthesize the findings of classical and contemporary interpretations related to Surah Yusuf/12:1–6. Data sources were selected from primary and secondary literature, including classical, modern, and contemporary interpretations, journal articles, theses, and relevant books on Bible–Quran intertextuality. Inclusion criteria included publications directly discussing the interpretation of verses 1–6 of Surah Yusuf, published in Arabic, English, or Indonesian. Exclusion criteria included popular sources without scientific basis, unverifiable publications, and translations without tafsir commentary. The literature search was conducted in academic databases, university repositories, and digital tafsir libraries (Creswell, 2013; Moleong, 2018).

Data analysis followed thematic and comparative analysis procedures to identify interpretive patterns, ethical and pedagogical themes, and differences in emphasis between different tafsir traditions. Each source was critically read, annotated, and relevant data units extracted (interpretation of the symbolic meaning of dreams, the role of narrative structure, ethical dimensions such as patience and steadfastness of faith, and Qur'an-Bible comparisons). Data were then inductively coded using reference management and qualitative analysis software, followed by cross-source triangulation to ensure consistency and validity of the findings. To enhance reliability, the researchers employed an audit trail and peer debriefing with at least one expert in tafsir or methodology (Adlini et al., 2022; Sugiyono, 2020). Limitations of the study were acknowledged and discussed to guide critical interpretation of the results.

Academic ethics and transparency are maintained through full citation of all primary and secondary sources and documentation of the search strategy (Fahrudin et al., 2020; Faizal & Ichsan, 2025; Fatul et al., 2024). The results of the study are synthesized narratively and in summary tables to display variations in interpretation and supporting evidence, and are

directed to answer the formulated research questions: how is Surah Yusuf/12:1–6 interpreted in different exegetical traditions; what ethical and pedagogical values are extracted; and how does a comparative Qur’anic–Bible perspective influence the understanding of the text. This methods paragraph can be directly inserted into the journal manuscript.

RESULTS

Content and Tafsir QS. Yusuf/12:1-6

The Qur'an not only contains laws and instructions for life, but also the stories of the prophets which are full of lessons and wisdom; One of the most complete and contains moral and spiritual lessons is the story of the Prophet Yusuf AS. which is told in Surah Yusuf, where verses 1–6 introduce the starting point of the narrative through the Prophet Yusuf's dream of eleven stars and the sun and moon prostrating to him, which is then understood as divine guidance regarding his exalted position and future events in his family's life. Classical and modern interpreters position the dream as a prophetic sign and a signal of future success: the eleven stars are often interpreted as Yusuf's brothers, while the sun and moon are understood as parental figures (father and mother/stepmother), so that the dream functions as a link to the series of trials, patience, and learning that shaped Yusuf's journey to a leadership role in Egypt (Rifai et al., 2025).

Contemporary commentaries, including those of commentators such as Quraish Shihab, emphasize that the opening of Surah Yusuf (verses 1–6) is not simply a narrative prologue but also presents central themes—faith in God's decree, the dynamics of familial affection and jealousy, and the signs of prophethood—which are further elaborated throughout the surah to provide readers with examples of ethics, patience, and practical wisdom; for the full text of the Quran and its commentary, please consult authoritative Quranic texts and commentaries such as online translations of the Quran and the commentary of Quraish Shihab.

الرَّحْمَةُ الْكَتَبِ الْمُبِينِ (١)

It means: “*Alif Lām Rā. These are the verses of the Book (the Qur'an) whose meaning and guidance are clear.*”

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢)

It means: “*Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand.*”

Interpretation of verses 1-2 of QS. Yusuf

Surah Yusuf opens with three concise yet powerful introductory verses—these verses introduce the central theme: that the Qur'an conveys a story full of wisdom and life lessons for humanity. In the context of revelation, Surah Yusuf is unique in that its entire story is presented in one chapter. It provides a narrative emphasis that allows the reader to follow Yusuf's trials, patience, and wisdom sequentially, thus making its moral message more coherent. Commentary and research confirm that this narrative serves as both a comfort and a lesson for the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, demonstrating how God's destiny and predestination operate in personal and social life (Syafaatunnisa, 2025).

The history of its derivatives is also explained in the exegetical literature: the request of the Jews and some of the companions who wanted to hear the stories of the prophets is mentioned in a number of descriptions as the contextual background when the stories of the prophets were told to the Prophet Muhammad, so that Surah Yusuf appeared as a divine answer to this need and at the same time as a narrative miracle that cannot be imitated by humans. Additional information from academic studies shows that at that time stories from Persia and India were circulating through storytellers such as an-Nadhr bin al-Harith, so that the presence of revelations containing the stories of the prophets in Arabic style became a comparison and proof of the truth of the text of the Qur'an (Rustam, 2023).

The opening of Surah Yusuf with the muqatta'at letters "Alif Lam Ra" is understood by many commentators as an affirmation that the revelation was composed of Arabic letters familiar to the people, however, the beauty, rhetorical structure, and depth of the Qur'an's meaning remain beyond human ability to match or imitate them. Classical and modern interpretations both cite these letters as a sign of the miracle of language and as an invitation for Arabs to reflect on the divine message being conveyed in their own language, thus rendering the claim that the Qur'an is merely a human narrative beyond reason. The choice of Arabic as a medium of revelation is also discussed in linguistic and exegetical studies: in addition to historical reasons—that the Prophet Muhammad lived in the Arabian Peninsula, so the revelation needed to be understood directly by the first recipients—Arabic has a rich root morphological system and stylistic flexibility that allows layers of meaning to be accommodated in a concise wording, so that the messages of the Qur'an can be conveyed with a precision and depth that is difficult to transfer intact to other languages. Linguistic studies explain how a single Arabic root can give rise to a number of interrelated words and

nuances of meaning, supporting the delivery of theological, ethical, and narrative messages in a dense and layered manner (Widodo, 2026).

In summary, the three opening verses of Surah Yusuf function as a frame: confirming that the story to be presented is a miraculous Arabic revelation, revealed at a time when there was a demand for the stories of the prophets, and presented in the form of a complete narrative that highlights the wisdom of patience, the steadfastness of faith, and the truth of divine destiny (Zahara & Ichsan, 2022). For further references and more detailed discussion, please refer to the following sources of interpretation and linguistic studies: brief interpretation and context of Surah Yusuf on Quran.com, academic studies on the story of Yusuf on university repositories, as well as linguistic studies regarding the special features of Arabic for the Qur'an.

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ (٣)

It means: “*We tell you (Prophet Muhammad) the best story by revealing the Qur'an to you. Indeed, before that you were among those who did not know.*”

This verse places the story of the Prophet Yusuf as the best part of the revelation received by the Prophet Muhammad, as well as answering the requests of Muslims and other parties who want to know the history of the prophets. The telling of the story is not just to fulfill historical curiosity, but is intended to provide moral guidance, strengthen faith, and show wisdom in life's trials. By confirming that the Prophet Muhammad saw. himself did not know the details of the story before the revelation, this verse confirms the source of the authenticity of that knowledge: not a human report or invention of the past, but a divine transmission that gives authority and certainty to the listener (Yardley, 2021).

The term *al-qashash* in this context refers to the presentation of a story in a coherent and orderly manner, following the sequence of events so that listeners can grasp the plot, cause and effect and the lessons contained therein. This narrative form facilitates reasoning and appreciation because it combines historical facts, symbolism, and moral interpretation in a coherent series. Therefore the use of the word *al-qashash* emphasizes the method of teaching in revelation: not random fragments, but rather stories compiled to illustrate Divine principles and guide the reader or listener towards deep understanding.

On the other hand, the word *al-ghafilin* refers to a condition of negligence that makes someone ignore important truths or lessons; not a weakness of reason but a lack of attention and seriousness to pay attention to signs and revelations. The warning about *al-Ghafilin* emphasizes that the benefits of divine stories can only be reaped by those who open their attention and heart; A coherent and meaningful story is useless for the careless. Thus, this verse simultaneously praises the divine method of storytelling and criticizes negligent attitudes, while encouraging listeners to actively reflect on and learn from the history of the prophets.

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ (٤)

It means: “(Remember) when Yusuf said to his father (Ya'qub), "O my father, indeed I have (dreamed of) seeing eleven stars, the sun and the moon. I saw them all bowing down to me.”

Allah Swt opened the story of Prophet Yusuf with an important event that contains a lesson: Prophet Yusuf's dream of seeing eleven stars and the sun and moon bowing down to him. This dream was a sign that Allah would place the Prophet Yusuf in a noble position in the future. With great respect and affection, Prophet Yusuf told his dream to his father, Prophet Ya'qub; His father understood that the dream was not just a fantasy, but rather a divine guidance and warned him not to share the dream with his siblings. The use of the word *sahidin* in the verse describes the obedience and respect of heavenly bodies to the Prophet Yusuf as a symbol of the honor that Allah bestowed on him, not the worship of creatures.

قَالَ يَبْنَئِي لَا تَقْصُصْ رُءْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ (٥)

It means: “He (his father) said, "O my son, do not tell your dreams to your brothers because they will make serious deceptions against you. Indeed, Satan is a clear enemy for humans.”

Prophet Jacob As realized that Prophet Yusuf's dream was a great blessing from God. However, he also understood the jealousy of Yusuf's brothers, because Yusuf received more attention and affection than his father. Therefore, Prophet Jacob advised Yusuf not to tell his brothers about his dream, lest they be tempted to deceive him. Gently, Prophet Jacob reminded him that Satan can incite hostility even between siblings. The use of the term *bunayya* in this verse emphasizes a father's affection and tenderness for his son.

وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَىٰ
أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ٦

It means: “Thus, God chose you (to be a prophet), taught you some of the interpretations of dreams, and perfected His blessings on you and on the family of Ya'qub, as He had perfected them on your two previous grandfathers, (namely) Ibrahim and Ishaq. Indeed, your Lord is All-Knowing, All-Wise.”

Prophet Jacob AS reassured Prophet Yusuf by explaining that his dream was not merely a vision, but a sign from Allah SWT containing divine intent. According to Jacob, the dream indicated that Yusuf would be chosen for a noble task, given the gift of dream interpretation, and would one day attain favors and a high position like the prophets before him. This explanation not only provided a rational understanding of the dream's meaning but also strengthened Yusuf's faith: he was convinced that what he experienced was within Allah's plan, so he accepted his destiny with serenity and hope.

In the study of interpretation, the term *ta'wil* refers to the explanation or realization of the hidden meaning of something seen in a dream, namely the reality hinted at through dream symbols. In the case of Yusuf, *ta'wil* has a concrete meaning because the dream, which was initially symbolic—eleven stars, the sun, and the moon prostrating to him—ultimately came true when his brothers and parents came to bow to him in Egypt. This event demonstrates that dreams can be vertical revelations that provide guidance—not merely psychological reflections—to servants chosen to convey the truth and fulfill the prophetic mission.

The Prophet Muhammad Saw emphasized that human dreams are divided into three types: good dreams that come from God, whispers from the heart or one's own mind, and bad dreams that come from Satan. This teaching provides practical guidance: good dreams should be appreciated and shared with those who can benefit, while bad dreams should be avoided and addressed with prayer for God's protection to prevent anxiety or negative effects on the soul. This approach demonstrates a balance between valuing spiritual experiences and maintaining psychological health and faith.

From this interpretation and narration, it can be understood that the Prophet Yusuf's dream was a divine sign of the exalted position that awaited him—a promise that would be

tested later through his life's journey. The verses recounting this event emphasize God's greatness in providing guidance through various means, including dreams. According to M. Quraish Shihab, Yusuf's story not only records a historical event but also conveys universal values: steadfast faith, patience in facing trials, wisdom in responding to slander and temptation, and compassion in family relationships. These values make Yusuf's story relevant as a moral and spiritual lesson for people of all time.

DISCUSSION

Wisdom from the Dreams of the Prophet Yusuf AS.

Dreams in Islamic tradition are understood not only as psychological experiences during sleep, but can also contain divine messages, good news, or warnings—a position systematically discussed in Islamic psychology and exegesis literature (Yuminah, 2018). The story of the Prophet Yusuf demonstrates the role of dreams as an early revelation: his dream of eleven stars and the sun and moon prostrating themselves was interpreted as his brothers, father and mother who would later prostrate themselves to him, an interpretation that was stated as a sign of his prophethood and exalted position (Rifai et al., 2025).

From a theological perspective, the interpretation of dreams of the Prophet Yusuf is seen as a gift of the knowledge of *takwil* (the ability to interpret dreams) that Allah gave to His chosen servants, so that dreams function as a communicative means between God and humans in the narrative of the Qur'an and classical and contemporary interpretive literature (Arroisi et al., 2025). Comparative studies between Western and Islamic psychology show that dreams within the Islamic framework can have three functions: psychological manifestations, tests or trials, and potential revelation or divine guidance (*ru'yah shalibah*); this division of functions helps explain why some dreams are treated with special religious etiquette (e.g., stored, interpreted by knowledgeable people) (Yuminah, 2018).

The narrative and cognitive approach to Surah Yusuf highlights how the Qur'anic text uses the world of dreams to structure the story, reinforce the themes of destiny and trust, and provide models of behavior (patience, wisdom, faith) that can be learned by the people, so that dreams become rhetorical and pedagogical elements in the Qur'anic revelation. Modern interpretive research on the dream of the Prophet Yusuf emphasizes the social ethical aspect of the story: Yusuf's dream provokes the jealousy of his brothers, but the series of events and interpretations ultimately show how wisdom, forgiveness, and reconciliation

emerge as a result of the test and steadfastness of faith—a reading that links the spiritual dimension of the dream with practical moral implications (Rifai et al., 2025).

Studies in Islamic history and philosophy (e.g., al-Kindi and the classical exegetes) enriched the understanding of dreams by balancing rational-psychological and metaphysical explanations; these works demonstrate that the Islamic intellectual tradition did not completely reject natural explanations of dreams, but placed them within a broader epistemic network including revelation, reason, and spiritual ethics (Elmuna, 2024). Thus, placing the dream of the Prophet Yusuf in two realms—as a historical-narrative event and as a spiritual-theological phenomenon—allows for a holistic reading: the dream acts as an indicator of destiny and a guide, while Yusuf's life journey confirms that divine interpretation becomes manifest through patience, knowledge, and divine will, a conclusion supported by contemporary exegetical studies and narrative analysis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the verses of QS. Yusuf (12):1–6 and the interpretation in Tafsir Al-Misbah, it can be concluded that the dream of the Prophet Yusuf (AS) is understood as a revelation and a form of divine guidance indicating his noble position in the future. The dream narrative contains important ethical and spiritual values—including faith, patience, wisdom, honesty in maintaining trust, and family affection—which the interpretation interprets as guidelines for moral behavior. Furthermore, the findings of this study confirm that revelation through dreams is one of the mechanisms of divine communication in the prophetic tradition, and that the Prophet Yusuf's reaction to trials (patience and trust) provides an adaptive model for individuals in facing social pressures and interpersonal conflicts. The practical implications of this study are two-way: individually, the values contained in the story of Yusuf can be internalized to strengthen spiritual resilience and personal ethics; contextually, an interpretive approach that emphasizes the moral learning aspect opens up opportunities for the integration of textual narratives into character education and spiritual guidance programs. This research encourages more comprehensive follow-up studies, particularly empirical studies on the effectiveness of applying Yusuf's values in forming the moral attitudes of the younger generation and comparative analysis of other interpretations to test interpretative consistency.

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