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The Concept of Space in the Holy Quran

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Abstract

The concept of space is one of the concepts frequently mentioned in the Holy Quran. The concept in question has a quality that points to both physical and metaphysical dimensions. Since the life of the hereafter is a continuation of this world in Islamic thought, space has also been used frequently in the Quran in the context of the life of the hereafter. The descriptions of heaven and hell have always been described in the Quran by associating them with the concept of space. The concept of space has a use in the Quran that has abstract meanings as well as its concrete meaning. It is seen that it is used in this context when describing the life of the prophets. In this article, it has been examined in which contexts the concept of space is used in the Quran, and the differences between these uses have been revealed. During the examination of the subject, many tafsir sources, especially the Holy Quran, were reviewed. In addition, contemporary sources on the subject were used.

Keywords: Quran, tafseer, physics, social sciences, spatial sciences, space, place.

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Kur'an-ı Kerim'de Mekan Kavramı

Öz

Mekan, Kur'an-ı Kerim'de sıkça geçen kavramlardan birisidir. Söz konusu kavram hem fizik hem de fizikötesi boyutlara işaret eden bir niteliğe sahiptir. İslam düşüncesinde ahiret hayatı bu dünyanın bir devamı niteliğinde olduğu için mekan aynı zamanda ahiret hayatı bağlamında da Kur'an'da sık sık kullanılmıştır. Kur'an'da cennet ve cehennem tasvirleri hep mekan kavramıyla ilişkilendirilerek anlatılmıştır. Mekan kavramı Kur'an'da somut anlamının yanında soyut anlamlara da sahip olan bir kullanıma da sahiptir. Peygamberlerin hayatı anlatılırken bu bağlamda kullanıldığı görülmektedir. Bu makalede mekan kavramının Kur'an'da hangi bağlamlarda kullanıldığı incelenmiş bu kullanımlar arasındaki farklılıklar ortaya konulmuştur. Konu incelenirken başta Kur'an-ı Kerim olmak üzere birçok tefsir kaynağı gözden geçirilmiştir. Bunların yanında konuyla ilgili çağdaş kaynaklardan yararlanılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kur'an, tefsir, fizik, sosyal bilimler, mekan bilimleri, uzay, mekan.

1. Introduction

The concept of space is a very broad concept that has physical and metaphysical dimensions and references both the world and the afterlife. As a matter of fact, many special places are mentioned in the Holy Quran, from the building scale to the city scale. In the Holy Quran, the concepts of direction and movement related to space come to the fore. Movement in space can be a horizontal/physical movement in the form of "travel" (*Al-Imran*, 3/137; *Saba*, 34/18), "migration" (*an-Nahl*, 16/80), "hijra" (*an-Nisa*, 4/97, 4/100; *al-Hashr* 59/9). It is also expressed as a vertical (transphysical) movement in the form of "Isra" (*al-Isra'*, 17/1), "Ascension" (*an-Najm*, 53/9) and "tayy-i mekan" (*an-Naml*, 27/39-40).

The aim of this article is to examine how the concept of "space", one of the most important elements of human life in the world, is discussed in the Holy Quran, and to investigate how space is discussed based on physics, philosophy and spatial sciences. Thus, a comparative analysis of the concept of space in the Holy Quran and different scientific/philosophical approaches is made. This study differs from

previous studies in terms of its multidimensional analysis of space. Because the studies on this subject have generally been limited to the place names and sacred places mentioned in the Holy Quran, and in some of them, only the historical features of these places have been examined.

In the second part of the article after the introduction, first, the opinions of physicists, philosophers and researchers interested in space science regarding the truth of space, and how they handled the concepts was examined. These include both the way they define space (absolute space, relative space, etc.), as well as the existence, movement, direction, boundary, volume, surface, emptiness, fullness related to space. etc. This examination was carried out based on the nature and truth of the place. In the third part of the article, the subject of space is discussed in the context of the Holy Quran, and how and within what semantic framework the concept of space is defined in the Holy Quran is examined. The fourth chapter deals with two basic issues regarding the reality of space, stacking and tayy-i makan. It deals with the issue of space.

2. Opinions on the Nature and Truth of Space

Although views on the¹ nature and truth of space have differed according to the developments in science and philosophy throughout history, it is seen that philosophical questions about space generally arise in the following four axes:²

- To experience in space or experiencing space?
- What is the difference between space and place?
- What is the relationship between space and time?
- Is it the world in space or is it the space in the world?

¹ Elden, Stuart, Space I, R. Kitchin & NJ Thrift (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (First edition. ed., Vol. 10, pp. 262-267). Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 2009.

² Essence means the mental representation of something; Truth refers to the reality of that thing in the external world. For detailed information about the concepts of essence and truth, see. Gorgun, Tahsin; "Mature", *Turkish Religious Foundation Islamic Encyclopedia (Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi DIA)*, XXVII, 336-338 and Cagrici, Mustafa; "Truth", *DIA*, XV, 177-178.

These discussions are also related to how space is defined. For this reason, it is necessary to first analyze how space is discussed in different languages and disciplines.

2.1. Nature of the Space

The concept of space, used by different disciplines, is a concept that expresses the coming together of two objects that contain and are contained and the relationship between these two objects.³ The concept is derived from the infinitive "kevn" and the word "mekan", which is derived from the word "mekin", which means to be slowly, so they have a conceptual relationship.⁴ In its everyday sense, the word space refers to the place where objects or people are located.⁵

İsfahani said that since the use of the word "space" has become very common, the letter "mim" is thought to be from the original word, and according to the common view, the word "space" comes from the root⁶ "kane-yekunu. According to Halil b. Ahmed, one of the early Arabic lexicographers, the word "space" comes from the root "kawn" and is in the form of "mef'al".⁷ The view that it is called "temekkene", similar to the verb "temeskene", by adapting it to the "fe'al" pattern due to its frequent use in the language, is not correct, because the desert Arabs who spoke a pure language used the word as "kun mekanek", "gum mekanek". So it indicates that this word is⁸ the infinitive or noun place of the verb "kane".

Space, as it is used in English, comes from the Latin term 'spatium', which means distance or stretch. Those who equate space with distance interpreted it as a container, while those who consider space in the sense of spread/distribution (like Descartes) drew attention to the length, depth and width dimensions of this container (space). This approach of Descartes

³ Ebu'l-Kâsım Huseyin b. Muhammad b. Mufaddal Ragib İsfahani, *el-Mufredat fî Garibi'l-Kur'ân*, "Mkn", p. 1387, trans. Yusuf Turker, İstanbul, 2007.

⁴ Abu'l-Fazl Cemâluddin Muhammed b. Mukerrem b. Ali b. Ahmed al- Ansari al- Ruwayfii İbn Manzur, *Lisanu'l-Arab*, "mkn", VIII, 341-342, Daru'l -Hadis, Cairo, 2003.

⁵ Kutluer, İlhan, "Space", *Türkiye Diyanet İslam Encyclopedia*, XXVIII, 550.

⁶ İsfahani, *el-Mufredat*, Kane, p. 1313

⁷ Ferahîdî, Halil b. Ahmed, *Kitabu'l Ayn*, Place, V, 410, Daru Mektebetu Hilal, century.

⁸ İsfahani, *el-Mufredat*, Space, p. 1387.

is a geometry-based approach that gives rise to Cartesian coordinates (x,y,z). In this approach, space becomes “more understandable and controllable”.⁹

On the other hand, it has been suggested that the concepts of space and place have different meanings. Accordingly, while space has a more mathematical and abstract content, place refers to the space that is experienced, lived and interacted with. This distinction puts space in a more general, large, open and abstract framework of meaning, and place in a more specific, personal and limited framework of meaning.¹⁰

As for the conceptual aspect of the word space, theologians define space as "a space occupied by objects, whose existence is in the mind" while philosophers defined it as "the inner surface of the surrounding body that overlaps with the outer surface of the surrounded body". Plato, one of the ancient Greek philosophers, discussed space in terms of formation and destruction, and depicted it as a container in which matter limited by geometric surfaces occupies space. Aristotle, on the other hand, thought of space with the concept of 'motion' and defined it as "the first immobile boundary of the covering body". According to him, space is the answer to the question 'where'.¹¹

According to Aristotle's understanding of the universe, which he explains in terms of matter and form, there is no void that has reality as a substance. Because if it is claimed that space is needed for movement to occur, this requires that the void have directions such as up, down, right and left, and that the void itself is a space. As a result, since the spatial movements of objects occur in space, space is nothing different from space.¹²

There are two types of understanding of space in Aristotle's physics. The first is the general space (topos koinos) that contains all the objects, the second is the special space (idios topos), which means the limit

⁹ Elden, Stuart, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

¹⁰ Elden, Stuart, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

¹¹ Kutluer, Ilhan, *Place, DIA. Encyclopedia of Islam*, XXVIII, 550-552.

¹² Aristotle, *Physics*, Yapi Kredi Publications, Istanbul 1997, pp.165-169.

of a certain object.¹³ For example, the general space of a book in a library is the library itself, and its private space is the boundaries determined by the width, length and height of that book. Aristotle grounds the existence of general space by citing the fact that each of the bodies such as earth, water, air and fire has a natural space. For example, the natural location of fire is up, and that of earth is down. On the other hand, Aristotle's definition of space as 'the boundary between the body that surrounds and the body that is surrounded' affirms the general space, and his idea that if there is no 'surrounding', there is no space, rules out the definition of special space.¹⁴

According to Aristotle physics, there are four different movements:

1. Moving from one space to another
2. Becoming/deteriorating
3. Increase/decrease
4. Transformation.

According to him, every object that moves from one space to another is necessarily in a space, and movement and space exist together. "If there is movement, there must be space; if there is space, movement must exist." According to Aristotle, "the greatest proof of the existence of space is that objects can replace each other." Thus, one object can be replaced by another object, and since the space remains the same in this process, spatial qualifications such as right, left, down and up remain the basic qualities of the space. On the other hand, when an object moves in a space, the space must be motionless. Aristotle explains this situation with the boat-river metaphor. While the boat moves in the river, which is its general location, the river as a whole does not move. Since the universe as a whole is motionless, it is not necessary for the universe to have a space.¹⁵

While Descartes, one of the modern philosophers, considered space and object to be identical, Leibniz evaluated space as a system of relations.

¹³ Aristotle, *ibid.*, p.141.

¹⁴ Hakli, Shaban, Application of the Concept of Space and Emptiness in Islamic Philosophy to Cosmology, *Hitit University Faculty of Theology Journal*, 2007/2, 6 (12), pp. 41-58.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *ibid.*, pp.135-141.

Kant went one step further and argued that space does not have an objective reality but is an intuition that exists a priori in the knowing subject. Islamic philosophers' interpretations of space are generally a continuation and discussion of the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. These interpretations are centered around the concepts of border, space and movement.¹⁶

Before moving on to the interpretations made by Islamic philosophers on the basis of space and emptiness, it would be useful to touch upon the concept of 'emptiness'. The word "khala" in Arabic is the infinitive "yakhlu" the verb "to remain empty" and is also used as a noun in the sense of "emptiness". The opposite of the infinitive khala is "melâ", meaning "fullness". Khala's explanations have been made from different philosophical perspectives as "a dimension that exists independently of the object", "a hypothetical void that is assumed to be filled by the object" or "something that is impossible to exist". In philosophy and theology, the concept of emptiness is defined as "a place that is empty of anybody or space-occupying substance", which in a sense implies that the concept of halâ has the meaning of non-existence in its content.¹⁷

Kindi, one of the Islamic philosophers, defines the void as "the space in which there is no place-holder" (mekânun la mutemekkine fihi) and treats the place-holder (mutemekkin) and space as two elements that require each other. The existence of one requires the existence of the other. According to Kindi, since there is nothing that occupies space beyond the universe, there cannot be a void. He explained this situation as there is no space beyond the universe by using the method of "muhale irca" (reduction to the impossible), saying that quantities such as time and space cannot be actually infinite. Unlike Aristotle, Kindi chose to explain space not with moving objects but with space-holders (mutemekkin). Therefore, he explained that there is no emptiness or fullness beyond the universe, with the limitation of the universe.¹⁸

¹⁶ Kutluer, İlhan, "Space", *DIA*, XXVIII, 550-552.

¹⁷ Kutluer, İlhan, "Halâ", *DIA*, XV, 221.

¹⁸ Hakli, Shaban, *ibid.*, pp. 41-58.

According to Kindi, object, movement, space and time are realities that can exist together. Unlike Aristotle, Kindi said that space is related to all four different types of movements, that space can be divided by dividing movements, and that just as space is needed to move from one place to another, space is also needed for formation/destruction, increase/decrease and transformation. Kindi's definition of space as 'the boundaries of objects' and "the encounter of the last limits of the enveloper and the enveloped" exactly coincides with Aristotle's definition.¹⁹

Farabi, in his *Risale of Emptiness (Risaletun fi'l -khala)* explained that the void is not possible with the bottle experiment. According to this explanation, when an empty bottle is immersed in water, no water enters it, but when some air is drawn from it and immersed in water, water fills the bottle as much as the air drawn into it. Those who argue that a void is possible claim that when air is drawn from the bottle, a void is created inside, and water fills into this void. However, even if the experiment is correct, the interpretation of the experiment is not correct. Because the volume occupied by objects is not fixed and can change depending on the conditions of the environment. Therefore, when air is drawn from the bottle, the volume of air remaining in the bottle expands and fills the entire bottle. When water enters the bottle, the air contracts again and transfers some of its space to the water.²⁰ This comment of Farabi shows that he thinks that space can only exist together with the 'placeholder'. Farabi's understanding of space and emptiness is the same as Aristotle, except for minor nuances. He also argues that there is no absolute void and that the universe is limited.²¹

According to Ibn Sina, since emptiness is ²² impossible, fullness is necessary. He explains the non-existence of the void with the following four points: First, if the void exists as a reality, it must have boundaries and

¹⁹ Kindî, *Philosophical Treatises* (Trans.: Mahmut Kaya), İz Publishing, İstanbul 1994, pp.16-17, 46-48; Hakli, Shaban, *ibid.*, p. 41-58.

²⁰ Fârâbî, *Risaletun fi'l -Halâ* (Translated by: Necati Lugal-Aydin Sayılı), Turkish Historical Society Printing House, Ankara 1985, pp. 3-16.

²¹ Hakli, Shaban, *ibid.*, pp. 41-58.

²² Ibn Sina, *Heaven and Universe* (Translated by: Muhittin Macit/Harun Kushlu), Litera Publishing, 2014, p. 55.

dimensions. However, the void has no boundaries or dimensions. Secondly, there is no movement or rest in space. Thirdly, in absolute vacuum there are no directions. Fourth, in order for the void to exist, it must have essence, quality and substance. Something that has these properties cannot be called a vacuum.²³

Ibn Sina asserts that our knowledge about space is not its essence and substance, but its relations with objects. Therefore, although space exists as a substance, information about it is obtained from objects and their movements. In fact, the existence of space can be known through the movements of objects and objects. Ibn Sina, who defines space as “the thing determined by the object' or 'the thing that surrounds the object”, says that four conditions are necessary for something to be a place: The object being in space; the object can be separated from that place; only one object can be present in a space at a time; when an object leaves a space, another object can be found in that space. These four conditions reveal that space has a reality separate from the object that holds space.²⁴

Ibn Sina differs from Aristotle in his views on space is that he states that the equality of objects and space is a metaphorical situation, not a real one. Saying “Space is equal to the thing that takes place” actually means “space belongs to the thing that takes place”. Because equality is not between space and the object that holds space, but between the boundaries of these two. Therefore, the expression related to space is not the shape and form of the object, but its boundaries.²⁵

2.2. The Truth of Space

In addition to the discussions and explanations mentioned above regarding the nature of space, views on the truth of space in physics and philosophy have also been presented. These discussions include the physical and metaphysical dimensions of space and are generally discussed under two headings as “absolute” and “relative”.

²³ Ibn Sina, *Physics - Kitab al-Shifa* (Translated by: Muhittin Macit/Ferruh Ozpilavci), Litera Publishing, 2004, pp.156-173.

²⁴ Ibn Sina, *Physics - Kitab al-Shifa*, p.139-149.

²⁵ Hakli, Shaban, *ibid.*, pp. 41-58.

2.2.1. Absolute Space

In the early periods when space emerged in Western thought, the absolute understanding of space was dominant. Representatives of the understanding of space in classical physics, especially Newton, Galileo and Descartes, said that space is a fixed and unchangeable container in which everything happens. Accordingly, space can be understood through measurement and calculation. According to this understanding, which can be described as 'connecting everything to space', there is absolute determination of space. The basis of the understanding of absolute space is Euclidean geometry.²⁶

In the Newtonian system, the concept of “an open, mechanically functioning universe” is seen. In this vision of the universe, the movement of objects is explained with the presuppositions of “absolute space” and “absolute time”. According to Newton, “absolute space is considered to be always motionless and identical to itself, without being dependent on anything, that is, according to Newton, absolute space exists separately from objects.” Their views on time are also in this direction; that is, “the flow of time does not depend on the speed of the reference system or other properties.”²⁷ After all, according to Newton, time and space have an 'absolute' quality that exists without being related to anything external.

Newton tried to prove the existence of absolute space with his famous bucket experiment. In this experiment, a bucket filled with water is tied to its handles with a rope and rotated around itself. As the bucket rotates, the water inside rotates to form a vortex and the curvature of the water surface is explained by Newton as the water being located in an absolute space independent of the bucket.²⁸ (See: Figure 1)

²⁶ Elden, Stuart, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

²⁷ Ucar, Semra, Interpretation of the Concepts of Time and Space in Newtonian Physics and Relativity Physics within the Framework of Reichenbach's Epistemology, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Istanbul, 2014. p. 5-8.

²⁸ Dundar, Furkan Semih, Absolute Space, *Bilim Teknik* May, 2016, p. 82-83.

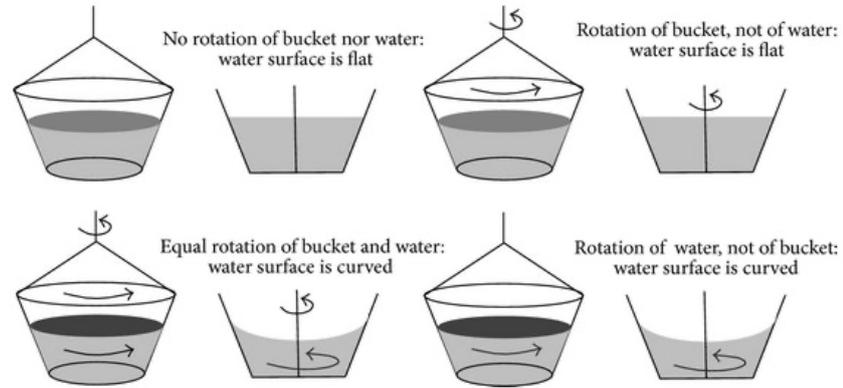


Figure 1: Newton's bucket experiment (Source: URL-1 <http://www.kozmikanafor.com/dusunce-deneyi/>)

2.2.2. Relative Space

Those who see the concept of absolute space as “spatial fetishism” have put forward the idea of relative space. According to this understanding, space is not just an empty container and is full of objects and relationships. At the basis of this understanding is a multiple geometry that rejects some of Euclid’s postulates and puts the observer in a key position. Since the way of experiencing space is related to many factors such as time, cost, economic factors, social interactions, and the person’s way of knowing and perceiving, space cannot be described as absolute.²⁹

Those who argue that space is relative have similarly said that distance is also relative, and that “closeness” and “distance” are not the same thing. Especially with the development of communication opportunities, easy audio and video access to any point in the world enables people living in different countries to interact more easily than those living in the same city or even the same building.³⁰

Einstein’s Postulate of Relativity, published in 1905 and awarded the Nobel Prize, was an important turning point for the idea of relative space. As it was known before Einstein, “absolute motion” could be talked about based on the concepts of “absolute space and absolute time”.

²⁹ Stuart Elden, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

³⁰ Stuart Elden, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

Newton's design of the universe required the existence of absolute space. Absolute space meant a universal reference system. The postulate of relativity is based on the understanding that there cannot be a universal reference system. Einstein's principles of relativity do not accept space and time as absolute. It is quite difficult for us to comprehend these results with the habits and knowledge we acquire from our daily lives.³¹

Those who defend the idea of relative space also interpreted Newton's bucket experiment mentioned above differently. Philosopher Ernst Mach argued that if the dimensions of the bucket change, the result will also change, and similarly, it cannot be known whether the water rotates relative to the bucket or the earth.³²

Those who think that the relative space understanding is inadequate to explain some points introduced the concept of "relational space". In this perspective, since objects can only exist as a system of relationships with other objects, space is also a product of these relationships. Space is in a never-ending process of formation / construction. Spatial issues are embedded in social relations.³³

Harvey says that when space is accepted as absolute, it will turn into a "thing in itself" independent of matter and will have a structure that can be used to distinguish and classify phenomena. In the relative understanding of space, space consists of the relationship between objects that can exist thanks to the existence of objects. In relational space, space is seen within objects from Leibniz's perspective and exists "by containing and representing relationships with other objects within the objects themselves". Harvey says that space cannot be absolute, relative or relational on its own, and that one or more of these definitions may be valid depending on the circumstances. According to him, the question 'what is space' should be replaced by the question 'what kind of conceptualizations of space will be created by different human practices'.

³¹ Semra Ucar, Interpretation of the Concepts of Time and Space in Newtonian Physics and Relativity Physics within the Framework of Reichenbach's Epistemology, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Istanbul, 2014.

³² Furkan Semih Doner, Bilim Teknik May, 2016

³³ Stuart Elden, *ibid.*, pp. 262-267.

Harvey exemplifies this thesis through urban life. According to him, the property relationship in cities can be read through absolute space; population, flows of information, goods and services through relative space; demography, market and retail sales forces through relational space.³⁴

The definition of space actually reveals the relationship of humans and other material beings with space. It can be said that the positivist perception of space, which is a product of the absolute understanding of space and objectifies the space and perceives it as a stage where human activities take place by reducing the space only to the plane of coordinates, location and distance, also³⁵ includes a mechanical view of human-space relations.

Recent discussions and opinions on space have similarly focused on whether space is an entity that exists on its own or a product. Some thinkers argue that space is not an independent form of construction, but a product that emerges as a result of social relations. While some reject the concept of absolute space, they argue that it would not be right to completely deny the spatial effect. Therefore, it has been stated that there is a need for a simultaneous perspective that sees space as both a social product and a determinant of social life.³⁶

Simmel says that the following five basic features give meaning to an empty space:

- The unique quality of that place
- The ways in which that space can be divided into spatially 'framed' parts and activities
- The degree to which social interactions can be placed within the space

³⁴ Harvey, David (2003); *Social Justice and the City*, (Trans.: M. Morali), Metis Publications, Istanbul.

³⁵ İlhan Kaya, *Space Discussions in Geographical Thought*, *Possible Thinking Magazine*, Issue:4, 2013.

³⁶ Isik, Oguz; *Changing Concepts of Society/Space: Politicization of Space, Spatialization of Politics*; *Society and Science*, 1994, Issue 64-65.

- Especially the degree of proximity/distance in the city and the role of the sense of sight
- The possibility of changing positions and especially the consequences of the arrival of the “stranger”.³⁷

As can be seen, these five features that give meaning to the place are a combination of both the features of the place itself and human-space relations.

In conclusion, the theoretical discussion on the nature and truth of space and the absolute / relative / relational ways of reading space also determine the limits of human-space interaction and human intervention in space. In contrast to the Islamic perspective, which sees intervention in space as a “construction” responsibility brought by the caliphate, the Western perspective considers this intervention as a social 'construction' and 'reproduction' problem of individuals. It also gives clues about where both approaches stand on the issues of activity or passivity, gradualism or suddenness, cohesion or domination in the relationship between humans and space.

The Nature of Space According to the Holy Quran

The word 'place' is mentioned in 27 various verses in the Holy Qur'an, which has survived to the present day through the most powerful transmission, i.e., through the trustworthy means of trustworthiness³⁸ There is a difference in the meaning of the word depending on where it is used in the Holy Quran. Izutsu categorized this meaning differentiation as “original meaning” and “relative meaning” and emphasized that one of the most important problems of semantic methodology is perceiving the distinction between original meaning and relative meaning. According to him, each word in the Holy Quran has the original meaning that it always carries and does not lose as long as it is known as the same word by the society, no matter which system it is included in. It also has a

³⁷ Quoted by: Urry, John; *Consuming Places* (Translated by: Rahmi G. Ogdul), Ayrinti Publications, 1999.

³⁸ Omer Ozbek, *The Thoughts Of Ibn Al-Jazari On The Issue Of Mutawatirness Of Qiraats* (İbnü'l-Cezerî'nin Kirâatlerin Mutevatirliği Meselesine Bakisi). *Bilimname*, 2018 (36), 563. DOI: 10.28949/bilimname.458437.

special/relative meaning that it "gains from the special system it is in and its relationship with other words in this system". Izutsu states that ³⁹ in real life, words do not only consist of the primary meaning, but also gain secondary meanings by being more or less influenced by the culture in which they are found.

In this study, similar to Izutsu's classification, it was examined how the word space is used in abstract / metaphorical and concrete / literal meanings in the Holy Quran. It can be said that the word space has an abstract / metaphorical meaning in 12 verses, and in 15 verses it refers to a concrete, physical place and is used in its literal meaning. (See: Table 1).

3.1. Abstract / Metaphorical Meanings

In different languages, the concepts of space and place can have a figurative or literal meaning depending on where they are used. For example, when it is said "s/he is irreplaceable", what is meant is the person's position / moral weight in society, not the physical place s/he occupies. Similarly, when the verses in the Holy Quran in which the word space is mentioned are examined, it is seen that the word takes on an abstract / metaphorical / spiritual content depending on its place. When we look at the explanations in the commentaries, it is understood that the word "space" in the Holy Quran is used in 12 places in an abstract / metaphorical way in meanings such as personal position / social status, spiritual position / situation, socio-economic environment, abstract direction /side and judgment.

³⁹ Izutsu, Toshihiko (1975); *God and Man in the Quran* (Translated by: Suleyman Ates), Ankara University Press, Ankara., pp. 21-25.

Table 3.1. The Meaning Map of the Concept of Space in the Holy Quran

ABSTRACT/METAPHORICAL MEANINGS	CONCRETE/REAL MEANINGS
<p>Personal position/social status: Nisa, 4/20; Yusuf, 12/78; Kasas, 28/82.</p> <p>Spiritual position/position/situation: Maide, 5/60; Yusuf, 12/77; Maryam, 19/57; Maryam, 19/75; Furkan, 25/34; Yunus, 10/28.</p>	<p>The area occupied by the object: A'raf, 7/143; Hajj, 22/26; (The place of the House (Kaaba).</p> <p>Side, aspect, direction, environment: Yunus, 10/22; Nahl, 16/112.</p> <p>Space (locality, in absolute sense, without relative /adjective):</p> <p>a. Somewhere on the east side: Maryam, 19/16.</p> <p>b. a distant place: Maryam, 19/22.</p>
<p>(Socio-Economic) Environment: A'raf, 7/95.</p> <p>Abstract direction/side: Abraham, 14/17.</p> <p>Verdict: Nahl, 16/101.</p>	<p>c. a remote /remote place: Hajj, 22/31.</p> <p>d. a remote place: Furkan, 25/12; Fussilet, 41/44; Saba, 34/52, 53.</p> <p>e. a suitable, equal, flat, open, wide place: Taha, 20/58.</p> <p>f. a narrow place: Furkan, 25/13.</p> <p>g. a nearby place: Kaf, 50/41; Saba, 34/51.</p>

3.1.1. Personal position/social status

There is a close relationship between space and opportunity. The places and positions people live in affect their material and moral status in the eyes of people. Likewise, the opportunities / virtues a person acquires throughout his life also affect his position and status. This is pointed out in the following verse: *“And those who had envied his position the day before began to say on the morrow: “Ah! it is indeed Allah Who enlarges the provision or restricts it, to any of His servants He pleases! had it not been that Allah was gracious to us, He could have caused the earth to swallow us up! Ah! those who reject Allah will assuredly never prosper.”*⁴⁰ In the interpretation of this verse, it is stated that worldly people were stunned by Karun's magnificent wealth, thought that he was actually a very lucky person, and wanted to be in his place (as rich as him). On the other hand, knowledgeable and wise people condemned these wannabe types and said that such wannabes were inappropriate and unnecessary.⁴¹ As a result, in the verse, Qarun's wealth and position are mentioned as his place. As a matter of fact, many commentators interpreted the word 'place' here as Qarun's ¹⁴² position ', which he acquired with his wealth.

On the other hand, the place that individuals acquire in worldly life with their innate characteristics (gender, race, aspect, temperament, etc.) that make them different from other people is defined with the concept of “place” in the Holy Quran: *“But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, Take not the least bit of it back: Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?”*⁴³ *“They said: “O exalted one! Behold! he has a father, aged and venerable, (who will grieve for him); so take one of us in his place; for we see that thou art (gracious) in doing good.”*⁴⁴ When

⁴⁰ Kasas, 28/82. (For the verse meanings in this study, except for those where another source is shown in the footnote, the following work was used: Karaman, Hayrettin et al., Kur'an Yolu Meâli, DİB Yay., Ankara, 2016, 5th Edition)

⁴¹ Karaman, Hayrettin et al., Kur'an Yolu Tefsiri, IV, 246, DİB Publications, Ankara, 2014.

⁴² See Fahrurddin al- Râzi, *Tefsir-i Kebir Mefâtihu'l-Gayb*, Translation: Prof. Dr. Lutfullah Cebeci et al. Akcag Publications: XVII, 191. Ankara; Seyyid Kutup, *Fizilali'l -Quran*, Translation: Bekir Karlıga et al., Hikmet Publishing House, Istanbul, 1968, XI, p. 305.

⁴³ Nisa, 4/20.

⁴⁴ Yusuf, 12/78.

you pay attention to the verses, in the first verse the word “place” is used to describe the replacement of one wife with another. Likewise, the word place was used when Joseph’s brothers asked for one of their own to replace Benjamin. It can be said that in both verses, the word “place” is used in the sense of “the position that a person acquires in the worldly life with the characteristics that distinguish him from others”.

3.1.2. Spiritual position / situation

In the verses, the word “space” represents not only a material position and status, but also a spiritual position, that is, the position, place or situation that a person has acquired as a result of his choices and life. This meaning is used in a verse as follows: *“They said: “If he steals, there was a brother of his who did steal before (him).” But these things did Joseph keep locked in his heart, revealing not the secrets to them. He (simply) said (to himself): “Ye are the worse situated; and Allah knoweth best the truth of what ye assert!”⁴⁵* The theft incident mentioned in the verse is explained as follows in the commentaries: His aunt, who loved Joseph (pbuh) very much, wanted him to stay with her. Prophet Jacob (pbuh) did not agree to this. Thereupon, Yusuf's aunt tied the belt inherited from Abraham around Joseph’s waist and said that the belt was lost. When the belt was searched, it was found on Yusuf, and thus his aunt kept Joseph with her. In the verse above, Joseph’s brothers wanted to point out this incident.⁴⁶ In the verse, the word place comes with the compound “to the place of evil” and declares the spiritual status of the brothers who slandered Joseph. Accordingly, while the word place is used to refer to a good, beautiful, valuable place or rank, it is also used to refer to a bad, worthless and evil place, rank.

Another verse showing that the word “space” is used not only in the sense of a material place but also in the sense of a spiritual rank and position is as follows: *“Say: “Shall I point out to you something much worse than this, (as judged) by the treatment it received from Allah. those who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath, those of whom some He transformed into apes and swine,those who worshipped evil;- these are (many times) worse in rank, and far*

⁴⁵ Yusuf, 12/77.

⁴⁶ Quran Path Tafsir, III, 249. The same narration is also mentioned in other tafsir, with some more details. See Fahrudin al- Râzi, ibid., XIII, 304.

more astray from the even path!"⁴⁷ In the verse, those whom Allah has cursed and made wrathful are, in the same way, came with the phrase "an evil place" and was used to mean a bad position. According to the general statement of the commentaries, those whose place is worse in the sight of Allah and who have strayed further from the right path, as stated in the verse, are the Jews. Because the Torah was revealed to the Jews through revelation and they became enlightened on this occasion, when they acted against God's commands despite this acquis, they no longer had the opportunity to offer an excuse and as a result, they were sentenced to such heavy punishments."⁴⁸ Similarly, the 34th verse of Surah Furqan says: "*Those who will be gathered to Hell (prone) on their faces,-they will be in an evil plight, and, as to Path, most astray.*"⁴⁹ While the expression "the worst place" in the verse is interpreted as hell, and the expression "the worst road" is interpreted as the road that leads to hell, it has also been said that it is possible to understand these expressions metaphorically. Accordingly, the worst place may mean the disreputable and worthless position of the unbelievers in the sight of Allah, and the worst way may mean the wrong and perverted path they followed while in the world.⁵⁰

In another verse, the relationship of the word place with spiritual rank is stated more clearly: "*And We raised him to a lofty station.*"⁵¹ The person mentioned in the verse and whose exaltation is praised is Idris (pbuh). Praising his rank and position is related to his knowledge. As a matter of fact, commentators have pointed out this. Her was the inventor of professions and arts such as the science of calculation, the science of accounting, the secrets of plants, medicine, strange arts, numeration, writing, sewing, and using a scale. There was information on subjects such as heavenly secrets, methods of ruling over spiritual beings, and the characteristics of beings in the pages of Idris (pbuh). Idris had many students, discovered iron and made tools from it, developed agriculture,

⁴⁷ Maide, 5/60.

⁴⁸ Quran Path Interpretation, DIB Publications, II, 300, 301.

⁴⁹ Furkan, 25/34.

⁵⁰ Quran Path Interpretation, IV, 124.

⁵¹ Maryam, 19/57.

and sewed clothes from leather and fabrics. Commentators⁵² have said that⁵³ by placing Idris (pbuh) in a superior position, either his characteristics explained above are meant or the meaning of the verse can be understood as his being in special places in the spiritual world (sky). While as - Sabuni interprets⁵⁴ the “ascension to a lofty place” mentioned in the verse as exalting the fame and reputation of Idris (pbuh) with his status as a prophet and his closeness to Allah; Sayyid Qutb said that the 'exalted position' in question is that his name is mentioned with respect in society.⁵⁵ While examining the different views on this issue, al -Razi stated that since the word “space” and “elevation” are mentioned together in the verse, the act of elevation is a spatial elevation in the real sense, not in terms of degree. However, according to Razi, even if this elevation is a “spatial elevation”, elevation to the sky can only be reserved for servants who have value in the sight of Allah, so in the verse, There is also a sign of the high spiritual rank of Idris.⁵⁶ There are also narrations in the Bible and Talmut about Idris being raised to heaven.⁵⁷ Referring to the Miraj Hadith,⁵⁸ Bursevi emphasized that the supreme position mentioned in the verse is the “fourth floor heaven”. Nakhcuvani also interpreted⁵⁹ this supreme rank as the highest rank of knowledge and certainty. In summary, the verse draws attention to the exaltation of the status of those who have knowledge, whether these sciences are related to art or religion, in the person of Idris (pbuh). Accordingly, if believers give the necessary value to knowledge, there will be a change in their position and they will attain exalted places/ranks.

⁵² Omer Faruk Harman, “Idris”, DIA, XXI, 480.

⁵³ Quran Path Interpretation, DIB Publications, II, 299.

⁵⁴ Sabuni, Muhammed Ali, *Safvetu't-Tefasir*, Trans: Sadreddin Gumus, Nedim Yilmaz. Ensar Publication. Istanbul, 1993. IX, 520.

⁵⁵ Seyyid Kutup, *Fizilali'l -Quran*, Translation: Bekir Karliga et al., Hikmet Publishing House, Istanbul, 1968, XI, 305.

⁵⁶ Râzi, *ibid.*, XV, 372.

⁵⁷ For these narrations, see: Abu'l A'lâ el- Mavdudî, *Tefhimu'l Kur'an, Meaning and Interpretation of the Quran*, Insan Publications, Istanbul, 1986, III, 205.

⁵⁸ Bursevi, Ismail Hakki, *Rûhu'l Beyân*, (Compiled by: Muhammed Ali es- Sabuni, Translated by: Abdullah Oz et al.), Damla Publishing House, 1996, V, 194.

⁵⁹ Nimetullah bin Mahmud al- Nahcuvani, *al- Fawatihu'l - İlahiyye ve'l-Mefatihu'l-Gaybiyye*, Asitane Bookstore, Istanbul, 1907, I, 502.

The meaning of another verse related to the subject is as follows: “Say: *“If any men go astray, ((Allah)) Most Gracious extends (the rope) to them, until, when they see the warning of Allah (being fulfilled) - either in punishment or in (the approach of) the Hour,- they will at length realise who is worst in position, and (who) weakest in forces!”*⁶⁰ In this verse, there is an answer to the fact that the polytheists consider themselves superior to the believers. The reason for these suspicions of the polytheists is that the people who first believed in the prophets were generally the weak and poor in society, while those who denied them had wealth and power. For this reason, unbelievers constantly humiliated and wanted to oppress believers. As a matter of fact, when the Prophet recited the verses of Allah clearly, gave good news to the believers and warned the polytheists, those spoiled polytheists lost their pride and said, *“The Unbelievers say of those who believe: “If (this Message) were a good thing, (such men) would not have gone to it first, before us!” And seeing that they guide not themselves thereby, they will say, “this is an (old,) falsehood!”*⁶¹ They claimed that they were superior and the believers were inferior. They asked questions such as: “Which of us has a superior position and whose members are better? Do you live in more beautiful mansions or do we?”⁶² According to al-Razi, the “space” mentioned in the verse refers to the position that the ‘people of misguidance’ deem themselves worthy of as a result of the power and wealth they have acquired in this world, and the place they will go to in the afterlife (hell/torment/humiliation).⁶³ Sabuni gave the meaning of the word “space” in the verse as “the position in the sight of Allah Almighty”⁶⁴ and Sayyid Qutb gave the meaning as “social position”.⁶⁵ In addition, Sabuni states that in the 73rd verse of the same surah, when the polytheists compare themselves with the believers; *“When Our Clear Signs are rehearsed to them, the Unbelievers say to those who believe, “Which of the two sides is best in point of position? Which makes the best show in council?”*⁶⁶ He says that the

⁶⁰ Maryam, 19/75.

⁶¹ Ahqaf, 46/11.

⁶² Quran Path Interpretation, DIB Publishing. III, 614.

⁶³ Râzi, *ibid.*, XV, 398.

⁶⁴ Sabuni, *ibid.*, III, 503.

⁶⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *ibid.*, IX, 534.

⁶⁶ Maryam, 19/73.

questions in the form are answered. When the expression in the verse is viewed from this perspective, it is possible to draw a three-dimensional meaning of the word 'space' here: First, “rank or position” obtained by the elements of wealth and power in the world. Secondly, the assemblies / spatial organizations that are the physical equivalent of this position. The third is where they will go in the afterlife (heaven/hell) as a result of all these deeds.

In the 28th verse of Yunus Surah, the word “space” is also used when describing the day of judgment in the afterlife.

*“One day shall We gather them all together. Then shall We say to those who joined gods (with Us): "To your place! ye and those ye joined as 'partners' We shall separate them, and their "Partners" shall say: "It was not us that ye worshipped!”*⁶⁷ According to Elmalili, *“Get to your place!” “You and your partners, stay where you are!”* It was intended to be said. *“Or let everyone take their place now, plaintiff and defendant, take their assigned place, you and your partners, all of you, those you claim to be our intercessors in the presence of God, those you associate with God.”*⁶⁸ In this verse, the expression of “take your place!” is understood as the “defendant chair” in the divine court that will be established on the day of judgment of the polytheists, or the place where the polytheists / sinners will gather at the judgment day.⁶⁹ The place where they will gather at the time of judgment on the afterlife is also the reward for their beliefs and deeds in this world.

The above verses show that the word space is used in the Qur'an not only as a material place, area and location, but also as a spiritual place, rank and position. However, attention has been drawn to the relationships between material space and spiritual space, and it has been pointed out that they will affect each other.

3.1.3. (Socio -Economic) Environment

The word space is also used in the Holy Quran to express the socio - economic conditions of societies. As a matter of fact, in the 95th verse of

⁶⁷ Yunus, 10/28.

⁶⁸ Elmalili, Hak Dini Kur'an Dili, IV, 474.

⁶⁹ See Elmalili, ibid., IV, 474; es- Sabuni, ibid., III, 31.

the Surah Al-A'raf, after emphasizing that the countries where the prophets were sent were tested with physical diseases and financial difficulties in order to give up denial, the word 'place' was used to explain the transformation of this troubled environment into a comfortable environment: *“Then We changed their suffering into prosperity, until they grew and multiplied, and began to say: “Our fathers (too) were touched by suffering and affluence” ... Behold! We called them to account of a sudden, while they realised not (their peril).”*⁷⁰

Al -Razi states that “hasana” mentioned in the verse is anything that human nature and mind deems beautiful and pleasant, and “sayyia” is everything that causes distress and is bad to its owner. While the characteristics of the sayyia place/environment are distress and fear, the characteristics of the hasana place/environment are abundance and security.⁷¹ In this verse, it is emphasized that the disbelievers persisted in their disbelief by saying that sickness and poverty, health and wealth are normal events that happened to our ancestors in the past as well as to us, and that they were suddenly afflicted with calamity when and where they least expected it.⁷²

3.1.4. Abstract direction/side

While the people of hell are described in the 17th verse of Surah Ibrahim, it is explained that death will come to them from every place (direction/side): *“In gulps will he sip it, but never will he be near swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die: and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting.”*⁷³ Although the word “space” used here is translated as direction/side, it refers to an aspect of unknown quality since it relates to the afterlife. Qurtubi narrates that Ibn Abbas said about the expression “death will come to him from every direction” in this verse: The causes of death will come upon him from his right, left, above, below, front, behind, from every direction. Some scholars have stated that

⁷⁰ A'raf, 7/95.

⁷¹ Râzi, *ibid.*, X, 520.

⁷² Kur'an Yolu Tefsiri, DIB Yay, II, 559 -560.

⁷³ Abraham, 14/17.

death will come to a person even from the roots of the hair and toes.⁷⁴ Al - Razi, on the other hand, explained the expression as meaning that the situations requiring death surround⁷⁵ the person mentioned in the verse or every part of that person's body from every direction. As a result, although aspects similar to the worldly life are mentioned in the commentaries, the unique nature of the afterlife should not go unnoticed.

3.1.5. Judgment

The word space is also used in the Quran in the sense of judgment. In the 101st verse of the Surah Nahl, which touches on the issue of Naskh , the word "space" is used in the sense of changing the ruling: "*When We substitute one revelation for another,- and Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages),- they say, "Thou art but a forger": but most of them understand not.*"⁷⁶

The dictionary meaning of 'nesih' is "to abolish, abrogate, annul, destroy, write, and transfer something from one place to another," and the legal meaning of 'nesih' is "to abrogate a legal ruling with another legal evidence, or to change the ruling of a previous nass with a later nass."⁷⁷ According to al-Razi, naskh/tebdil means "to remove something from its place, provided that it replaces something else". When Allah replaces a verse with another verse, it is called the substitution / abrogation of that verse. According to the majority of scholars who say that the "verse" mentioned here refers to the verses in the Holy Quran, the ruling of a verse of the Quran can be changed by a later verse or completely abolished. According to the other view, the verse in question is not "the replacement of a verse of the Quran with another verse , but rather the fact that Almighty Allah has made the ruling of an old religion (the verse stating that ruling) with the ruling of a later religion (for example, a ruling in the Torah and the Bible) It is meant to change it with a verse of Quran."⁷⁸ Sabuni also explained the expression "When we change a verse and replace it with

⁷⁴ Kurtubî, *El- Camiu li - Ahkam'i -l Kuran*, Buruc Publications, Istanbul, 1997, IX, 533.

⁷⁵ Râzi, *ibid.*, XIII, 529.

⁷⁶ Nahl, 16/101.

⁷⁷ Muhsin Demirci, *Tafsir Usulu*, M.U. Faculty of Theology Foundation Publications, 2010, Istanbul, p.244.

⁷⁸ Razi, *ibid.*, XIV. p. 344.; Quran Path Interpretation, III, 441.

another verse ...” as “abolishing the reading or ruling of the verse”.⁷⁹ As a result, it can be said that the word “space” in this verse is used to express the place of that verse in the Holy Quran and the provision it contains.

3. 2. Concrete / Real Meanings

In 15 verses of the Holy Quran, the word “space” is used in a concrete and physical context and in the true sense of the word. In these verses, it is seen that the word 'space' is expressed with concepts that refer to space such as object, movement, direction, distance, and spatial adjectives such as narrow, wide, far or close. In the Holy Quran, the word “space” is referred to the object itself in the sense of the place occupied by the object in some verses, in some verses it expresses the relational dimension of the space such as side / aspect / direction / environment, and in some verses it is used in an absolute sense and as space / place / locality.

3.2.1. The Space Occupied by the Object: The Relativity of Space to the Object

In addition to the above abstract meanings of the word space, the first verse in which it refers to concrete and physical space is the 143rd verse of the Surah Al-A'raf. In this verse, the word space is used in the sense of “the place occupied by the object”: “*When Moses came to the place appointed by Us, and his Lord addressed him, He said: "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon Thee." Allah said: "By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me." When his Lord manifested His glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he said: "Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe."*”⁸⁰ The expression “Istaqarra makanehu” in the verse, is attributed to the mountain and is used to mean the place occupied by the object.⁸¹

According to Yildirim, in the verse above, the reason why the Prophet Moses (pbuh) could not see Almighty God was that Prophet Moses

⁷⁹ Sabuni, *ibid.*, III, 345.

⁸⁰ A'raf, 7/143

⁸¹ Quran Path Interpretation, II, 586.

(pbuh) was on Mount Tur, within the boundaries of time, space, form and thought. However, on the night of Miraj, Muhammad (pbuh) was freed from the record of time and space and was observed in a metaphysical world.⁸² The fact that the mountain is mentioned together with the place in the verse and shattered into pieces after the divine manifestation makes this explanation more meaningful.

In another verse, the word space is used adjacent to the word bayt/kaaba: “Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House, (saying): “Associate not anything (in worship) with Me; and sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or stand up, or bow, or prostrate themselves (therein in prayer).”⁸³ In the verse, it is reminded that the Kaaba has been a place of collective worship for humanity since the time of Abraham. Verse, can be as translated as “When we placed Abraham in the place where Beytullah is” or “When we showed the place⁸⁴ of Beytullah” or “When we prepared the place of Beytullah for Abraham”. Elmalili said the following in his interpretation of this verse: “We had prepared the place of the Kaaba for Abraham. In other words, in order to ensure the construction of the Kaaba, we first prepared its place and built a shelter there that could be used both for worship and shelter.”⁸⁵ Al-Razi says that the fact that the Baytullah was the place or the authority for Abraham means two things: First, that he identified the Lord of the Bayt with his heart and did not associate partners with Him; and second, that he cleansed it of idols with his body. The verse explains the order to clean the Baytullah before it was built as cleansing the place (space) where the Baytullah will be built from material (such as garbage) and spiritual (idols) filth.⁸⁶

In these verses, it is seen that the word space is used in the sense of “the place occupied by an object”. On the other hand, the mention of the location of the Beyt before the construction of the Beyt, especially in the second verse of the Quran (Hajj, 22/26), brings to mind the discussions

⁸² Celal Yildirim, *Quran Interpretation of the Century in the Light of Knowledge*, Anadolu Publications, V, 2215-2216.

⁸³ Hajj, 22/26

⁸⁴ Quran Path Interpretation, III, 727.

⁸⁵ Elmalili, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, V, 484.

⁸⁶ Razi, *ibid.*, XVI, 298.

about absolute/relative space and emptiness discussed in the previous section. Namely when viewed from the point of view of space's relativeity to the object, it can be said that space exists together with the object (relative space). On the other hand, mentioning the space of the object/structure before it exists can be interpreted as the space comes before the object and is a container of the object (absolute space). However, even though space is mentioned when the object does not exist, that space is also related to the object that will occupy the space.

3.2.2. Side, aspect, direction, environment: The relational dimension of space

The word space is used in some verses in the sense of “side, direction, aspect, environment”. As a first example, in the Surah Yunus, “waves coming from all directions” is mentioned: “*He it is Who enableth you to traverse through land and sea; so that ye even board ships;- they sail with them with a favourable wind, and they rejoice thereat; then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think they are being overwhelmed: they cry unto Allah, sincerely offering (their) duty unto Him saying, "If thou dost deliver us from this, we shall truly show our gratitude!"*”⁸⁷ In the verse, the coming of waves from every direction is expressed with the word “space” and is used in the sense of direction/aspect/side.

According to the verse, it is explained that a space (ship) and its people (people) are surrounded by another space (sea) and its people (water). Therefore, there is a relationship between two different spaces. As can be understood from the expression in the verse, it is possible for this relationship to have three different results: The first is that one includes the other and combines them in a single place; second, the continuation of space within space; thirdly, as a result of the withdrawal of the siege, two different places continue to exist independently of each other. This comment refers to the concept of “relational space” mentioned in the previous section. In the relational understanding of space, objects are defined as a system of relationships and it is assumed that space emerges as a product of these relationships.

⁸⁷ Yunus, 10/22.

The word space is used in the same sense as the verse above: “Allah sets forth a Parable: a city enjoying security and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place: Yet was it ungrateful for the favours of Allah. so Allah made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (closing in on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought.”⁸⁸ “min kulli makan” mentioned in the verse indicates that the sustenance coming to that city comes from different settlements/regions (from all directions) in the north, south, east and west of the city.

According to most commentators, the city in question is Mecca. After the Prophet Abraham built the Kaaba here, it⁸⁹ was considered untouchable due to his prayers and blessings. In addition, bloodshed was prohibited here and it was declared that those entering the city were safe. Mecca has maintained its status as a safe and sacred place for centuries.⁹⁰ However, on the occasion of the pilgrimage, Mecca became a trade center and provided very important economic opportunities for the Meccans.⁹¹ However, the peace of the city was disrupted as the Meccan notables resorted to an increasing dose of violence against the Prophet and the Muslims. The environment of safety and abundance there gradually disappeared, and probably even before this⁹² verse was revealed, a famine had occurred.

The verse also draws attention to the relationship between space and abundance through Abraham's (pbuh) prayer, which will be examined under a separate heading.

3.2.3. Space (locality, absolute, non-relative /adjective)

In addition to the relative and relational meaning of the word space, there are also verses in which it is used in an absolute sense, without being attributed to an object, and with adjectives such as far, near, narrow or wide. Although the word “space” in these verses refers to a worldly place, it can also have a content related to the spiritual world in

⁸⁸ Nahl, 16/112.

⁸⁹ See: Baqara 2/126; Ibrahim 14/35, 37.

⁹⁰ See: Ankebut 29/67.

⁹¹ See: Kasas 28/57.

⁹² Quran Path Interpretation, III, 446.

accordance with the message of the Holy Quran. The absolute and non-relative uses of the word “space” in the verses are listed below:

a. A place on the east side: In the Surah Maryam the space referred to by the expression "a place on the eastern side" in the verse “*Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East.*”⁹³ the Bayt -i Makdis in Jerusalem or it could be the east side of Maryam’s house. According to Ibn Abbas, since Maryam retreated to “somewhere on the eastern side”, Christians believe in the east, that is, they adopted the side where Jesus (pbuh) was born as their qibla.⁹⁴

b. A far place: The expression “a far place” is expressed in different words in different verses. While the concept of “distance” refers to the distance arising from the distance between different places in the world in some verses (Maryam, 19/22; Hajj, 22/31; Fussilet, 41/44), in one verse (Furkan, 25/12) it is used in the description of the hell scene in the afterlife. It refers to an unknown distance that describes the distance between the fire and the person. In the 52nd and 53rd verses of Surah Saba, the expression “a distant place” is used to explain the position of the afterlife in relation to the world and the position of the world in relation to the hereafter. The verses that reference the different meanings mentioned and their explanations are given below:

1. In the twenty-second verse of the Surah Maryam, it is stated: “*So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place.*”⁹⁵ The expression “a distant place” in the verse has been interpreted as Maryam’s fear that people would condemn her, so she hid her pregnancy by retreating to a distant place for a while in order to hide the situation from her family.⁹⁶

Al-Razi said that this “a distant place” expression means “far away from the people”, and there are opinions about the distance, such as “a far corner of the house”, “behind the mountain” or “the trip they went on

⁹³ Maryam, 19/16.

⁹⁴ Razi, *ibid.*, XV, p.307; Quran Path Interpretation, III, 596.

⁹⁵ Maryam, 19/22.

⁹⁶ Quran Path Interpretation, III, 597.

with their⁹⁷ cousin”. Sayyid Qutb also gave the same meaning to the same expression as “a secluded corner”.⁹⁸

The phrase “a remote place” is expressed with a different word “makan sahiq” in the Hajj Surah: “*Being true in faith to Allah, and never assigning partners to Him: if anyone assigns partners to Allah, is as if he had fallen from heaven and been snatched up by birds, or the wind had swooped (like a bird on its prey) and thrown him into a far- distant place.*”⁹⁹ Elmalili, regarding the connection between the remote place mentioned in the verse and polytheism, said that polytheism is destructive and will tear a person’s heart to pieces, eventually dragging him into the abyss.¹⁰⁰ As can be seen, although the word space is used as a concrete analogy in the verse in question, an abstract connection has been established based on the general context of the verse.

In the forty-fourth verse of Surah Fussilat, Almighty God says “*Had We sent this as a Qur’an (in the language) other than Arabic, they would have said: "Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger an Arab?" Say: "It is a Guide and a Healing to those who believe; and for those who believe not, there is a deafness in their ears, and it is blindness in their (eyes): They are (as it were) being called from a place far distant!"*”¹⁰¹ The last sentence of the verse, which means “(as if) they are being called from afar”, indicates how far they are from the spirit and meaning of the Quran with this attitude.¹⁰² Thus, a material / physical “distance” analogy (a distance where the sound cannot be easily heard or understood) is meant by a spiritual distance (spirit and meaning).

2. In the twelfth verse of Surah al-Furqan, Almighty God says: “*When it sees them from a place far off, they will hear its fury and its ranging sigh.*”¹⁰³ According to Elmalili, seeing hell from a distant place means describing the hell fire as if someone has insight. In the interpretation of

⁹⁷ Razi, *ibid.*, XV, 318.

⁹⁸ Sayyid Qutb, *ibid.*, IX, 502.

⁹⁹ Hajj, 22/31.

¹⁰⁰ Elmalili, *Hak Dini Kur’an Dili*, V, 488.

¹⁰¹ Fussilet, 41/44.

¹⁰² Quran Path Interpretation, III, 446.

¹⁰³ Furkan, 25/12.

this verse, Alusi quotes the following hadith: “The Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said, whoever knowingly lies about me should prepare for the place where he will sit between the two eyes of hell.” O Messenger of Allah! They asked, “Does hell have eyes?” Have you not heard that when Allah Almighty sees them from afar, he says, “If he had no eyes, would he see them?” he said.¹⁰⁴

3. The expression “a distant place” used to explain the position of the hereafter in relation to the world and the position of the world in relation to the hereafter is mentioned in the 52nd and 53rd verses in Surah Saba. The verse in question explains that those who did not believe in the world will say “we believe in it” when they see the torment, but it will no longer be possible for them to gain faith from a distant place (the world). However, they had denied it before and were talking about¹⁰⁵ the unseen from a distant place. In the verse, the world is described as a distant place compared to life in the afterlife. It is stated in the 52nd verse of Saba Surah and “*And they will say, "We do believe (now) in the (Truth)"; but how could they receive (Faith) from a position (so far off,-)*” The sentence translated as “is a representative expression indicating that the opportunity for faith to be beneficial and to attain salvation has already been missed, or that the request to repent and be returned to the world will not be accepted.”¹⁰⁶

c. A suitable, equal, flat, open, wide space: Another verse in which the place is used with an adjective is the 58th verse of Surah Taha: “*But we can surely produce magic to match thine! So make a tryst between us and thee, which we shall not fail to keep - neither we nor thou - in a place where both shall have even chances.*”¹⁰⁷ The part translated as “a suitable space” in the verse means a place equidistant from both sides, a flat area that will not obstruct the view of the audience, a flat space without pits and hills, a space where both parties will consent, a space other than the space we are in now.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Alusi, *Ruhu'l-Meani*, XVII, p.242; Elmalili, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, VI, 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ Saba, 34/52-53.

¹⁰⁶ Quran Path Interpretation, IV, 130.

¹⁰⁷ Taha, 20/58.

¹⁰⁸ er -Razi, XV, p. 539; Quran Path Interpretation, III, 641.

d. A narrow space: The phrase “a narrow place” is used in the verse 13 of Surah Furqan as follows: “*And when they are cast, bound together into a constricted place therein, they will plead for destruction there and then!*”¹⁰⁹ While interpreting this verse, it is interpreted as a physical narrowness. It has been interpreted by some interpreters as meaning narrowness of heart, which means narrowness of spirit. Regarding the issue, the following saying of Abdullah ibn Mubarak was quoted: Surely, hell will be narrow on the unbeliever, just as the iron at the bottom of the spear becomes tight on its shaft (it squeezes it).¹¹⁰ Just as there is comfort in width, there is also distress and unrest in narrowness. For this reason, while describing heaven, God Almighty said, “*Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and of the earth*”¹¹¹ Surely, Allah Almighty has gathered a wide variety of troubles for the people of Hell, adding distress and hardship to the severe torment.¹¹²

e. A close space: The phrase “a close space” mentioned in two verses in the Holy Quran, is not used to describe a distance in the world, but to describe the afterlife. These two verses are, rather, the 12th Verse of Surah Al-Furqan and the 52-53 of Surah Saba, explained above. It is used as the opposite of the concept of “a distant place” in the verses.

The following is stated in the forty-first verse of Surah Qaf: “*And listen for the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quiet near,*”¹¹³ When this verse is evaluated together with the next verse, it is stated that “the doomsday is near” and the fact that the call comes from a close place indicates that even though it is being called to all people on earth, each individual will hear this call clearly and closely, as if it were right next to his ear. If the first of these¹¹⁴ two verses is interpreted as the call that took place in the Prophet's life, and the second as the call to doomsday, it will be

¹⁰⁹ Furkan, 25/13.

¹¹⁰ Al-Camiu li- Ahkam'i -l Kur'an, Furkan, 25/13. Verse Interpretation.

¹¹¹ Al-i Imran, 3/133.

¹¹² Fahrudin Er- Râzi, *Tefsir-i Kebir Mefatihul-Gayb*, Translation: Lutfullah Cebeci et al. Akcag Publications: XVII, 191. Ankara.

¹¹³ Kaf, 50/41.

¹¹⁴ Kaf, 50/42.

necessary to understand the call that the Prophet will listen to as revelation.¹¹⁵

Qatadah, while narrating from Ka'b al-Akhbar, stated that this caller / messenger / angel will call out on the rock of Bayt al- Maqdis by the command of Allah: O rotten bones, o joints torn into pieces, Allah commands you to come together for the separation of judgments.¹¹⁶

In the 51st verse of Surah Saba, the same phrase "*makan qarib*" is used. It is described in the verse that those who do not believe will be caught "from a close place": "*If thou couldst but see when they will quake with terror; but then there will be no escape (for them), and they will be seized from a position (quite) near.*"¹¹⁷ Ibn Kathir interpreted the words "They were caught in a nearby place" as "There will be no place to escape or take shelter for those who deny the Day of Judgment". Although there are narrations that this expression refers to the torment in the world or their defeat on the day of Badr, according to Ibn Kathir, what is correct is that the Day of Judgment is meant here. The biggest catch was that day.¹¹⁸ Some commentators explain the word "seizing from a close place" in the 51st verse of the Saba Surah as being taken from the earth, from the graves, from the place where judgment is held at the Judgment Day, or from the place where they are and being punished. According to another interpretation, what is meant here is for those people to be surrounded. Referring to the verse¹¹⁹ "*Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck*"¹²⁰ Muhammad Asad interpreted this expression as "from within themselves, from their personalities, from their lifeblood".¹²¹

As can be seen, while some commentators interpret a distant place or a close place mentioned in the verses as a physical location, some

¹¹⁵ Quran Path Interpretation, V, 132.

¹¹⁶ Ibn Kesir, *Interpretation of the Holy Quran with Hadiths*, Cagri Publications, Istanbul, 1986, XIII, 7466.

¹¹⁷ Saba, 34/51.

¹¹⁸ Ibn Kesir, *Interpretation of the Holy Quran with Hadiths*, XII, 6671.

¹¹⁹ Quran Path Interpretation, IV, 130.

¹²⁰ Isra, 17/13.

¹²¹ Muhammad Asad, *Quran Message*, Sign Publications, 1999. II, 883.

commentators interpret it metaphorically. The concept of 'space' mentioned in these verses complies with both interpretations.

As a result, the broad meaning of the word “space” in the Holy Quran, which includes both physical and metaphysical meanings, is in harmony with the unity of the world and the afterlife preached by the Islamic Religion and the diversity of information sources. The fact that space is considered in a concrete sense, both independently of the object and in relation to an object, and that the relations between different spaces are talked about, can be explained by the “created” quality of the space. On the other hand, it is also seen that it is used in spiritual/ metaphorical meanings such as authority, position, status, environment, direction, side, judgment in the verses. This can be interpreted as each created being having both a real and a figurative place.

The Truth of Space According to the Holy Quran

After presenting the literal and figurative meaning of the concept of space in the Holy Quran, the metaphysical dimensions of space will be discussed in this section. The metaphysical dimension of space, both the God-space relationship through the word 'istiva' and the human-space relationship through the concept of “tayı-i makan” will be examined.

4.1. Istiva”: God-Space Relationship

One of the reasons why the concept of space is discussed in Islamic thought is to understand the “istiva” verses and to answer questions about the relationship between God and space in this context.¹²² It is concisely stated in the 5th verse of Surah Taha “ar-Rahman ala'l-arsh istava”. The word “istiva”, which is expressed as¹²³ “*Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority).*” is also found in other verses.¹²⁴

¹²² Muhammed, Kadir Recep and Karadas, *Cagfer; Allah and Space According to Ebu'l Muin an-Nesefi*; Uludag University Faculty of Theology Journal, 17 (1), 2002. pp.245-262.

¹²³ A'raf, 7/54; Yunus, 10/3; Ra'd, 13/2; Taha, 20/5; Furqan, 25/59; as-Sajdah, 32/4; Hadid, 57/4; Baqara, 2/29; Fussilet, 41/11.

¹²⁴ Taha, 20/5.

Based on the dictionary meaning of “Arsh” as “ceiling”, “the space or position that is higher than a ground, place or position is called *Arsh*”.¹²⁵ The word “istiva” is given meanings in dictionaries such as “to be moderate, proper and equal; to decide, to sit and settle down; to direct, to go up; to dominate, to sit on the throne”. This broad meaning of the word has caused the meanings given to the verses of “istiva” to be wide and diverse. These explanations and opinions, which also discuss the God-space relationship, are summarized under four main headings:¹²⁶

1. Istiva is the act of Allah Almighty sitting on the throne, which is located above the heavens and is carried by angels. The view of Mushebbihe, Mucessime, Kerramiyye and some other sects is in this direction.

2. Istiva is an attribute of Allah that cannot be known by the creatures. This is the opinion of the leading scholars of the Sahabah and Tabin, the imams of the four sects, and some Salafi, Ash’ari, and Maturidi scholars.

3. Istiva explains that Allah is beyond the heavens and above the Throne, the nature of which is unknown to humans. The majority of Salafiyyah and some scholars and Sufis also hold this view.

4. Istiva expresses the divine power and will over the universe and God's unconditional sovereignty. Many Islamic scholars adopt this view.

As can be seen, while the first of these explanations and interpretations deals with the verses of Istiva in their apparent meaning, the commentary summarized in the fourth article deals with them in a completely abstract/ metaphorical meaning. On the other hand, at first glance, space is considered “absolute” in the first group of scholars’ view while those who hold the last view have a perspective parallel to the “relativity” of space and the understanding that it was created later.

While interpreting the verse of istiva, al-Razi made the following statement after stating that Allah Almighty is free from space and

¹²⁵ Quran Path Interpretation, DIB Publishing, II, 536.

¹²⁶ Yavuz, Yusuf Sevki; Article of Resignation, DIA, vol.23, p.402-404.

direction: “Allah Almighty stated that He created the heavens and the earth as He wished, without any dispute or opposition, and then He stated that he is seated on the throne, that is, he rules the creatures as he wishes and desires. Then, “*Then (He) stood upon the Throne.*” The verse means, “After Allah created the heavens and the earth, He established himself on the throne of sovereignty and majesty.”¹²⁷

Karaman and his friends explained ¹²⁸ *istiva'* as “the whole universe is under the sovereignty of Allah, the Most Merciful” and “the world of beings is surrounded by His mercy”. In the interpretation of the 54th verse of the Surah Al-A'raf, “*istiva ala'l arsh*”, according to the majority of commentators, means “Allah rules over the universe and everything in the universe as an absolute ruler, superior and transcendent to all beings; that He organizes and manages the universe and everything in it in the most superior and perfect way encompassing all beings and events with its knowledge, will and power”.¹²⁹

Based on the verse of “*There is nothing whatever like unto Him*”¹³⁰, Ebu'l Muin an- Nesefi emphasized that similarity can be expressed for those who are equal, because “space” and “mutemekkin” are equal in measure. On the other hand, based on the fact that space is accepted as 'created' by all schools of thought, al-Nesefi argued that attributing space to Allah is to attribute to Him the signs of *hudūs* (being created) and that it is impossible to attribute space to Allah Almighty because of all these reasons.¹³¹

Ibn According to Acibe, the Throne encloses the entire universe within it. So much so that the universe seems to be so small that it cannot be seen in the middle of the Throne. The manifestations of the secrets of

¹²⁷ Razi, *ibid.*, X, 420.

¹²⁸ Quran Path Interpretation, DİB Publishing. III, 625.

¹²⁹ Quran Path Interpretation, DİB Publishing. II, 534-537.

¹³⁰ Shura 42/11.

¹³¹ Muhammed, Kadir Recep and Karadas, Cagfer; *Allah and Space According to Ebu'l Muin an-Nesefi*; Uludag University Faculty of Theology Journal, 17 (1), 2002. pp.245-262.

Rububiyyat (they are the essence of divine majesty) invaded the Throne, surrounded it and destroyed its existence.¹³²

Ibn 'Arabi, on the other hand, has stated that spatial greatness is the state referred to in the verse, “*Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne (of authority).*”¹³³ He stated that this was the situation mentioned in the verse. “Arsh is the highest of places. Spiritual greatness, on the other hand, is the greatness expressed in verses such as¹³⁴ “*Everything is perishable, except for His face*”, “*Everything returns to Him*”, “*There is no god but Allah*”.

Elmalılı, after stating that there are two different views as to whether the encompassing of the Throne is a 'spatial encompassing' or a 'spiritual encompassing', states that the invasion of the Throne by Allah (swt), who is unlike anything He created, should not be considered in a corporeal sense that requires a spatial interval between Him and His creatures. Elmalılı approves of the 'istiva is known, its nature is unknown' approach adopted by the salaf and cites the following couplet from *Ebhas fi'l-Aqedah*: "The Lord of the Throne is above the Throne, but without the attribute of being settled". On the other hand, he says that the aforementioned 'tanzih' (interpretation) approach of the later scholars is also appropriate in terms of preventing 'tajsim' (literalisation).¹³⁵

The phrase “*When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them)*” in verse 186 of Surah Baqara is another verse that should be considered within the framework of material closeness / spiritual closeness discussed in the “istiva” verse above. It is emphasized that the closeness mentioned here also expresses a transphysical dimension that cannot be evaluated by the limits and rules of the physical world. As a matter of fact, this state of closeness, which is described in another verse as “being closer to a person than the jugular vein”, cannot be explained only with the concepts of physical / perceived space and distance. As a matter of fact, the Prophet (pbuh) said to the companions who were

¹³² İbn -i Acıbe el- Hasenî, *Bahrü'l-Medîd Fi Tefsîri'l-Kur'âni'l-Mecîd*, III. 376.

¹³³ Taha, 20/5.

¹³⁴ Ibn Arabi. Muhyiddin, *Fusu'sul Hikem* (Translation and Commentary: Ekrem Demirli), Kabalci Publishing House, Istanbul, 2006, p.74.

¹³⁵ Elmalili, *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili*, IV, 51-58.

chanting and praising loudly during a campaign, “You do not pray to the deaf or the unseen. In any case, you are praying to someone who hears and is near.” His warning is another expression of this closeness. The fact that the above-mentioned verse 186 of the Surah Al-Baqara comes immediately after the verse about fasting reveals the metaphysical dimension of the closeness in question more clearly. Thanks to fasting, which involves staying away from sensual pleasures, things that prevent the servant from consciously experiencing and feeling his closeness to Allah, it will be possible for the servant to be aware of the windows opening to the beyond-physical worlds and beings.¹³⁶

4.2. Space in Ishari comments

In the Holy Quran, in the Surah An-Naml, it is described that the throne of Belkis was brought to Solomon. This event especially attracted the attention of Sufi scholars and commentators because it expresses the metaphysical dimensions of space and spatial movement without any time restriction. These verses form the basis of the concept of “tayy-i makan” in Sufism.

In the verse in question in Surah An-Naml, the bringing of the throne of Bilkis through the skill of the one who has knowledge of the Book is described as follows:

“Said one who had knowledge of the Book: "I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!" Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said: "This is by the Grace of my Lord!- to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful! and if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is (a gain) for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, Supreme in Honour !””¹³⁷

The incident of bringing the throne in the verse mentioned above took place when the queen of Sheba, Belkis, set out to meet with Prophet Solomon with her entourage. It was realized upon the request of Suleiman. First, a demon among the “jinns” took over this task, and he said that he would bring that throne to him before he got up from his position. Later, in

¹³⁶ See: Elmalili, Hak Dini Kur'an Dili, I, 545-547; Quran Path Interpretation, DİB Publishing, I, 283-285.

¹³⁷ Naml, 27/40.

the words of the verse, 'one who has knowledge from the book' brought the throne to Solomon without even blinking an eye. Although there are different opinions in the interpretations about who this person is, there is a common view that Ibn Abbas also accepts that he is Suleiman's vizier Asaf b. Barhiya.

Ibn Ajibe says that while Suleiman was looking towards Yemen, with the prayer of Asaf bin Berhiya, Belqis sank into the ground where his throne was located and emerged where Suleiman was.¹³⁸

According to Nakhcuvani, “a genius who has tremendous knowledge from the book of Allah” tells Suleiman that he will bring him to the throne very quickly by saying “I will bring it to you before your eyes return to yourself, that is, before you move your eyes.” Nakhcuvani states that what is meant by this book is Allah’s knowledge that encompasses everything; He states that this is also described as “fate, the world of God’s names, Lawh -i Mahfuz or A’yan Sabite”.¹³⁹ “This person was given the special secrets of Allah's names, and with this knowledge, he had the power to bring something into being and destroy it in an instant. In short, he brought the throne at that moment.”¹⁴⁰

Ibn Arabi evaluates the moving of the throne as follows: “In our opinion, there is no displacement at the same time. What is at stake is destruction and creation from a perspective that no one is aware of except what God teaches. This meaning is expressed in the verse “*Were We then weary with the first Creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new Creation?*”¹⁴¹. They have never passed a time where they did not see what they saw. When this happened as we stated, the throne of Belkis disappearing in its place and existing in front of Solomon (pbuh) was the same as her existence, just like the renewal of beings with the divine breath. However, no one can understand such a short time. Perhaps a

¹³⁸ İbn -i Acıbe el- Hasenî, *el- Bahru'l - Medîd Fi Tefsîri'l-Kur'âni'l-Mecîd*, Translation: Dilaver Selvi, Semerkand Publications, Istanbul. VII, 68.

¹³⁹ Ayan-ı Sabite: Fixed truths in God's knowledge / the image of things in God's knowledge (For detailed explanation, see Ibn Arabi, Muhyiddin, *ibid.*, p.39.)

¹⁴⁰ Nakhcuvani, *ibid.*, II, 64.

¹⁴¹ Kaf, 50/15.

person is not even conscious of the fact that he disappears and then comes into existence with every breath. Do not think that the “later” in our expression “this disappears, then comes into existence” requires a period, this is not true. There is no past time in between. As in this example, in every breath, the time for things to disappear is the same as the time for things to come into existence.”¹⁴²

Although it is not clear how far away this throne was brought, there are rumors that it was a distance of at least three days and at most two months. Elmalili states that the arrival of a throne from such a distance in the blink of an eye is not a simple event, but a miracle. Muhyiddin Arabi said, “The throne was neither moved from one place to another, nor was the earth rolled up or split open for it. (...) Because the moment it existed was the same moment it disappeared. "The two were at once, and Asaf's word was the same as his deed in time." Elmalili also expressed his opinion that this explanation is not compatible with the expression 'I bring' in the verse and particularly emphasized that the verb here is 'bring', not 'remake'. According to Elmalili, when the vizier said this, he brought it together; the point that today's technology has reached shows that such a thing is possible even in the physical world. The author tried to explain this movement by giving examples from the technology of that time, the speed of transmission and movement of radio, telegraph, electricity and lightning. According to him, “Just as celestial objects fly in space due to the law of gravitation, and organs move in the body due to a will, the fact that a distant object flies and changes place in space due to a will is from a knowledge that is clear and present in the book, in¹⁴³ the *Levh-i mahfuz*.”

Mawdudi said that concepts such as place/space, time, and movement are valid for us, but in the sight of Allah, all of these are not binding and unchangeable, as a matter of fact, the movement of the stars and the sun is like the movements of the Prophet Muhammad. He said that the Prophet's Isra and Miraj events can be given as examples of this.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibn Arabi. Muhyiddin, *ibid.*, p.168.

¹⁴³ Elmalili, Hak Dini Kur'an Dili, VI, 145.

¹⁴⁴ Mawdudi, Abu'l A'lâ, *ibid.*, IV, 99.

In Surah Taha, Moses (pbuh) is asked to take off his shoes because he is in a holy place, which is another important issue emphasized in ishari tafsirs.

*“Verily I am thy Lord! therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa.”*¹⁴⁵

Bursevi, “God ordered Moses (pbuh) to take off his shoes because walking around barefoot is more appropriate to modesty and good manners. That’s why Bishr Khafi and similar Sufis walked around barefoot, and the *Salaf Salihin* circumambulated the Kaaba barefoot. Or this order was given so that the feet of Moses (pbuh) would honor the Valley and the fertility of the land would reach it. He namely said to the Prophet, “Walk on the carpets of the Throne with your shoes, so that the Throne will be honored with the dust of your shoes and the light of the Throne will reach you, O Lord of the world and the hereafter!” Or, because it was not appropriate to enter the presence of the kings with shoes, Moses (pbuh) was ordered to take off his shoes. However, this is not according to the rank of Muhammad (pbuh), as mentioned above, but according to the rank of Moses (pbuh). Sheikh Uftade said that this expression means “Leave nature and self alone!” Bursevi says: “The verse seems to say: Forget about yourself and the things that follow it, no matter what, leave it alone and come.”¹⁴⁶

Similarly, Ibn Acibe, in his Sufi interpretation of the verse, made the following explanation: “It is said to the pious: “Take off your feet and throw them away; because you are in the sacred valley; that is, you are in the place of sacred peace and familiarity. The universe was rolled up from your heart, and now you have seen the light of observation.”¹⁴⁷

While some commentators focused on the material from which the shoes were made when explaining why Moses was asked to take off his

¹⁴⁵ Taha, 20/12.

¹⁴⁶ Bursevi, Ismail Hakki, *Rûhu'l Beyân*, XII, 175.

¹⁴⁷ İbn -i Acibe el- Hasenî, *Bahr'l-Medîd Fi Tefsîri'l-Kur'âni'l-Mecîd*, V, 615.

shoes, the interpretation that his feet were asked to directly touch that sacred place and benefit from its blessings was preferred.¹⁴⁸

Explanations have also been made in ishari tafsirs regarding the verse in the Surah Maryam, which refers to Idris and says “*And We raised him to a lofty station.*”¹⁴⁹ The “supreme space” mentioned in this verse, which was explained in detail while examining “verses related to space” in the previous section, has been explained by Sufi commentators as “the fourth or sixth heaven”, “the highest level of knowledge and¹⁵⁰ certainty”.

According to Ibn Arabi, height or sublimity can be considered in two ways: One is the height of the place and the ground, the second is the height of the level and rank. Ibn Arabi states that the soul of Idris is located in the “Sun sphere”, which is superior in terms of location because it is the “pole of the spheres”. Spiritual superiority belongs to the ummah of Muhammad (pbuh). Because Allah Almighty He said, “*You are superior,*” and in this greatness, “*Allah is with you.*”¹⁵¹ And although Allah Almighty is exalted from space, He is not exalted from spiritual level. On the other hand, the author expresses that these two greatnesses are brought together for us: “Place thanks to deeds, and height thanks to knowledge. Then, exalting their togetherness from partnership, he said, “*Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord Most High.*”¹⁵² The author describes sublimity as a quality of the place with the verse “We took him to a lofty place”; He implied his superiority in rank with the verse “When your Lord said to the angels that He will create a caliph on earth.”¹⁵³

As can be seen, when we look at the issues of istiva and tayy-i makan from the perspective of the Holy Quran, it is understood that “space” should not be evaluated as absolute, that time and space are both created later and have a relative nature, and that Allah Almighty is free from space and time.

¹⁴⁸ Quran Path Interpretation, DİB Publishing. III, 538.

¹⁴⁹ Maryam, 19/57.

¹⁵⁰ Bursevi, *ibid.*, V, 194; al- Nahcuvani, *ibid.*, I, 502.

¹⁵¹ Muhammad, 47/35.

¹⁵² A'lâ, 87/1.

¹⁵³ Ibn Arabi. Muhyiddin, *Fusu'sul Hikem*, Sure Publishing House, Ankara, 1997, p. 39-40.

5. Conclusion

As discussed in detail in this article, the concept of space has received versatile academic attention from physics to philosophy, from Islamic sciences to social sciences. The fact that humans are creatures recorded in time and space shows the reason for this interest. Questioning about the nature and truth of space has been deemed essential to help people position themselves correctly for both worldly and afterlife.

The concept of space contains both abstract and concrete meanings. There is a similar usage in different languages. When the 27 verses in the Holy Quran where the concept of space is mentioned are examined, we see both abstract / metaphorical such as personal position / social status, spiritual position or situation, (social-economic) environment, abstract direction / side and judgment. It is also used in concrete / real meanings such as the place occupied by the object, side, aspect, direction and environment. Therefore, the concept has a versatile use and different meanings depending on its place in the verse.

Discussions about the truth of space on the axis of physics, philosophy and spatial sciences include absolute, relative and relational interpretations of space. In the absolute understanding of space, space is a fixed and unchangeable container independent of the object. In the relative understanding of space, space will exist depending on the way it is experienced. In the relational understanding of space, it is stated that space is the product of a system of relationships. When the meaning of space in the Holy Quran is examined, it is seen that in some verses, space is defined in relation to objects, and in some verses, space is defined within a system of relationships between different spaces. Although place is mentioned before the object in only one verse, even in that verse the place is discussed in relation to another object. Apart from these, there are also verses in which place is used with an adjective.

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