

ASTRONOMY IN QURAN

Astronomy gets into trouble when we start reading Quran and try to figure out the Sun, moon and stars and their purpose. Yes there are some verses which could be interpreted in such a way to see them sound correct a little. But as soon as we see in detail the questions arise for anything beyond the 7th century Arabia, Quran and hadith gives us information which we could never accept based on the current knowledge achieved by modern science.

RISING AND SETTING OF SUN

Sun rise and sun set is defined very differently in Quran as well as in hadith. When Muslim preachers talk about the heavenly objects and try to correlate the scientific miracles of Quran and Hadith I do not know how they can skip these very important verses of Quran and sahih (authentic) hadith.

Let's see what Quran says about sun. The background is that Jew rabbis told some men that if they want to know about Muhammad being a true prophet then ask him about three things and one of them was about the man who travelled far in east and then in west. The name in Quran for that man is given as dhul-Qarnayn (literal meaning "He of two horns") a majority of early Islamic commentators say that it was Alexzander the great as his pictures with two horns was on tetradrachm (silver coin of ancient greek).

And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about Dhul-Qarnayn. Say, "I will recite to you about him a report. Indeed We established him upon the earth, and We gave him to everything a way. So he followed a way. Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a spring of dark mud, and he found near it a people. Allah said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, either you punish or else adopt among them goodness." (Quran 18:83-86)

This verse 86 makes it clear that he reached to a location where sun sets, which is impossible. The rotation of the earth makes it look like for the people standing on the ground that the sun is setting but you can fly in a plane and you can move around the earth if with a constant speed of Mach 1.4 you will always have sun at the same point where you started, That's a speed of 1038mph not many planes can do that but let's add 12 more hours and start early morning so you can go around the world and never see sun setting for 24 straight hours.

Considering many people now claim that this is only stated "as if" i.e. he found "as if" it is setting in a spring of dark mud. The problem is that Arabic is a very vast language according to

Muslim scholars and if Allah wanted to write as if he could have done that very easily but He didn't.

Second problem with the "as if" story is the hadith narrated by Abu Dharr in Suna Abu Dawood, book 32 hadith 3991, Grade Sahih states as follow:

Narrated Abu Dharr: I was sitting behind the Messenger of Allah who was riding a donkey while the sun was setting. He asked: Do you know where this sets? I replied: Allah and his Apostle know best. He said: It sets in a spring of warm water.

Now we have Qurnic verse as well as sahih hadith narrating the same thing that sun sets in the spring of warm water or muddy water. When I was searching about this confusion I also came across a response from the modern scholar of Islam trying to defend the claim of this hadith that even though this hadith is Sahih which is the top most grade but found only in Suna Abu Dawood and hence they would not want to go with this but another hadith. The second hadith is even more confusing about sun setting is from Sahih al-Bukhari 3199

The Prophet asked me at sunset, "Do you know where the sun goes (at the time of sunset)?" I replied, "Allah and His Apostle know better." He said, "It goes (i.e. travels) till it prostrates Itself underneath the Throne and takes the permission to rise again, and it is permitted and then (a time will come when) it will be about to prostrate itself but its prostration will not be accepted, and it will ask permission to go on its course but it will not be permitted, but it will be ordered to return whence it has come and so it will rise in the west

Two problems with this hadith, one: that now the sun is not an object it's something with brain and it can ask and receive the answer. Plus once again the sun goes somewhere The whole theory of Allah created these objects which are floating in their own circles just went down the drain. The second problem with above is again that sun sets for a specific interval of time, then prostrates and ask permission to continue its next courses after getting a positive reply.

Anyhow now if you do not want to accept the location for setting of sun, let's talk about location of rising of sun. This is the continue of the same story of Dhul-Qarnayn Quran chapter 18 verse 87 to 91

He said, As for one who wrongs, we will punish him. Then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with a terrible punishment. But as for one who believes and does righteousness, he will have a reward of Paradise, and we will speak to him from our command with ease. Then he followed a way. Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We [Allah] had not made against it any shield. Thus. And We had encompassed [all] that he had in knowledge.

Now if you read the verse 90, he reached a location where the sun was rising from. The problem is that here “as if” could not be placed because the same verse states that Allah did not make any shield on those people against the heat of the sun. This problem even becomes more complex when we look at the tafsir of Jalalayn.

“until when he reached the rising of the sun the place where it rises he found it rising on a folk namely Negroes zanj for whom We had not provided against it that is against the sun any form of cover in the way of clothing or roofing as their land could not support any structures; they had underground tunnels into which they would disappear at the rising of the sun and out of which they would emerge when it was at its highest point in the sky”

Considering that jalalayn’s writing of commentary was one of the oldest so he also won’t know what the science has told us or shown us at this time and hence he would also assume the story is actually accurate and there is a location as described in Quran and as it is described in hadith. This is a theory of flat earth. Sun rise and sets at a particular location and in the 7th century Arabia nothing more could have been known about the sun.

Now let’s see a verse which is independent of Dhul-Qarnayn if it shows anything different.

And the sun runs toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. (Quran 36:38)

So sun runs until it reaches its stopping point. Does this not follow the previous verses? Tafsir also agrees to what it says in verse as follow:

And the sun which runs from wa’l-shamsu tajri to the end of the statement is subsumed by the introductory wa-ayatun lahum ‘and a sign for them’; alternatively it constitutes another sign for them; similar is the case with wa’l-qamara ‘and the moon’ further below to its resting-place in

other words it does not overstep it. That namely its running is the ordaining of the Mighty in His kingdom the Knower of His creation. (Tafsir al-Jalalayn)

MOON ACCORDING TO QURAN

Moon is a source of light, according to Quran moon has its own light and is shining bright.

And made the moon therein a light and made the sun a burning lamp? (Quran 71:16)

Now that we know that moon only reflect the light, hence the new translations will usually have the word “reflected” in brackets so that people who are reading translations would probably just read without looking at it closely. But here in this verse the Arabic word used is “Noor” which means light or bright white light. Allah used this word many times for himself as “Noor”, let’s look at a verse from chapter 24 which actually states the same word four (4) times in one verses to represent his own light.

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly star lit from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things. (Quran 24:35)

If Allah is “Noor” and moon is “Noor” and “Noor” means reflected light then Allah is reflected light as well. So the Arabic author of Quran did not create any distinction between the two but the translators are doing it because now we know that moon only reflects or diverts light.

Now Allah also tells us in Quran that why the moon was created, once again Arabic word the “Noor” is written to show the light. The verse tells us that moon has phases and it is made this way to tell the time in terms of days and years.

It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon be a light and determined for it phases - that you may know the number of years and account [of time]. Allah has not created this except in truth. He details the signs for a people who know (Quran 10:5)

Another verse about moon is when people came and asked Muhammad why the moon has phases then the following verse came down.

They ask you, [O Muhammad], about the new moons. Say, "They are measurements of time for the people and for Hajj." And it is not righteousness to enter houses from the back, but

righteousness is [in] one who fears Allah. And enter houses from their doors. And fear Allah that you may succeed. (Quran 2:189)

So moon has been created by Allah almighty to tell us how to calculate time in terms of days and months and years and that's it only. The Tafsir tells us more about this verse as there are many unrelated stuff present in one verse. Tafsir al-Jalalayan states:

They will ask you O Muhammad (s) about the new moons "ahilla plural" of hilal 'Why do they seem very thin and then wax until they are full of light and then wane again as at the first and are not always the same in the way that the sun is?' Say to them 'They are appointed times mawaqit is the plural of miqat for the people for them to know the times for sowing the land for business for their women's waiting periods their fast and their breaking it and the Pilgrimage' wa'l-hajji and the Pilgrimage' is a supplement to li'l-nasi 'for the people' that is to say appointed times by which its season is known for if they the new moons always looked the same none of these things could be known. It is not piety to come to the houses from their backs in your state of pilgrimage inviolability ihram when you would bore holes in them to enter them and then exit disregarding their doors; they used to do this and claim that it was out of piety; but piety is to fear God by not contravening His commands; so come to the houses by their doors when in a state of pilgrimage inviolability and fear God that you may prosper that you may triumph.

So actually the answer to why moon has phases was given that it is like this to show time and calculate months that's it. But the actual answer to why was unknown to Quran or hadith. Let's see sun and moon together in a verse.

It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: Each swims along in orbit. (Quran 36:40)

So basically sun and moon does never over take each other, one is for night and the other is for the day. The problem is now how the solar or lunar eclipse happens then? Isn't moon can be present in the day time but we just cannot see with our eyes as it is not reflecting the light of the sun, or the sun light is just too strong for our eyes to see the reflected light of the moon in morning.

Now moon got split and the hour of the Day of Judgment is near. There are so many hadith stating about splitting of moon, and Muhammad is asking people of bear witness. BTW the people who related this to miracle of Muhammad please read Quran where in 4 location Allah states Muhammad was given no miracle. Split of moon could be confused by eclipse very easily

(as from above verse of Quran you know 7th century Arabs had no idea that moon and sun can be seen together) But the problem is deeper here. The hour is near, i.e. day of judgment

The Hour has come near, and the moon has split (Quran 54:1)

It is now 1600 years after that near hour of judgment. What do you call near as near ? I get lost in the definition of near. And if you think this is not the hour of judgment then go and read any of tafsir, al-jalalayn describes it as day of Resurrection and ibn Abbas as Day of Judgment and both actually means the same.

The Hour has drawn near the Resurrection is close at hand and the moon has split it broke in two at Mount Abu Qubays and Qu'ayqa'an as a sign for the Prophet s for it had been demanded of him and when it took place he said 'Bear witness now!' (Tafsir al-Jalalayn)

And from his narration on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that he said in the interpretation of Allah's saying (The hour drew nigh): '(The hour drew nigh) He says: the coming of the Hour drew nigh by the advent of Muhammad (pbuh) and the coming down of the smock (and the moon was rent in twain) this is also another sign of the closeness of the Day of Judgement. (Tafsir ibn Abbas)

Hence this point towards another contradiction in Quran. But Muslims try their best to defend it.

STARS IN QURAN

According to Quran stars are created to give light for night visitors, as well as they are the guide and beatification of the nearest heaven, all of these are absorbable by human compression. But stars according to Quran are also some sort of missiles which are sent down upon Satan as a form of punishment of blazing fire. It seems like that the author of Quran just could not differentiate between shooting star which is not actually a star but rather just a meteorite entering the atmosphere of Earth vs the starts which are huge sun like objects but too far from the earth that they appear small.

And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made them like what is thrown at the devils and have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze. (Quran 67:5)

Two problems here:

1. Stars are not in the nearest heaven, sun is a star and could be classified as nearest but the rest of the stars are too far out there. Some have died years ago but we still see their light because even with the speed of light it takes years to reach earth.
2. Second problem is that Allah talks about them being objects thrown at devil so that it could not travel to the heaven. From tafsir and hadith these actually referred to shooting stars which are meteorite which enters the earth orbit and then glow and not the actual stars, which point to the ignorance of Allah about the very basic of astronomy.

If you have any issue with translation let's look at all the translations, modern and old before the word missile was invented.

Sahih International: And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made [from] them what is thrown at the devils and have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze.

Pickthall: And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps, and We have made them missiles for the devils, and for them We have prepared the doom of flame.

Yusuf Ali: And we have, (from of old), adorned the lowest heaven with Lamps, and We have made such (Lamps) (as) missiles to drive away the Evil Ones, and have prepared for them the Penalty of the Blazing Fire.

Shakir: And certainly We have adorned this lower heaven with lamps and We have made these missiles for the Shaitans, and We have prepared for them the chastisement of burning.

Muhammad Sarwar: We have decked the lowest heavens with torches. With these torches We have stoned the devils and We have prepared for them the torment of hell.

Mohsin Khan: And indeed We have adorned the nearest heaven with lamps, and We have made such lamps (as) missiles to drive away the Shayatin (devils), and have prepared for them the torment of the blazing Fire.

Arberry: And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and made them things to stone Satans; and We have prepared for them the chastisement of the Blaze.

Now we can also look at Tafsir so that there is no doubt for the creation of stars. According to tafsir of Ibn Abbas the cousin of Muhammad

(And verily We have beautified the world's heaven) the first heaven (with lamps) with stars, (and We have made them) i.e. the stars (missiles for the devils) such that some of them become bewitched, some are killed while others are burnt, (and for them) for the devils (We have prepared) in the Hereafter (the doom of flame)

When we look at Sahih Hadith in reference to the above verse, we have even more clarity for one of the purpose of stars. According to Jami at-tirmidhi (Vol. 5, Book 44, Hadith 3224) and Sunan ibn Majha (Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 194)

Narrated Ibn 'Abbas: "We were with the Messenger of Allah (?), while he was sitting with a group of his Companions, when they saw a glowing shooting star. The Messenger of Allah (?) said: 'When you saw the likes of this during Jahiliyyah, what would you say about it?' They said: 'We would say that a great man died, or that a great man has been born.' The Messenger of Allah (?) said: 'It is not shot due to the death of anyone, nor his coming into life. Rather when our Lord [Blessed is His Name and Most High] decrees a matter, He is glorified by the bearers of the Throne. Then He is glorified by the inhabitants who are below them, then those below them, until such glorification reaches this Heaven. Then the inhabitants of the sixth Heaven ask the inhabitants of the seventh Heaven: "What did your Lord say?" He said: 'So they inform them; then the inhabitants of each Heaven seek the information, until the news is conveyed to the inhabitants of the Heavens of the earth. The Shayatin try to overhear so they are shot at, so they cast it down to their friends. Whatever they came with is true, as it is, but they distort it and add to it.'" (Jami at-Tirmidhi, Vol. 5, Book 44, Hadith 3224, Grade: Sahih)

So once again Quran, Tafsir and Hadith all agree to the meteorite coming towards earth are actually shooting stars which are an attack of Allah on Satan who is trying to reach the heaven. Hadith is kind of goes beyond and describes which kind of Satan and why but let's only stick to the point where Quran ends, else we will have problem on how Satan overheard which was only for the people of heaven. How can Quran get confused about a star and a shooting star if it is a book from GOD who created everyone and everything? Don't you think The Almighty creator should know the difference?

CONCLUSION

In the 7th century Arabia, the astronomy of the objects in sky was limited to what you can see in the sky. Imagine no lights on earth and how many stars you could see and how many meteor shower once could see at night. People gets fascinated by those objects and Quran only confirmed which the people knew about them at that time. Anything beyond is all fiction in Quran which makes these verses nothing more than human written scriptures ... One should only ask a question to oneself that if the GOD sent down his worlds don't you think he should at least know the difference between shooting star and the stars, the difference between sun never setting vs the setting and rising place of the sun, the moon being a reflected light vs producing its own light. If the science did not know about these object today we might still believe them, but scientific miracles of Quran totally fails over here at these objects.