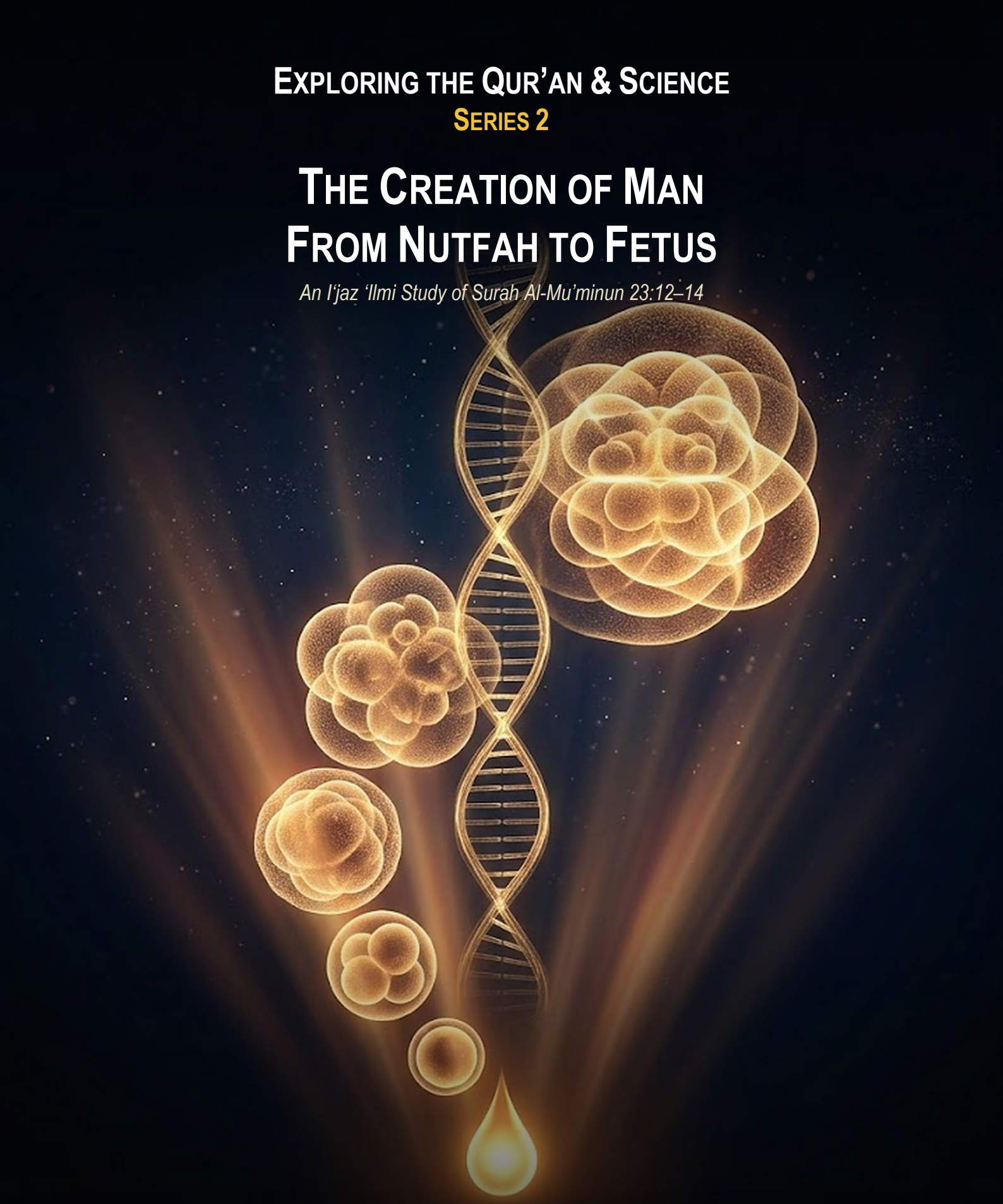
## Exploring the Qur'an & Science
### Series 2

# The Creation of Man From Nutfah to Fetus

*An I'jaz 'Ilmi Study of Surah Al-Mu'minun 23:12–14*

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## EXPLORING THE QUR'AN & SCIENCE

### SERIES 2

# THE CREATION OF MAN: FROM NUTFAH TO FETUS

*An I'jaz 'Ilmi Study of Surah Al-Mu'minun 23:12–14*

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن سُلَٰلَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ

"And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay."

SURAH AL-MU'MINUN 23:12

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praise is due to Allah, who created man from an extract of clay, then shaped him creation after creation within three darknesses. Blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, the truthful and the confirmed, 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**.

To every mother who has carried a child, and every child who has been carried: may this article increase our gratitude to the Creator, 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 symbolic picture**: at the bottom, **a golden drop of fluid**; above it, **dividing cells** — from a single cell to ever larger clusters — rising upwards beside **a twisting strand of DNA**, with rays of light against a dark background.

**The drop** symbolises the ***nutfah***: ***"Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging"*** (23:13). **The growing cells** symbolise the journey ***"creation after creation"*** (39:6), and **the dark background** recalls ***"three darknesses"***.

**The DNA strand** symbolises Allah's decree, written for every human being from the womb. **Two gold lines** at the bottom frame the author's name.

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*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 CREATION OF MAN: FROM NUTFAH TO FETUS

Where do we come from? The question is as old as humanity. The Qur'an answers it not with vague philosophy, but with a clear sequence of stages: from an extract of clay, to a drop of fluid, to an ***'alaqah***, to a ***mudghah***, to bones, to bones clothed with flesh — and finally ***"another creation"***.

This article brings together three sources: the verses of the Qur'an on the creation of man, authentic Hadith that mention the duration of those stages, and the findings of modern embryology with references that can be checked. The aim is not to force a match between revelation and science, but to reflect honestly — where the harmony lies, and where we need to be cautious.

*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.*

| Qur'anic term | Linguistic meaning | Approximate time* | What embryology observes |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Nutfah (23:13)* | A drop of fluid; "amshāj" = mixed (76:2) | Week 1 (Carnegie 1–3) | Fertilisation: a zygote from the male cell and the female ovum |
| *Qarārin makīn (23:13)* | A firm place of lodging | Weeks 1–2 (Carnegie 4–5) | The blastocyst embeds in the wall of the womb (implantation) |
| *'Alaqah (23:14)* | Something that clings; a leech; a clot of blood | Weeks 3–4 (Carnegie 6–12) | The embryo hangs on the womb; elongated shape; early heart & vessels |
| *Mudghah (23:14; 22:5)* | A lump of flesh as if chewed | Weeks 4–6 (Carnegie 10–16) | Segmented somites; limb buds; partly formed, partly unformed |
| *'Iẓām (23:14)* | Bones | Week 7 (Carnegie 18) | Ossification (bone formation) begins |
| *Kasawnal-'iẓāma laḥmā (23:14)* | The bones clothed with flesh | Weeks 7–8 (Carnegie 18–23) | Muscles arrange around the skeleton; body and limbs fully shaped |
| *Khalqan ākhar (23:14)* | Another creation | Week 9 onwards | Fetal period: growth and maturation of organs |

** Approximate time after fertilisation, from the Carnegie staging table. The match is at the level of general concept, not exact equivalence.*

*Figure 1: The stages of human creation in the Qur'an and their approximate match in modern embryology.*

Figure 1 summarises the discussion of this article. Each row is explained in the sections that follow.

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## SEVEN STAGES IN THREE VERSES

**SURAH AL-MU'MINUN 23:12–14**

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن سُلَٰلَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَٰهُ نُطْفَةً فِى قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging.

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا ٱلنُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا ٱلْمُضْغَةَ عِظَٰمًا فَكَسَوْنَا ٱلْعِظَٰمَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَٰهُ خَلْقًا ءَاخَرَ ۚ فَتَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ ٱلْخَٰلِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh], and We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators.

*Translation: Sahih International* — quran.com/23:12-14

### COMMENTARY ON VERSES 23:12–14 — AN ORDERED SEQUENCE

**First: An origin from clay.** ***"And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay"***. The exegetes explain that this refers to Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, who was created from clay. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 23:12

**Second: A drop in a firm lodging.** ***"Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging"***. The womb is described as ***qarārin makīn*** — a firm, protected place of lodging.

**Third: Five successive changes.** Verse 14 mentions five changes with two different connecting words: ***thumma*** (then — indicating an interval of time) and ***fa*** (and — indicating closer succession). The drop ***then*** becomes an ***'alaqah***; ***and*** a ***mudghah***; ***and*** bones; ***and*** the bones are clothed with flesh; ***then "We developed him into another creation"***. And all of it closes with praise: ***"So blessed is Allah, the best of creators."***

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## THE MEANING OF EACH TERM

The strength of verse 23:14 lies in its choice of words. Each term carries a concentrated image.

### NUTFAH — A DROP OF FLUID

***Nutfah*** means a small amount of fluid, a drop. The Qur'an also calls it ***nutfatin amshāj*** — ***"a sperm-drop mixture"*** (76:2). The exegetes explain that it is the mixing of the male and the female fluid. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 76:2

### 'ALAQAH — THAT WHICH CLINGS

In the classical Arabic dictionaries, ***'alaqah*** carries several meanings: **something that clings or hangs**, **a leech** that clings and sucks blood, and **a clot of blood**. Sahih International renders it ***"a clinging clot"***, combining two of these meanings. Ibn Kathir describes the 'alaqah as elongated red blood. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 23:14

All three meanings are worth reflecting on, because the embryo in the third and fourth weeks does ***cling*** to the wall of the womb, its shape is ***elongated***, and its blood system begins to form. Yet we remain cautious: which meaning is intended, Allah knows best.

### MUDGHAH — A LUMP AS IF CHEWED

***Mudghah*** is a lump of flesh the size of something chewed. In Surah Al-Hajj it is described as ***"a lump of flesh, formed and unformed"*** (22:5) — partly shaped and partly not yet shaped.

### 'IẒĀM AND LAḤM — BONES AND FLESH

Then ***"We made [from] the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh"***. The order is clear: bones are mentioned first, then the flesh that covers them.

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## VERSES THAT COMPLETE THE PICTURE

The account of human creation is not only in Surah Al-Mu'minun. Several other verses add details that complete the picture.

**SURAH AL-INSAN 76:2**

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَٰهُ سَمِيعًۢا بَصِيرًا ۝٢

Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.

*Translation: Sahih International* — quran.com/76:2

***"Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him"*** — then ***"We made him hearing and seeing"***. Man is created to be tested, and is equipped with the tools to face that test: hearing and sight.

### THREE DARKNESSES

In Surah Az-Zumar, Allah says: ***"He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, within three darknesses"*** (39:6). Ibn Kathir relates from Ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنهما, Mujahid and others that the three darknesses are **the darkness of the belly, the darkness of the womb, and the darkness of the placenta (the membrane surrounding the fetus)**. Tafsir Ibn Kathir 39:6

### REMARKS — IN STAGES, NOT ALL AT ONCE

The phrase ***khalqan min ba'di khalq*** — "creation after creation" — sums up the whole theme of this article: man is not created all at once in a complete form in the womb, but through successive stages. Interestingly, the theory of ***preformation*** — that the embryo is a complete miniature human from the start and merely grows — was still held by many European scholars until the 18th century.

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## FORTY DAYS

The best-known Hadith on the duration of the stages of creation is the narration of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud رضى الله عنه, agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim. The wording below is that of Imam Muslim.

**HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2643 (AGREED UPON)**

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو بَكْرِ بْنُ أَبِي شَيْبَةَ، حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ، وَوَكِيعٌ، ح وَحَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ، اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ الْهَمْدَانِيُّ - وَاللَّفْظُ لَهُ - حَدَّثَنَا أَبِي وَأَبُو مُعَاوِيَةَ وَوَكِيعٌ قَالُوا حَدَّثَنَا الأَعْمَشُ، عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ وَهْبٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ الْمَصْدُوقُ « إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْقُهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ عَلَقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ ثُمَّ يُرْسَلُ الْمَلَكُ فَيَنْفُخُ فِيهِ الرُّوحَ وَيُؤْمَرُ بِأَرْبَعِ كَلِمَاتٍ بِكَتْبِ رِزْقِهِ وَأَجَلِهِ وَعَمَلِهِ وَشَقِيٌّ أَوْ سَعِيدٌ فَوَالَّذِي لاَ إِلَهَ غَيْرُهُ إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ حَتَّى مَا يَكُونَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلاَّ ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا وَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ حَتَّى مَا يَكُونَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَهَا إِلاَّ ذِرَاعٌ فَيَسْبِقُ عَلَيْهِ الْكِتَابُ فَيَعْمَلُ بِعَمَلِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيَدْخُلُهَا ».

**TRANSLATION:**

'Abdullah (bin Mas'ud) رضى الله عنه said: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ — the truthful, the one whose truth is confirmed — told us: **"Each of you is gathered in his mother's womb for forty days; then within that (period) he becomes an 'alaqah like that; then within that (period) he becomes a mudghah like that. Then the angel is sent, and he breathes the soul into him, and he is commanded with four words: to write his provision, his term of life, his deeds, and whether he will be wretched or blessed. By the One besides whom there is no god, one of you does the deeds of the people of Paradise until there is only a forearm's length between him and it, then what is written overtakes him, and he does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters it. And one of you does the deeds of the people of the Fire until there is only a forearm's length between him and it, then what is written overtakes him, and he does the deeds of the people of Paradise and enters it."**

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu Bakr bin Abi Shaibah, from Abu Mu'awiyah and Waki'; and from Muhammad bin 'Abdullah bin Numair, from his father ('Abdullah bin Numair), Abu Mu'awiyah and Waki' — all from Sulaiman al-A'mash, from Zaid bin Wahb, from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud رضى الله عنه, from the Prophet ﷺ.

**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, Hadith No. 2643 (narration 2643a); also narrated by Imam al-Bukhari in Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of the Beginning of Creation, Hadith No. 3208.

**GRADE:** SAHIH — Muttafaq 'alaih: narrated by both al-Bukhari (No. 3208) and Muslim (No. 2643).

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*Source:* https://sunnah.com/muslim:2643a

## REMARKS — TWO WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING "FORTY DAYS"

**First: Three successive periods.** Most scholars, including Imam al-Nawawi in his commentary, understood this Hadith as three successive periods of forty days each — nutfah, then 'alaqah, then mudghah — with the soul breathed in after about 120 days.

**Second: Within the same period.** Muslim's wording reads ***thumma yakūnu fī dhālika 'alaqatan mithla dhālik*** — "then ***within that (period)*** he becomes an 'alaqah". Some contemporary scholars hold that the words ***fī dhālika*** open the possibility that these stages take place ***within*** the first forty days, not after them. This view is supported by the Hadith of Hudhaifah bin Asid in the next section.

**Third: Its main lesson is about the ending.** The second half of this Hadith is not about embryology, but about the ***khatimah*** (one's final state): do not feel secure in your own deeds, and do not despair of Allah's mercy. What counts is the ending.

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## FORTY-TWO NIGHTS

Imam Muslim also narrates the Hadith of Hudhaifah bin Asid al-Ghifari رضى الله عنه, which mentions an earlier and more detailed time.

**HADITH — SAHIH MUSLIM, NO. 2645**

حَدَّثَنِي أَبُو الطَّاهِرِ، أَحْمَدُ بْنُ عَمْرِو بْنِ سَرْحٍ أَخْبَرَنَا ابْنُ وَهْبٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي عَمْرُو، بْنُ الْحَارِثِ عَنْ أَبِي الزُّبَيْرِ الْمَكِّيِّ، أَنَّ عَامِرَ بْنَ وَاثِلَةَ، حَدَّثَهُ أَنَّهُ، سَمِعَ عَبْدَ اللَّهِ بْنَ مَسْعُودٍ، يَقُولُ الشَّقِيُّ مَنْ شَقِيَ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ وَالسَّعِيدُ مَنْ وُعِظَ بِغَيْرِهِ. فَأَتَى رَجُلاً مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يُقَالُ لَهُ حُذَيْفَةُ بْنُ أَسِيدٍ الْغِفَارِيُّ فَحَدَّثَهُ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ قَوْلِ ابْنِ مَسْعُودٍ فَقَالَ وَكَيْفَ يَشْقَى رَجُلٌ بِغَيْرِ عَمَلٍ فَقَالَ لَهُ الرَّجُلُ أَتَعْجَبُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَإِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم يَقُولُ « إِذَا مَرَّ بِالنُّطْفَةِ ثِنْتَانِ وَأَرْبَعُونَ لَيْلَةً بَعَثَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهَا مَلَكًا فَصَوَّرَهَا وَخَلَقَ سَمْعَهَا وَبَصَرَهَا وَجِلْدَهَا وَلَحْمَهَا وَعِظَامَهَا ثُمَّ. قَالَ يَا رَبِّ أَذَكَرٌ أَمْ أُنْثَى فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ أَجَلُهُ. فَيَقُولُ رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ يَا رَبِّ رِزْقُهُ. فَيَقْضِي رَبُّكَ مَا شَاءَ وَيَكْتُبُ الْمَلَكُ ثُمَّ يَخْرُجُ الْمَلَكُ بِالصَّحِيفَةِ فِي يَدِهِ فَلاَ يَزِيدُ عَلَى مَا أُمِرَ وَلاَ يَنْقُصُ ».

**TRANSLATION:**

'Amir bin Wathilah (Abu al-Tufail) heard 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud رضى الله عنه say: "The wretched one is he who is wretched in his mother's womb, and the fortunate one is he who takes a lesson from (the fate of) others." So he went to a Companion of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ called Hudhaifah bin Asid al-Ghifari رضى الله عنه and told him what Ibn Mas'ud had said, adding: "How can a man be wretched without deeds?" Hudhaifah said: "Are you surprised by that? I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say: **'When forty-two nights have passed over the sperm-drop, Allah sends an angel to it, who shapes it and creates its hearing, its sight, its skin, its flesh and its bones. Then he says: My Lord, male or female? And your Lord decrees what He wills, and the angel writes it. Then he says: My Lord, his term of life? And your Lord decrees what He wills, and the angel writes it. Then he says: My Lord, his provision? And your Lord decrees what He wills, and the angel writes it. Then the angel goes out with the scroll in his hand; he adds nothing to what he was commanded and takes nothing away.'"**

**CHAIN OF NARRATION:** Narrated by Imam Muslim: from Abu al-Tahir Ahmad bin 'Amr bin Sarh, from 'Abdullah bin Wahb, from 'Amr bin al-Harith, from Abu al-Zubair al-Makki, from 'Amir bin Wathilah (Abu al-Tufail), from 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud and Hudhaifah bin Asid al-Ghifari رضى الله عنهما, from the Prophet ﷺ.

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**REFERENCE:** Narrated by Imam Muslim in Sahih Muslim, Book of Divine Decree, Hadith No. 2645 (narration 2645a).

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

*Source:* https://sunnah.com/muslim:2645a

## REMARKS — SHAPING IN THE SIXTH WEEK

**First: The time mentioned.** ***"When forty-two nights have passed over the sperm-drop"*** — that is, around **the sixth week**. At that time, the angel ***shapes*** it and creates its hearing, sight, skin, flesh and bones.

**Second: In harmony with embryology.** According to the Carnegie staging table, around day 42 is **Carnegie stage 16–17**: the limb buds begin to form hands and feet, finger rays appear, and the primordia of the eyes and ears have formed. Ossification (bone formation) begins around **the seventh week**. This is among the clearest points of harmony in this topic.

**Third: Reconciling the two Hadith.** Scholars, among them Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani in ***Fath al-Bari***, discussed how to reconcile the Hadith of Ibn Mas'ud and the Hadith of Hudhaifah. Among the views put forward: there are several stages of writing and shaping that take place at different times. What is certain is that both are authentic, and according to the majority view the soul is breathed in after 120 days.

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## WHAT MODERN EMBRYOLOGY SAYS

Modern embryology uses the **Carnegie stages** — 23 stages covering the first eight weeks after fertilisation, the ***embryonic period***. It is in this period that almost all the major organs are formed.

### SCIENTIFIC FINDING: THE CARNEGIE STAGES

This system was developed from the embryo collection of the Carnegie Institution of Washington in the mid-20th century. Each stage is defined by external features, not just age. For example: **stage 5** (days 7 to 12) is implantation; **stage 9** (days 19 to 21) sees the first somites; **stage 18** (days 44 to 48) is the beginning of ossification; and **stage 23** (days 56 to 60) is the end of the embryonic period.

**STUDY REFERENCES:**

Hill, M.A. Embryology: Carnegie stage table. UNSW Embryology. https://embryology.med.unsw.edu.au/embryology/index.php/Carnegie_stage_table

### SCIENTIFIC FINDING: AN EMBRYO THAT CLINGS AND HANGS

After implantation, the embryo in the third and fourth weeks depends entirely on the mother through the wall of the womb. At this stage ***gastrulation*** takes place — the formation of the three basic layers of the body — and the heart begins to beat around day 22.

The study by Moris and colleagues (2020) in ***Nature*** built a laboratory model (a gastruloid) from human stem cells that mimics the early body plan of the embryo, equivalent to around Carnegie stage 9 — opening a new window onto weeks that were once almost impossible to observe.

**STUDY REFERENCES:**

Moris, N. et al. (2020). An in vitro model of early anteroposterior organization during human development. Nature, 582, 410–415. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-020-2383-9

### SCIENTIFIC FINDING: SOMITES: SEGMENTS LIKE TOOTH MARKS

From stage 9 to 13 (days 19 to 32), ***somites*** form along the back of the embryo — segmented blocks of tissue that later become the spine, muscles and skin. Because of this segmented appearance, the embryo at this stage is often described as looking like something **chewed**, with tooth marks.

The study by Makwana and colleagues (2025) in ***Nature Cell Biology*** used "trunk-like structures" made from human stem cells to study how the somites and neural tube develop together.

**STUDY REFERENCES:**

Makwana, K. et al. (2025). Modelling co-development between the somites and neural tube in human trunk-like structures. Nature Cell Biology. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41402467/

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### SCIENTIFIC FINDING: BONES FIRST, THEN MUSCLES ARRANGED

The early skeleton of the embryo forms as a cartilage model; then ***ossification*** — the deposition of true bone — begins between the sixth and seventh weeks. In the seventh and eighth weeks, the muscles arrange themselves around the skeleton and the shape of the body and limbs becomes complete. After the eighth week, the embryo enters the ***fetal period***, a stage of growth and maturation.

#### STUDY REFERENCES:

Breeland, G., Sinkler, M.A. & Menezes, R.G. (2023). Embryology, Bone Ossification. StatPearls, NCBI Bookshelf. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK539718/

## BETWEEN HARMONY AND CAUTION

The table below separates solid claims from exaggerated ones on this topic.

### POPULAR CLAIMS AND THEIR ASSESSMENT

| CLAIMS OFTEN HEARD | ASSESSMENT |
|---|---|
| "The Qur'an describes human creation in stages." | Solid. The Qur'an gives a clear sequence (23:12–14) and "creation after creation" (39:6). |
| "'Alaqah means leech, exactly like the shape of the embryo." | Half true. Leech is one linguistic meaning; others are "that which clings" and "a clot". The embryo in weeks 3–4 is indeed elongated and clinging, but the other meanings should not be denied. |
| "The Hadith fixes each stage at exactly 40 days, as in embryology." | Inaccurate. Embryology shows that the 'alaqah- and mudghah-like stages take place within the first eight weeks. Muslim's wording ("fī dhālika") and the Hadith of Hudhaifah allow an understanding that fits better. |
| "Bones form first, then are clothed with flesh." | Broadly in harmony. Ossification begins around week 7, and muscles arrange around the skeleton in weeks 7–8. |
| "A famous professor of embryology has confirmed all of this." | Be careful. The statement of an individual, however senior, is not confirmation by the field of science. Refer directly to studies and textbooks. |

### REMARKS — THE REAL WONDER

In the seventh century CE there was no microscope and no ultrasound. An influential view of the time, such as that of Aristotle, held that the embryo was formed from menstrual blood shaped by the male fluid. The Qur'an, however, speaks of a creation in ***stages***, of a ***mixture*** of male and female fluid, and of ***three darknesses*** protecting the fetus. This general harmony — not a day-by-day match — is what most deserves reflection.

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# THE BEST OF CREATORS

Verse 23:14 does not end with a scientific term, but with praise: ***"So blessed is Allah, the best of creators"***. A heart that reflects on its own creation is surely moved to praise its Creator.

## LESSONS FROM THIS ARTICLE

**First: We began from something small.** A drop of fluid — so there is no room for arrogance.

**Second: Allah creates in stages.** "Creation after creation" (39:6) — and He also nurtures His servants in stages.

**Third: Destiny is written from the womb.** Provision, term of life, deeds, and whether wretched or blessed (Sahih Muslim 2643).

**Fourth: What counts is the ending.** Ask Allah for ***husn al-khatimah*** — a good ending (Sahih Muslim 2643).

**Fifth: Be honest about the limits of knowledge.** Reflect on general harmony; avoid forced matches.

**Sixth: Honour your mother.** The three darknesses that once protected us were within a mother's womb.

## CONCLUSION

The Qur'an and authentic Hadith describe human creation as a journey in stages: from a drop of fluid, to something that clings, to a lump of flesh, to bones clothed with flesh, until it becomes ***"another creation"***. Modern embryology, with microscopes and scans, has also found a journey in stages. Both meet at one truth: **every human being is a carefully planned creation.**

Whenever we see a baby, may we remember that he — and we — were once a drop of fluid in a firm lodging, protected within three darknesses by Allah the All-Powerful. ***Fatabārakallāhu aḥsanul-khāliqīn.*** 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 .

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**GRADE:** SAHIH — contained in Sahih Muslim.

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

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