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# The Quran and Science

What did Allah reveal about cosmology, biology & history?

## Hindsight is 20/20

Since the advent of modern science, there has been a rush of many within religious communities to evaluate their faith according to scientific discoveries to see if there might be any previously undiscovered proof that their beliefs are true. Christians and Muslims have been especially diligent in this regard, having published entire volumes of work on why certain discoveries in the sciences either confirm their scriptures; or may have been revealed centuries earlier by the founders of their faith.

Far from being an erroneous exercise, there have been many discoveries as a result of this process that have sharpened the faith of many – and lead to changes in historical doctrines. The most infamous of these probably being the *flat earth* and *center of the solar system* theories. In recent centuries Catholic teachers used a limited number of passages from the Bible to assert that the earth was flat or the center of the solar system. With the invention of the telescope, people began to realize that these *interpretations* of biblical text were incorrect. More to the point, the text used to “prove” a case about the natural order were not, in fact, about the natural order at all. Especially when religious scholars looked at their own scriptures in a more straightforward manner, instead of “reading into” the text what they wanted to see. After all, the Bible never said the earth was flat or that the earth was the center of the solar system – even nonchristian scholars recognize this fact.

Some popular defenders of the Quran have taken a similar “proved by science” approach, saying that the Quran reveals scientific and natural wonders that Mohammed could not have possibly known. This includes covering topics from biology to cosmology and areas in between. While these interpretations are popular, neither the Bible or the Quran make numerous claims to scientific evidences. Their claims center on the identity of God and His relationship to man. Both books use narrative, poetics, and other illustrative tools to make their case. However, both books also contain certain passages that might be *construed* as being “scientific.”

The Quran goes a step further than the Bible, by actually discussing details of cosmology and biology, claiming to reveal details, and not just general knowledge. The Bible, on the other hand, does not go into such detail. It focuses on the historical events surrounding its major figures which someone can attempt to verify or refute through additional evidences apart from its own claims.

Sperm does not mutate into blood cells. The cells which form blood, much less clotting agents, do not begin formation until the fourth week of pregnancy. After the joining of the sperm and egg into a morula, there is no blood or clotting agent yet in formation. However, many other cell types have form prior to blood and clotting agents.

- 2nd Error - *"From that clot we made a lump."*

This is mentioned as an additional error since the Quran presents the idea that human life is grown from a clot to a later collection of other cells (lump). As mentioned above, that is not the case.

- 3rd Error - *"We made out of the lump, bones."*

The order presented in the Quran is fertilization, blood (or cell) formation, bones, then flesh. This is untrue. Cells for organs and flesh actually begin formation prior to bone tissue. Later, as the child grows, bone structures begin to develop along with organs and flesh.

- 4th Error - *"...and clothed the bones with flesh."*

As mentioned above, cellular division forming bone tissue takes place after flesh and organs begin developing. The picture painted in the Quran is very different. Every modern observation of fetal formation demonstrates conclusively that the Quran's order of events are in extreme error.

Any of these, and the other readily available facts regarding human reproduction can be referenced in an encyclopedia, or medical database on the Internet, and compared with the Quran. Can the Quran be the Word of God and be wrong about human reproduction, which God created?

The Quran claims to be authored by God, revealing only truth and containing no error. If the Quran contains the kind of errors as we see above, then how do you know it is a trustworthy record of what God thinks about you; and what He wants for your life?

made from the perspective of one standing on the Earth. At different times of the year night is longer than day. The closer you get to the polar regions, the longer night or day become. Night can sometimes last months longer than day!

36:40 stands, from every perspective, in opposition to what is already known about the orbits of the Sun, Moon, and Earth. Even in Mohammed's day the "night outpacing the day" was easily observable as false from any position on the Earth (with the possible exception of the equator, of which Mohammed lived 20 degrees north of). Is 36:40 God's word? If so, we must answer the question, "Why would God contradict the facts of His own creation?"

### Biology and the Origins of Man

86:5. *"Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted. Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs."*

First it should be noted that the above passage is not poetic. The author of the above passage tells us that sperm (drop emitted) comes from the area of the body "between the backbone and the ribs," where the heart and lungs reside. In actuality, sperm is produced and stored in the scrotum; more technically, in a system of tubes in the testicles which are located in the scrotum. The scrotum is *not* located between the back and the ribs. (If yours is, contact us and we'll refer you to a specialist.) Can the Quran be the Word of God and be wrong about reproduction, which God created?

### More Errors on Human Reproduction

23:14. *"Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood, then of that clot we made a lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it another creature."*

There are four orders of error in this small passage. However, it is no fault of Mohammed, he did not have the technology available to discover the truth about embryology through observation.

- 1st Error - *"We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood."*

### Where do the Sun and Moon go?

In the book *The Bible, The Quran, and Science*, author Maurice Bucaille dives into a number of scientific claims that he defends as being revealed in the Quran and confirmed by modern science. Bucaille makes several blunders in his evaluation of Quranic miracles, but probably the worst is his misapplication of the Quran's text. Bucaille uses what are clearly poetic passages, or general statements on nature and construes a larger meaning. One such example is his claim stemming from this passage:

*"The sun runs its course to a settled place." (36:38 Pickthall uses "resting place.")*

Bucaille claims that modern science has determined that this resting place is in the constellation of Hercules (Alpha Lyrae). His claim is that as the sun comes to the end of its useful life and dies, it will wind up in this location. Is that true? Not according to any cosmologist with whom this author talked.

This poses a significant problem for the Quran. Consider: If this is not a "scientific revelation," but simply a general statement, then what does it mean? In its context, 36:37-40 discusses the change of day and night. It notes that the sun runs its course, then the moon. But even that observation is incorrect in two respects. If taken literally, then the error with the Quran is that it says the sun goes to a "resting place." Could that be the actual meaning? Consider what the passage says about the moon:

*"And for the moon We have appointed mansions till she return like an old shrivelled palm-leaf." (36:39)*

Certainly this is poetic language about the stages of the moon, from full to new – but "mansions?" Yusuf Ali's translation notes that the moon must traverse those mansions before it returns to view. This kind of language in both passages seems to indicate that the observer looked at the setting of the sun and moon as akin to taking a rest someplace.

Are these simply poetic passages, or does the Quran infer something more? The Quran answers this question when reading 36:33-46 that these things are signs that one may observe to see if Allah is telling the truth. Yet, we can now observe more than Mohammed ever imagined, and we know that the Sun *does not* have a resting place, nor do moons have mansions.



Another passage of cosmological interest is 36:40. Also written about in *The Quran and Science*.

*"It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the night outstrip the day, each just swims along in its own orbit." (36:40 Ali translation)*

The above Sura is often quoted as a demonstration that God must have been the author of the Quran since people in Mohammed day had no clue about orbits and the true nature of the heavens. What may be clearly observed, however, is that from every practical point of view, 36:40 is in error.

### The Poetic View

It might be said that Mohammed was speaking from a purely poetic standpoint, not intending to present a literal proclamation of the relationship of the Earth, Moon, and Sun. However, the context of the passage is not poetic. Forgetting for a moment that modern Islam interpret this Sura literally; verse 37 remarks that these things are "signs for men". The language in this passage is straightforward. The questions is, is it correct?

### The View from Earth

36:40 can only be understood from the perspective of a man standing on the Earth and looking at the sky. What do you see? "The Sun is not allowed to overtake the Moon." In other words, Mohammed, along with everyone else, observes the regular motions of the Sun and Moon traveling across the sky. The only way this verse can be accurate is if Mohammed is talking about an eclipse. The Moon intersects his line of sight covering up the Sun and passes, from his perspective, "over" the Sun. The Moon, from a visual perspective, "catches up," the Sun.

Of course, modern Islam does not interpret 36:40 as an eclipse. Simply put, if Mohammed is referring to an eclipse then nothing remarkable was revealed. Yet we know that Mohammed was witness to an eclipse, during his son's death, as recorded in the *Hadith*.

Aside from interpreting this as an eclipse, which removes its "miraculous" nature, this verse comes into question. From the visual perspective of one standing on Earth, the Sun travels more often in the sky than the Moon. Each day the Sun comes up and goes down. Because of its rotation around the Earth, on some days the moon appears, and on others it does not (during the New Moon).

*"They float each in an orbit."* Could a mere man without God's help have known this? Sure. The Greeks knew it long before Mohammed. The Egyptians knew it when constructing the Pyramids. Thus, there was no new revelation in 36:40.

### The View from Space

From a comparative view in space, the orbits of the Sun and Moon cannot be compared as if "outpacing" one another. They don't orbit on the same plane. Secondly, they don't orbit each other, the Moon orbits the Sun by means of its orbit of Earth. The Sun can't catch up the moon because the Moon is already in subjection to the Sun!

Forget for a moment that the orbits aren't comparative. View the verse in terms of raw *speed*. *"The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon."* Really? The Sun orbits the galactic center at just over 518,000 miles and hour. The Moon orbits the Earth at approximately 2,300 miles an hour. Which is faster? Even in this regard the Moon orbits the galactic center being carried, in part, by the gravitational influence of the Sun. The Sun is not allowed to catch up the Moon? On the contrary, the Moon is "caught up" in the gravitational influence of the Sun and carried along by it.

If you view this from the perspective of rotations rather than orbits the Quran fails again. The Earth gives the appearance that the Sun is orbiting it because it rotates on it's own axis. This happens once just under every 24 hour period. The Moon circles the Earth once every 29.5 days; so the Sun "catches up" the Moon all the time. Note that the Moon's rotation was discovered thousands of years ago as even the Arabs prior to Mohammed day used a *Lunar* calendar based upon the rotational, rather than an orbital, perspective.

### The View from Regions on the Earth

"...nor does the night outstrip the day." Again we have a error