EXPLORING THE QUR'AN & SCIENCE

SERIES 1

THE BIG BANG IN THE QUR'AN

An I'jaz 'Ilmi Study of Surah Al-Anbiya' 21:30 — Ratq, Fatq and Modern Cosmology



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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An I'jaz 'Ilmi Study of Surah Al-Anbiya' 21:30 — Ratq, Fatq and Modern Cosmology

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓا۟ أَنَّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَٰهُمَا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ ٱلْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ حَىٍّ ۖ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?."

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:30

HJ CHE ALIM HJ CHE HARON

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who separated them after they were joined, and who made from water every living thing. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who taught his ummah to reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, and upon his family and his Companions.

This article is specially dedicated to my beloved wife,

ZAHARAH MOHD LATIF;

my dear children,

MUHAMMAD HAFIZ, NOOR HAZWANI, ABDUL HAKIM, NOOR HIDAYAH, NOR AQILA and **NOR ATIQAH**;

and my sons- and daughters-in-law,

FAZILAH, MALEK, HANIN, FAIRIZAL and **FIRWAN**.

May this article increase our awe of the Creator of the universe, and may it be 'ilmun yuntafa'u bih — knowledge that brings benefit.

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ABOUT THE COVER OF THIS ARTICLE

The cover of this article does not depict any human being. It shows **a scene in space**: **an intensely bright light** radiating from the centre, surrounded by **billowing clouds of cosmic gas and dust**, while **small galaxies** and stars are scattered across the darkness.

The light at the centre symbolises the early state of the universe which, according to modern cosmology, began from an extremely hot and dense state — reminding us of Allah's words that the heavens and the earth ***"were a joined entity, and We separated them"*** (21:30).

The billowing clouds recall the heaven ***"while it was smoke"*** (41:11). **The scattered galaxies** symbolise a vast universe that keeps on expanding. **Two gold lines** at the bottom frame the author's name.

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SUPPORT & DONATIONS

Colour guide: green box = verses of the Qur'an; gold box = Hadith; blue box = scientific finding; blue table = comparison. Underlined blue narrator names can be clicked to open the narrator's page on sunnah.com.

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THE BIG BANG IN THE QUR'AN

Among the verses of the Qur'an most often discussed in studies of I'jaz 'Ilmi (the scientific signs of the Qur'an) is Surah Al-Anbiya', verse 30. It states that the heavens and the earth were originally ***ratqan*** — joined — and that Allah ***fataqnāhumā*** — separated them. Many modern writers link it with the **Big Bang** theory, the scientific model which explains that the universe began from an extremely hot and dense state about 13.8 billion years ago and has been expanding ever since.

This article explains that verse and related verses according to the Arabic language and the exegesis of the early scholars, then presents the findings of modern cosmology with references that can be checked. At the end, we assess honestly where the harmony lies, and where we need to be cautious.

The position of this article is simple: **the Qur'an is a book of guidance, not a physics textbook.** Its truth does not depend on scientific theories. Yet when solid scientific findings agree with the meaning of a verse, they become one more reason to reflect and believe — just as the verse itself ends: ***"Then will they not believe"***?

Note: The translation of the Qur'anic verses in this article is Sahih International. The grade of every Hadith is stated in the Hadith box, with a link to sunnah.com. Every scientific finding is given with a link to its original source.

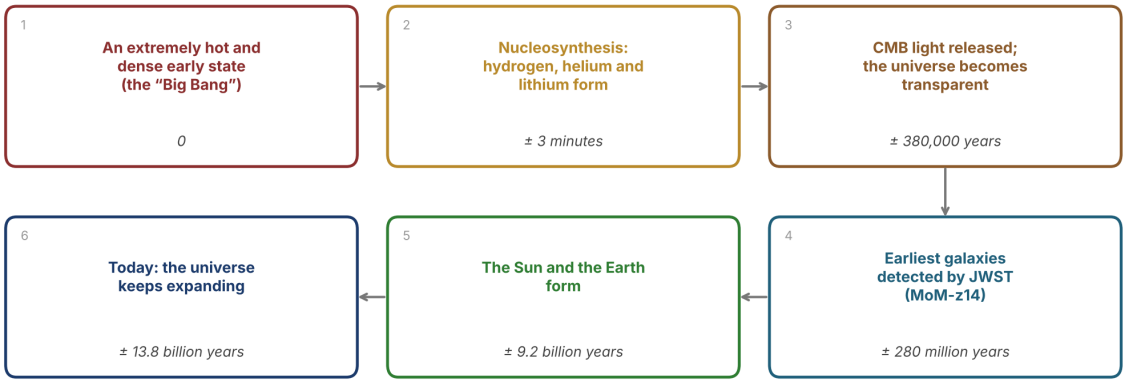

Figure 1: A brief timeline of the history of the universe according to modern cosmology.

Figure 1 shows six main stages in the history of the universe as science understands it today. Each stage is explained in Section 5.

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A VERSE THAT INVITES REFLECTION

SURAH AL-ANBIYA' 21:30

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوٓاْ أَنَّ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَٰهُمَاۖ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ ٱلْمَآءِ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ حَىٍّۖ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/21:30

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 21:30 — RATQ AND FATQ

First: A question that invites thought. The verse opens with a question: ***"Have those who disbelieved not considered"***? The Qur'an does not merely inform; it invites people to observe and use their reason.

Second: The meaning of ratq. In Arabic, ***ratq*** (رَتْق) means something joined, tightly closed, without any gap — the opposite of ***fatq*** (فَتْق), which means to split, open or separate something that was joined. Sahih International renders it: ***"the heavens and the earth were a joined entity"***.

Third: The act of Allah. ***"and We separated them"***. The separation is attributed to Allah — not to chance, nor to a process without a Creator. This is the basic difference between a believer's view of the universe and that of a materialist.

Fourth: Water and life. The same verse continues: ***"and made from water every living thing"***. Two great matters are brought together in one verse — the origin of the universe and the origin of life. Section 7 explains the second.

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WHAT THE EARLY EXEGETES SAID

Before looking at modern science, we need to know how this verse was understood by the early generations. Imam Ibn Kathir gathers several views of the Salaf on the meaning of ***ratq*** and ***fatq***. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 21:30

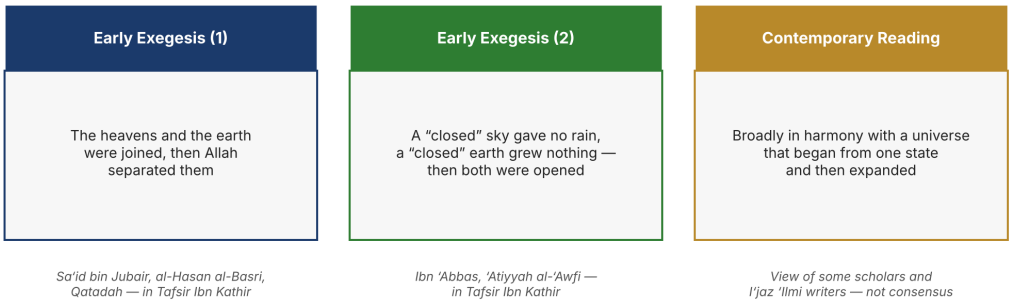

Figure 2: Three layers of understanding of "joined, then separated" in verse 21:30.

THE FIRST VIEW: JOINED, THEN SEPARATED

Sa'id bin Jubair said that the heavens and the earth were originally stuck to each other; when the heaven was raised and the earth appeared, that was the separation mentioned in the verse. Al-Hasan al-Basri and Qatadah said that the two were joined, then separated by the air between them. Abu Salih al-Hanafi said that the heaven was one, then split into seven heavens, and likewise the earth.

THE SECOND VIEW: A HEAVEN THAT GAVE NO RAIN

Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما explained: the heaven was ***ratq*** — closed, giving no rain — and the earth was also ***ratq*** — growing no plants. When Allah made inhabitants for the earth, He opened the heaven with rain and the earth with vegetation. The same is reported from 'Atiyyah al-'Awfi. This explanation fits closely with the rest of the verse: ***"and made from water every living thing."***

REMARKS — TWO VIEWS THAT COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER

The two views do not contradict each other; the brief wording of the verse is broad enough to hold both.

No classical exegete mentioned the "Big Bang". Linking the verse with cosmology is a ***contemporary reading*** — valid as reflection, but not a replacement for the exegesis of the Salaf.

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WHEN THE HEAVEN WAS SMOKE

SURAH FUSSILAT 41:11

ثُمَّ ٱسۡتَوَىٰٓ إِلَى ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٞ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلۡأَرۡضِ ٱئۡتِيَا طَوۡعًا أَوۡ كَرۡهٗا قَالَتَآ أَتَيۡنَا طَآئِعِينَ ١١

Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, "Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion." They said, "We have come willingly."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/41:11

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 41:11 — DUKHĀN

First: The heaven as smoke. ***"Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke"***. The word ***dukhān*** (دُخَان) means smoke. The classical exegetes mention that this smoke was vapour rising from the water when the earth was created. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 41:11

Second: The obedience of the whole universe. Allah ***"said to it and to the earth"***: ***"Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion."*** And their answer: ***"We have come willingly."*** The whole universe submits to Allah's command — only human beings are given the choice to obey or to refuse.

REMARKS — SMOKE AND THE EARLY UNIVERSE

Some modern writers link ***dukhān*** with the state of the early universe. According to cosmology, for roughly the first 380,000 years the universe was filled with **hot plasma** — an ionised gas that was ***opaque***, meaning light could not pass through it, like a thick fog. Only after the universe cooled (an event called ***recombination***) could light travel freely.

This "opaque fog" is interesting to reflect on alongside the word ***dukhān***. Yet we remain cautious: smoke in Arabic is particles suspended in gas, while cosmic plasma is an ionised gas. The resemblance lies in the **general picture**, not in the physical details. It is a ***contemporary ijtihad***, not an agreed meaning.

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THE HEAVEN CONSTRUCTED WITH STRENGTH

SURAH ADH-DHARIYAT 51:47

وَٱلسَّمَآءَ بَنَيۡنَٰهَا بِأَيۡيْدٖ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ ٤٧

And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/51:47

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 51:47 — LAMŪSI'ŪN

First: The heaven as a construction. ***"And the heaven We constructed with strength"***. The word ***bi-aydin*** is understood by the exegetes as "with strength" or "with power".

Second: The meaning of lamūsi'ūn. Sahih International translates the end of the verse: ***"and indeed, We are [its] expander"***. This rendering follows a meaning that is possible in the language: ***mūsi'ūn*** as "those who expand". Most classical exegetes, including Ibn Kathir, understood it as "We are vast in power" — Allah's capability is limitless. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 51:47

Third: Holding both meanings in order. The reading "We are expanding it" sits well with the discovery that the universe is expanding. It is a **possible meaning** of the words — not the only meaning, and not one agreed upon by the classical exegetes.

The fair approach is to hold both in the right order: the classical meaning as the foundation, and the contemporary reading as an additional reflection that does not cancel the original meaning.

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WHAT SCIENCE SAYS ABOUT THE BEGINNING

The Big Bang theory did not arise from a single discovery, but from several lines of evidence coming from different directions and supporting one another. Here are its four main pillars.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE UNIVERSE IS EXPANDING

In 1929, **Edwin Hubble** showed that distant galaxies are moving away from us, and the farther a galaxy is, the faster it recedes. This was the first observational evidence that the universe is **expanding**. Georges Lemaître, a Belgian physicist and priest, had proposed the same idea theoretically in 1927.

If the universe is expanding, then in the past it was smaller, denser and hotter. This is the basic idea of the Big Bang theory.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Hubble, E. (1929). A relation between distance and radial velocity among extra-galactic nebulae. PNAS, 15(3), 168–173. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.15.3.168

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE COSMIC MICROWAVE BACKGROUND (CMB)

In 1965, **Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson** accidentally discovered microwave radiation coming evenly from every direction of the sky. This is the ***CMB*** — the "oldest light" in the universe, released about 380,000 years after the beginning, and now cooled to about 2.7 degrees above absolute zero.

The **Planck** satellite of the European Space Agency mapped the whole-sky CMB with very high precision. The Planck 2018 data put the age of the universe at **13.787 ± 0.020 billion years**, and show that the space of the universe is almost flat.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Penzias, A.A. & Wilson, R.W. (1965). A measurement of excess antenna temperature at 4080 Mc/s. Astrophysical Journal, 142, 419. https://doi.org/10.1086/148307

Planck Collaboration (2020). Planck 2018 results. VI. Cosmological parameters. Astronomy & Astrophysics, 641, A6. https://doi.org/10.1051/0004-6361/201833910

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: BIG BANG NUCLEOSYNTHESIS

In the first few minutes, the universe was hot enough to form the light elements: **hydrogen, helium and a little lithium**. The theory predicts that about one quarter of ordinary matter by mass became helium — and this is what astronomers measure in the oldest stars and gas clouds.

The review by Fields and colleagues (2020) concludes that these predictions match observations for heavy hydrogen (deuterium) and helium. One small discrepancy — the "lithium problem" — is still being studied.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Fields, B.D., Olive, K.A., Yeh, T.-H. & Young, C. (2020). Big-Bang Nucleosynthesis after Planck. JCAP, 2020(03), 010. https://doi.org/10.1088/1475-7516/2020/03/010

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SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE JAMES WEBB TELESCOPE SEES THE EARLIEST GALAXIES

The **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)**, launched in December 2021, can see the light of galaxies emitted when the universe was still very young. In 2024, the galaxy ***JADES-GS-z14-0*** was confirmed at about 290 million years after the beginning. In 2025, that record was broken by the galaxy ***MoM-z14***, at about 280 million years after the beginning.

These galaxies are earlier and brighter than many models expected — they do not overturn the Big Bang, but refine our understanding of how galaxies form.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Carniani, S. et al. (2024). A shining cosmic dawn: spectroscopic confirmation of two luminous galaxies at z≈14. Nature, 633, 318–322. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07860-9

Naidu, R.P. et al. (2025). A Cosmic Miracle: A Remarkably Luminous Galaxy at z=14.44 Confirmed with JWST. arXiv:2505.11263. https://arxiv.org/abs/2505.11263

REMARKS — EVIDENCE THAT REINFORCES ITSELF

The strength of the Big Bang theory comes from the **meeting of independent lines of evidence**: the expansion of galaxies, the CMB, the abundance of light elements, and now direct observation of the earliest galaxies. That is why the great majority of cosmologists accept it as the best model so far of the ***history*** of the universe.

Yet it must be understood that the Big Bang theory explains ***how*** the universe developed after its beginning. It does not answer ***why*** the universe exists, nor ***who*** brought it into existence. Those questions are answered by revelation: ***"and We separated them"***.

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QUESTIONS STILL OPEN

Scholarly honesty requires us to also mention what is ***not yet*** known. Science is not a finished book; it is always being renewed. For that reason we should not "lock" the meaning of a Qur'anic verse onto any theory in detail.

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE HUBBLE TENSION

The expansion rate of the universe (the ***Hubble constant***) is measured in two main ways. CMB data from Planck give a value of about **67 km/s/Mpc**, while direct measurements using Cepheid stars and supernovae (the SH0ES team) give about **73 km/s/Mpc**. This difference is called the ***Hubble tension***, and its cause is still debated.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Riess, A.G. et al. (2022). A Comprehensive Measurement of the Local Value of the Hubble Constant. ApJ Letters, 934, L7. https://doi.org/10.3847/2041-8213/ac5c5b

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: DARK ENERGY THAT MAY CHANGE

Since 1998, scientists have found that the expansion of the universe is ***accelerating***, and its cause is called ***dark energy***. In the standard model, dark energy is assumed to be constant. However, the results of the **DESI** project (March 2025), which mapped millions of galaxies, hint that dark energy may ***change*** over time.

This hint has not yet reached the level of a definitive "discovery", and is being examined by many teams. It is a clear example that science's picture of the universe is still moving.

STUDY REFERENCES:

DESI Collaboration (2025). DESI DR2 Results II: Measurements of Baryon Acoustic Oscillations and Cosmological Constraints. arXiv:2503.14738. https://arxiv.org/abs/2503.14738

REMARKS — REVELATION IS CONSTANT, SCIENCE DEVELOPS

Dark matter, dark energy, the Hubble tension, and what happened in the very first moment — all remain open. That is why the cautious approach is to speak of **general harmony** between the verse and science, without claiming that the Qur'an "confirms" every detail of a theory that is still changing. If a theory changes tomorrow, our faith is not shaken, because it rests on revelation, not on theory.

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EVERY LIVING THING FROM WATER

The second part of verse 21:30 affirms: ***"and made from water every living thing"***. The same meaning is repeated in Surah An-Nur:

SURAH AN-NUR 24:45

وَٱللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَآبَّةٍ مِّن مَّآءٍۖ فَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِى عَلَىٰ بَطْنِهِۦ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِى عَلَىٰ رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَمْشِى عَلَىٰٓ أَرْبَعٍۚ يَخْلُقُ ٱللَّهُ مَا يَشَآءُۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

Allah has created every [living] creature from water. And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/24:45

COMMENTARY ON VERSE 24:45 — WATER, THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

"Allah has created every [living] creature from water". Then Allah mentions the variety of creatures: ***"And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four"***. One origin, many forms — a sign of the Creator's power. Ibn Kathir explains that water is the origin of every living thing. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 21:30

SCIENTIFIC FINDING: WATER AS THE BASIS OF LIFE

Every known living cell depends on water. Water is the solvent in which the chemical reactions of life take place, and it makes up most of the body mass of living things. The science writer Philip Ball (2017) explains that water is not merely a passive "container", but ***actively*** shapes the structure and function of proteins and DNA.

That is also why, in the search for life on other planets (astrobiology), the guiding motto of space agencies is ***"follow the water"***. Westall and Brack (2018) conclude that liquid water is the most basic requirement for life as we know it.

STUDY REFERENCES:

Ball, P. (2017). Water is an active matrix of life for cell and molecular biology. PNAS, 114(51), 13327–13335. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1703781114

Westall, F. & Brack, A. (2018). The Importance of Water for Life. Space Science Reviews, 214, 50. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11214-018-0476-7

In the seventh century CE, no laboratory could show that every living thing depends on water. Yet the Qur'an stated it briefly and generally — and that general statement remains true to this day.

Before the Heavens and the Earth Were Created

There is no authentic Hadith that specifically explains the words ***ratq*** and ***fatq*** in verse 21:30. However, there are authentic Hadith about the state ***before*** the heavens and the earth were created. They are included here as a foundation of belief, not as scientific evidence.

HADITH — SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, NO. 3191

حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ حَفْصِ بْنِ غِيَاثٍ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي، حَدَّثَنَا الأَعْمَشُ، حَدَّثَنَا جَامِعُ بْنُ شَدَّادٍ، عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ مُحْرِزٍ، أَنَّهُ حَدَّثَهُ عَنْ عِمْرَانَ بْنِ حُصَيْنٍ ـ رضى الله عنهما ـ قَالَ دَخَلْتُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَعَقَلْتُ نَاقَتِي بِالْبَابِ، فَأَتَاهُ نَاسٌ مِنْ بَنِي تَمِيمٍ فَقَالَ « اقْبَلُوا الْبُشْرَى يَا بَنِي تَمِيمٍ ». قَالُوا قَدْ بَشَّرْتَنَا فَأَعْطِنَا. مَرَّتَيْنِ، ثُمَّ دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ نَاسٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْيَمَنِ فَقَالَ « اقْبَلُوا الْبُشْرَى يَا أَهْلَ الْيَمَنِ، إِذْ لَمْ يَقْبَلْهَا بَنُو تَمِيمٍ ». قَالُوا قَدْ قَبِلْنَا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، قَالُوا جِئْنَاكَ نَسْأَلُكَ عَنْ هَذَا الأَمْرِ قَالَ « كَانَ اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ شَىْءٌ غَيْرُهُ، وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ، وَكَتَبَ فِي الذِّكْرِ كُلَّ شَىْءٍ، وَخَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ ». فَنَادَى مُنَادٍ ذَهَبَتْ نَاقَتُكَ يَا ابْنَ الْحُصَيْنِ. فَانْطَلَقْتُ فَإِذَا هِيَ يَقْطَعُ دُونَهَا السَّرَابُ، فَوَاللَّهِ لَوَدِدْتُ أَنِّي كُنْتُ تَرَكْتُهَا.

TRANSLATION:

'Imran bin Husain رضى الله عنهما said: I entered upon the Prophet ﷺ and tied my she-camel at the door. Then some people of Bani Tamim came to him, and he said: **"Accept the good tidings, O Bani Tamim."** They said: "You have given us good tidings, so give us (something)." (They said it) twice. Then some people of Yemen entered upon him, and he said: **"Accept the good tidings, O people of Yemen, since Bani Tamim did not accept them."** They said: "We accept, O Messenger of Allah." They said: "We have come to ask you about the beginning of this matter (creation)." He said: **"Allah existed and nothing existed other than Him, and His Throne was upon the water, and He wrote everything in the Record (al-Dhikr), and He created the heavens and the earth."** Then a caller called out: "Your she-camel has run away, O Ibn al-Husain!" So I went off, and found that a mirage had come between me and it. By Allah, I wish I had left it (and stayed to listen).

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari: from 'Umar bin Hafs bin Ghiyath, from his father, Hafs bin Ghiyath, from Sulaiman al-A'mash, from Jami' bin Shaddad, from Safwan bin Muhriz, from 'Imran bin Husain رضى الله عنهما, from the Prophet ﷺ.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Creation, Hadith No. 3191 (Book 59, Hadith 2).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih al-Bukhari, the most authentic book of Hadith after the Qur'an by consensus of the Hadith scholars.

Source: https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3191

REMARKS — "ALLAH EXISTED, AND NOTHING EXISTED OTHER THAN HIM"

First: Allah has no beginning. His words ***"Allah existed and nothing existed other than Him"*** affirm that Allah is ***eternal*** — without beginning. Everything other than Allah is created and has a beginning. This is revelation's answer to the question science cannot answer: who began everything?

Second: Knowledge is worth more than wealth. Bani Tamim asked for wealth; the people of Yemen asked about the beginning of creation. And 'Imran bin Husain رضى الله عنهما regretted missing that gathering of knowledge to chase his camel.

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HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2653

حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ، أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَمْرِو بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرِو بْنِ سَرْحٍ حَدَّثَنَا ابْنُ، وَهْبٍ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبُو هَانِئٍ الْخَوْلاَنِيُّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ الْحُبُلِيِّ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرِو، بْنِ الْعَاصِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ « كَتَبَ اللَّهُ مَقَادِيرَ الْخَلاَئِقِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ بِخَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ - قَالَ - وَعَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ ».

TRANSLATION:

'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As رضى الله عنهما said: I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **"Allah wrote the decrees of all creatures fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth."** He said: **"And His Throne was upon the water."**

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu al-Tahir Ahmad bin 'Amr bin Sarh, from 'Abdullah bin Wahb, from Abu Hani' al-Khawlani, from Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hubuli, from 'Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As رضى الله عنهما, from the Prophet ﷺ.

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, Hadith No. 2653 (narration 2653b).

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim, the second most authentic book of Hadith after Sahih al-Bukhari.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2653b

Third: Decree precedes creation. Allah decreed the affairs of all creatures fifty thousand years before the heavens and the earth were created. The universe — with all its physical laws — is not an accident, but runs according to Allah's decree.

A note of caution: Some writers link ***"His Throne was upon the water"*** with the state before the Big Bang. Such a link is not mentioned by the commentators of Hadith and should not be forced. We believe in the Throne and that water as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ described them, without imagining their form and without likening them to creation.

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BETWEEN HARMONY AND CAUTION

The table below separates solid claims from exaggerated ones.

POPULAR CLAIMS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

CLAIMS OFTEN HEARD	ASSESSMENT
"The Qur'an clearly mentions the Big Bang theory."	Exaggerated. The Qur'an mentions the heavens and the earth being joined, then separated (21:30). It is broadly in harmony with the Big Bang, but does not mention the details of the theory.
"The classical exegetes already understood 21:30 as the Big Bang."	Inaccurate. They understood it as the separation of the heavens and the earth, or the opening of the sky with rain and the earth with plants.
"Dukhān (41:11) is the plasma of the Big Bang."	Contemporary ijtihad. There is a general resemblance (an opaque fog), but it is not an agreed meaning.
"Verse 51:47 proves the universe is expanding."	A possible meaning of the words, not the only one. Most classical exegetes understood it as the vastness of Allah's power.
"Every living thing needs water."	In harmony with modern biology (Ball 2017; Westall & Brack 2018) — among the strongest points of harmony in this verse.
"Science has proven the Qur'an in every detail of cosmology."	Unwarranted. Science is still changing (the Hubble tension, dark energy). The truth of the Qur'an does not depend on theory.

REMARKS — THREE PRINCIPLES OF CAUTION

First: The exegesis of the Salaf comes first. A scientific reading is an additional layer, not a replacement.

Second: Only solid facts are linked. Theories still under debate are called theories, not facts.

Third: The final aim is faith. Verse 21:30 itself ends with the question ***"Then will they not believe"***? The goal is not to win a scientific debate, but to bring the heart to the Creator.

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SIGNS FOR THOSE OF UNDERSTANDING

SURAH ALI 'IMRAN 3:190–191

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱخْتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّأُو۟لِى ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ ﴿١٩٠﴾

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.

ٱلَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ قِيَٰمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَٰذَا بَٰطِلًا سُبْحَٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ ٱلنَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/3:190-191

Allah praises those ***"Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides"*** and ***"give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth"***. Remembrance and reflection go together. The fruit of their reflection is not a theory, but a prayer: ***"Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly"***.

LESSONS FROM THIS ARTICLE

First: The Qur'an invites reflection. "Have those who disbelieved not considered…" (21:30).

Second: The universe had a beginning, and Allah began it. "Allah existed and nothing existed other than Him" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3191).

Third: Water is a basic blessing of life. "And made from water every living thing" (21:30; 24:45).

Fourth: Respect the exegesis of the Salaf. A scientific reading complements, it does not replace.

Fifth: Be honest about the limits of knowledge. Science is still developing; do not tie a verse to an unsettled theory.

Sixth: The end of reflection is worship. "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly" (3:191).

CONCLUSION

Verse 21:30 states, in a few words, that the heavens and the earth were originally joined and then separated, and that every living thing was made from water. The early scholars understood it with

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meanings that were true in their time; modern cosmology has found a universe that began from one state and then expanded. Both meet at one truth: **this universe had a beginning, and it did not begin itself.**

Whenever we look at the night sky, may we remember that the light of the stars is part of a long story of creation — and that behind that story is the One Creator. ***Subḥānaka faqinā 'adhāban-nār.*** And Allah knows best.

In sha Allah, the series **Exploring the Qur'an & Science** will continue with the next article, using the same method: the Qur'an, authentic Hadith, the exegesis of the scholars, and only solid scientific findings.

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SURAH AL-BAQARAH 2:261

مَّثَلُ ٱلَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمۡوَٰلَهُمۡ فِي سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنۢبَتَتۡ سَبۡعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنۢبُلَةٖ مِّاْئَةُ حَبَّةٖۗ وَٱللَّهُ يُضَٰعِفُ لِمَن يَشَآءُۚ وَٱللَّهُ وَٰسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ٢٦١

The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/2:261

SURAH SABA' 34:39

قُلۡ إِنَّ رَبِّي يَبۡسُطُ ٱلرِّزۡقَ لِمَن يَشَآءُ مِنۡ عِبَادِهِۦ وَيَقۡدِرُ لَهُۥۚ وَمَآ أَنفَقۡتُم مِّن شَيۡءٖ فَهُوَ يُخۡلِفُهُۥۖ وَهُوَ خَيۡرُ ٱلرَّٰزِقِينَ ٣٩

Say, "Indeed, my Lord extends provision for whom He wills of His servants and restricts [it] for him. But whatever thing you spend [in His cause] - He will compensate it; and He is the best of providers."

Translation: Sahih International — quran.com/34:39

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2588

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ، وَابْنُ، حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - وَهُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلاَّ عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلاَّ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Charity does not decrease wealth.

Allah does not increase a servant who forgives except in honour. And no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises him in rank."

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CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

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GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:2588

HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 1631

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ أَيُّوبَ، وَقُتَيْبَةُ - يَعْنِي ابْنَ سَعِيدٍ - وَابْنُ حُجْرٍ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا إِسْمَاعِيلُ، - هُوَ ابْنُ جَعْفَرٍ - عَنِ الْعَلاَءِ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ « إِذَا مَاتَ الإِنْسَانُ انْقَطَعَ عَنْهُ عَمَلُهُ إِلاَّ مِنْ ثَلاَثَةٍ إِلاَّ مِنْ صَدَقَةٍ جَارِيَةٍ أَوْ عِلْمٍ يُنْتَفَعُ بِهِ أَوْ وَلَدٍ صَالِحٍ يَدْعُو لَهُ ».

TRANSLATION:

Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: an ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him."

CHAIN OF NARRATION: Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Yahya bin Ayyub, Qutaibah bin Sa'id and 'Ali bin Hujr, from Isma'il bin Ja'far, from al-'Ala' bin 'Abd al-Rahman, from his father 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ya'qub, from Abu Hurayrah رضى الله عنه .

REFERENCE: Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Wills (Kitab al-Wasiyyah), chapter on the reward that reaches a person after his death, Hadith No. 1631.

GRADE: SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

Source: https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631

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