

Islamic Cosmic Calendar: 'The Big Bang', 'The Smoke', and 'The Seven Heavens'

Astronomy

"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?" (Quran 21:30)

Previous generations of commentators have not fully known how to interpret this line. Many modern commentators hold that it is a clear reference to the Big Bang theory, which asserts that all matter, including the earth, was once fused together in a compact unit that suddenly split apart, eventually resulting in the galaxies, planets, stars, and other heavenly bodies over billions of years. This is a plausible interpretation as the plural word *samawat* (heavens) is used here, which is usually used in Qur'anic parlance to refer to all the zones of space outside the earth. (Compare with verse 21:32 where earth's specific 'sky' is mentioned in the singular.)

Also see the section:

Islamic View of the Creation of Life on Earth – Islam and Modern Science: Part 2

The Smoke (Quran 41:11)

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."

According to Muhammad Asad, the term "smoke" means:

“I.e., a gas – evidently hydrogen gas, which physicists regard as the primal element from which all material particles of the universe have evolved and still evolve” (*The Message of the Quran*, pg. 932)

According to *Towards Understanding the Quran*, the “smoke” means:

“By smoke is implied the initial and primary stage of matter, in which it lay diffused in space in a shapeless, dust-like condition before the formation of the universe”

The following excerpt is taken from *The Message of the Quran* by Muhammad Asad, pg. 629:

Quran 21:30:

“Are, then, they who are bent on denying the truth not aware that the heavens and the earth were [once] one single entity, which We then parted asunder?”

Note 38:

“It is, as a rule, futile to make an explanation of the Qur’an dependent on ‘scientific findings’ which may appear true today, but may equally well be disproved tomorrow by new findings. Nevertheless, the above unmistakable reference to the unitary origin of the universe – metonymically described in the Qur’an as ‘the heavens and the earth’ – strikingly anticipates the view of almost all modern astrophysicists that this universe has originated as one entity from one single element, namely hydrogen, which became subsequently consolidated through gravity and then separated into individual nebulae, galaxies, and solar systems, with further individual parts progressively breaking away to form new entities in the shape of stars, planets, and the latter’s satellites.” See also *Islamic Cosmic Calendar* in Appendix

Seven Heavens – The Quranic Multiverse (Quran 41:12)
“And He completed them as seven heavens within two days and inspired in each heaven its command. And We adorned the nearest

heaven with lamps and as protection. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.”

The Multiple Universes:

God Says, “So He ordained them seven heavens in two periods, and revealed in every heaven its affair; and We adorned the lower heaven with brilliant stars and (made it) to guard; that is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing” (The Noble Koran 65:12). “Do you not see how Allah has created the seven heavens, one above another” (The Noble Koran 67:3)

Therefore, it is evident from the above verses that there are seven universes (heavens) and each of the universes has different sets of natural laws.

Layers of the Heavens according to al-Sayuti (in descending order)	
<u>al-Suyuti</u>	<i>Kitāb aḥwāl al-qiyaama</i>
<i>al-firdaws</i> (Paradise)	<i>jannāt ‘adn</i> (“garden of Eden”) white pearl
<i>jannat al-na’im</i> (“garden of bliss”)	<i>jannat al-firdaws</i> red gold
<i>jannat al-ma’wa</i> (“garden of refuge”)	<i>Jannat al na’im</i> (“garden of bliss”) white silver
<i>jannat ‘adn</i> (“garden of Eden”)	<i>jannat al-khuld</i> (“garden of eternity”) yellow coral
<i>dar al-khuld</i> (“abode of eternity”)	<i>jannat al-ma’wan</i> (“garden of refuge”) green chrysolite
<i>dar al-salam</i> (“abode of peace”)	<i>dar al-salam</i> (“abode of peace”) red sapphire
<i>dar al-jalal</i> (“abode of glory”)	<i>dar al-jinān</i> (“abode of the garden”) white pearl
Source: <u>al-Suyuti</u>;[5]:131	Source: <i>Kitāb aḥwāl al-qiyaama</i>[51]

‘Al-Aloosi said:

“The reported text reads, ‘The size of the earth compared to the first heaven is like the size of a ring in a desert; the size of the first heaven compared to the second is like the size of a ring in a desert, and so on, until the seventh heaven. The size of the seventh heaven compared to the Kursi of Allah is like a ring in a desert, and the size of the Kursi compared to the Throne is likewise.’”

[*Rooh Al-Ma’aani*]

‘The meaning of the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him):

“In Paradise there are one hundred degrees or levels,” does not rule out the possibility of there being more than that. This is similar to the hadith “Allah has ninety-nine names” and the hadith “I ask You by every name that You have, by which You named Yourself, or revealed it in Your Book, or kept it hidden in the knowledge of the unseen with You.” The scholars discussed the meaning of the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), “In Paradise there are one hundred degrees or levels that Allah has prepared for those who strive in jihad” and explained it in several ways: that this number is not to be taken literally; rather what is meant is that there are many degrees or levels (Islamqa).

The following excerpt is taken from “The Bible, The Quran and Science” by Maurice Bucaille, pg. 140:

The terms ‘worlds’ reappear dozens of times in the Qur’an. The Heavens are referred to as multiple as well, not only on account of their plural form, but also because of their symbolic numerical quantity 7. This number is used 24 times throughout the Qur’an for various numerical quantities. It often carries the meaning of ‘many’ although we do not know exactly why this meaning of the figure was used. The Greeks and Romans also seem to have used the number 7 to mean an undefined idea of plurality. In the Qur’an, the number 7 refers to the Heavens themselves (samawat). It alone is understood to mean ‘Heavens.’

The 7 Roads of the Heavens Are Mentioned Once:

– Sura 2, Verse 29:

“(God) is the One Who created for you all that is on the earth. Moreover, He turned to the heaven and fashioned seven heavens with harmony. He is Full of Knowledge of all things.”

– Sura 23, Verse 17:

“And We have created above you seven paths. We have never been unmindful of the Creation.”

– Sura 67, Verse 3:

“(God) is the One Who created seven heavens one above another. Thou canst see no fault in the creation of the Beneficent. Turn the vision again! Canst thou see any rift?”

– Sura 71, Verses 15-16:

“Did you see how God created seven heavens one above another and made the moon a light therein and made the sun a lamp?”

– Sura 78, Verse 12:

“We have built above you seven strong (heavens) and placed a blazing lamp.” Here, the blazing lamp is the Sun.

The commentators on the Qur’an are in agreement on all these verses: the number 7 means no more than plurality. There are therefore many Heavens and Earths, and it comes as no small surprise to the reader of the Qur’an to find that earths such as our own may be found in the Universe, a fact that has not yet been verified by man in our time.

Verse 12 of Sura 65 does, however, predict the following: “God is the One Who created seven heavens and of the earth (ard) a similar number. The Command descends among them so that you know that God has power over all things and comprehends all things in His knowledge.” Since 7 indicates an indefinite plurality (as we have seen), it is possible to conclude that the Qur’anic text clearly indicates the existence of more than one single Earth, our own Earth (ard); there are others like it in the Universe.

According to Al-Razi:

“It is established by evidence that there exists beyond the world a void without a terminal limit (khala’ la nihayata laha), and it is established as well by evidence that God Most High has power over

all contingent beings (al-mumkināt). Therefore, He the Most High has the power (qādir) to create a thousand thousand worlds (alfa alfi 'awālim) beyond this world such that each one of those worlds is bigger and more massive than this world as well as having the like of what this world has of the Throne (al-'Arsh), the Chair (al-Kursiyy), the heavens (al-Samawāt), and the earth (al-Ard), and the Sun (al-Shams) and the Moon (al-Qamar). The arguments of the philosophers (dalā'il al-falāsifah) for establishing that the world is one are weak, flimsy arguments founded upon feeble premises.”

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi on Physics and the Nature of the Physical World: A Preliminary Survey

Amr and Khalq – Two Different Words for ‘Creation’ (2019-11-25 23:59)

The following excerpt is taken from *Exposition of the Quran* by Ghulam Ahmed Pervez, pp. 1144-1145:

Al-amarato wat-tamoor means a signpost made of small stones in the desert to indicate boundaries or paths. Al-itemar means to consult. In verses (7:110) and (26:35) the Pharaoh asked his chiefs about Moses, “So what do you suggest in this matter?” Motamar means the place where consultations take place – the conference room and the conference itself. Ameer is a person who gives guidance to a blind man (Taj). It also means abundance (Taj). Other meanings in which amr is used are: to order, to direct a situation or a position. When it is used in the context of giving directions, then its plural is awamir (as we used awamir and nawahi – its antonym). When amr is used in the sense of a problem or a situation, its plural is umoor. Al-imaato means a government or state (Taj) and ameer means a person who gives directives. In verse (7:54), amr is used in a different form than khalq. Here it is important to keep in view its basic meanings, i.e., guidance, indication, direction. Ibn-e-Faris says that nourishment is also one of its intrinsic meanings.

Khalq means to bring into existence various things by mixing different elements. This pre-supposes that these elements already exist. However, before this stage, there is another stage when things are in the process of becoming. This planning stage is *alam-ul-amr*. *Amr* also means the laws, rules, or disciplines according to which things in the universe exist. The Quran says that when Allah decides to create something, He says “Be” and so it “Becomes”. How it takes shape and form, and where it comes into being, we do not know as it is beyond our comprehension.

Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, in his book *Essays on Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (p. 103), quotes Pringle Pattison, a famous Scottish philosopher, who exposes the helplessness of the English language. He says that English has only one word about the creation of the universe, whereas there should have been two different words to explain two different phases. Arabic has two words, *khalq* and *amr*, to express the two ways in which the creative activity of Allah reveals itself to us.

In short, the first stage is that of divine planning, where Allah’s directive energy initiates an inchoate object on the path leading to its destined incarnation. In addition, the process by which it finally assumes the material form intended for is called the process of creation. Creation involves the blending of various elements in a particular manner and proportion to produce an entirely new thing, for instance, the formation of water through a combination of hydrogen and oxygen molecules. How the divine planning operates in the various stages of *amr* is beyond human comprehension. The domain of *amr* (creating from nothingness) is exclusive to Allah. In the world of creation (*khalq*), we can understand and comprehend through physical laws the operation of creation but also cooperate with Allah in the creative process. The laws under which various objects in the universe function in the world of divine planning (*alam-ul-amr*) are enforced and executed in the world of creation (*alam-ul-khalq*) under set standards and measures.

Islamic Cosmic Calendar

I don't mean to offend you, but allow me to tell you why you're insignificant. Time is old. Time is really, really old. Time, to be specific, has been alive and ticking for 13.8 billion years. It's tough to get an accurate perception of something like the age of the universe. Humans are bad with big numbers. I don't mean in a mathematical sense; we're pretty good at that. But rather, we're poor at judging scale and perspective. Have you considered, for example, that there's a 31-year difference between a million and a billion seconds? By the power of factors, a million seconds, being less than a fortnight (that's two weeks for those who don't know), may as well be discarded. The best scientific research currently estimates that the universe is 13.8 billion years old. But that number is so big, it doesn't really mean anything to most of us. To put it into perspective, Carl Sagan, an American astronomer, cosmologist, and astrophysicist, introduced the Cosmic Calendar and collapsed the entire history of the universe into just a single year. By employing this calendar metaphor, the human mind is able to approach un-human time scales in a human format. In his book, *The Dragons of Eden*, and his TV series, *Cosmos*, Carl Sagan popularized a method to visualize the chronology of the universe. It's simple. Take its current age, 13.8 billion years, and scale it down to a single year – the Cosmic Calendar, where midnight on the first of January marks the start of time (the Big Bang), and the end of the 31st of December is right now, this very moment. The cosmic year is one to remember; here are a few highlights from it:

- January 1st, 14 seconds past midnight: Hydrogen starts to form. It's cool enough now for electrons to combine with protons. Previously, the universe had been a hot plasma of photons, electrons, and baryons.
- January 10th: The first stars ignite. For over 300 million years, the universe had been dark.
- January 13th: Small galaxies first appear.

- March 15th: Our galaxy, the Milky Way, first appears.
- End of August, start of September: Our sun, the Earth, and the rest of our solar system are formed.
- September 21st: First life, single-cell organisms, first appear.
- December 5th: Multi-cell organisms, almost 3 billion years after single-cell organisms, are formed.
- December 14th: Small animals appear.
- December 20th: Land plants appear.
- December 25th: Welcome the dinosaurs, Merry Christmas.
- December 26th: Mammals emerge.
- December 27th: Birds.
- December 28th: Flowers.
- December 30th: Dinosaurs die – that didn't last long.
- 8 minutes ago: Humans appear.
- 14 seconds ago: Modern civilization.
- 5 seconds ago: Prophet Jesus.
- 4 seconds ago: Prophet Mohammed.
- In the last second: Modern science and technology, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, World War I, World War II, the Apollo Moon landing, and Donald Trump becomes President.

Your life, if you are lucky enough to live to the age of 109, is a blink of an eye – a quarter of a second. You are insignificant in the grand scheme of the cosmos. But don't let that get you down. You're also extremely fortunate to have this fleeting moment in the sun. The

average ejaculate has 250 million sperm cells, and you made it, buddy. Best make the most of your day.

Carl Sagan's Cosmic Calendar did not only help us understand the age of the universe in an easier way but also helped us understand what is meant by two groups of verses in the Holy Quran addressing the same topic but written in a different way. The first group of verses says: "It is He (God) who created the heavens and earth in six days," and the other group of verses says, "He who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days." This is the Quranic Cosmic Calendar, revealed over 1400 years ago. And let me explain why I believe the Holy Quran introduced the Cosmic Calendar approach first before Carl Sagan. The answer is simple; it is because there is a great similarity between the Holy Quran's Cosmic Calendar and Carl Sagan's Cosmic Calendar.

These similarities are as follows:

- First, by employing this calendar metaphor, the human mind is able to approach un-human time scales in a human format. That's why Carl Sagan popularized the Cosmic Calendar in the first place and collapsed the entire history of the universe into just a single year – 365 days. And the Holy Quran introduced the Cosmic Calendar, then collapsed the entire history of the universe into just 6 days.
- Second, Carl Sagan's Cosmic Calendar tells us that the Earth was formed at the end of August, which means it was formed in the eighth month out of 12 months, which is precisely at the point when the universe was in two-thirds of its age. Similarly, the Holy Quran's Cosmic Calendar tells us that the Earth was formed "in 4 days out of a total of 6 days," being again, when the universe was exactly in two-thirds of its age. This is written in Chapter 41, from verses 10 to 12: "In four days, He made in the Earth what anchors it from high above it, and put barak in it, and equally measured out

sustenance (of its dwellers) for those who ask.” “Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke...” And verse 12 says: “And He completed them seven heavens within two days and He made in each heaven its affair. And adorned the nearest heaven with lamps.”

- Third, when Carl Sagan first popularized his Cosmic Calendar in 1996, it spanned one year, and there was no Donald Trump at that time. And when I read the Cosmic Calendar for you now, it also spanned one year. But this time it included Donald Trump becoming President as an example of a recent famous event. And when anyone reads Carl Sagan’s Cosmic Calendar after thousands of years, it will remain the duration of one year and will include future events that are yet unknown to us now. So here’s the kicker: This one-year Cosmic Calendar doesn’t mean that the universe is going to end in this final second of the year. The scale just continues condensing itself to accommodate the increasing age of the cosmos. How clever Carl Sagan was. Time goes on and on, but his Cosmic Calendar scale remains constant at just one year. But Sagan is not alone, because the Holy Quran did it first. When you read the Holy Quran, you will know that the Quran’s six-day Cosmic Calendar doesn’t mean that the universe is going to end in the final second of the sixth day. The scale just continues condensing itself to accommodate the increasing age of the cosmos. When the Holy Quran says, “It is He (God) who created the heavens and earth in six days,” and in another verse says, “He who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days,” it is implying that what is between the heavens and the earth have not yet ended. Every moment there is something created in between the heavens and the earth. So now I say: How clever the Holy Quran is; time goes on and on, and still, its Cosmic Calendar scale remains constant at just 6 days!

Allegorical Version:

The following traditions are taken entirely from *The History of al-Tabari, Volume 1 - General Introduction and from The Creation to the Flood* (trans. Franz Rosenthal, State University of New York Press, Albany 1989), pp. 187-193:

‘There is (also) a sound tradition from the Messenger of God told us by Hannad b. al-Sari, who also said that he read all of the Hadith (to Abu Bakr) - Abu Bakr b. ‘Ayyash - Abu Sa’d al-Baqqaal - ‘Ikrimah - Ibn Abbas:

The Jews came to the Prophet and asked him about the creation of the heavens and the earth. He said: God created the earth on Sunday and Monday. He created the mountains and the uses they possess on Tuesday. On Wednesday, He created trees, water, cities, and the cultivated barren land. These are four (days). He continued (citing the Qur’an): “Say: Do you really not believe in the One Who created the earth in two days, and set up others like Him? That is the Lord of the worlds. He made it firmly anchored (mountains) above it and blessed it and decreed that it contain the amount of food it provides, (all) in four days, equally for those asking” - for those who ask. On Thursday, He created heaven. On Friday, He created the stars, the sun, the moon, and the angels, until three hours remained. In the first of these three hours He created the terms (of human life), who would live and who would die. In the second, He cast harm upon everything that is useful for mankind. And in the third, (He created) Adam and had him dwell in Paradise. He commanded Iblis to prostrate himself before Adam, and He drove Adam out of Paradise at the end of the hour. When the Jews asked: What then, Muhammad? He said: “Then He sat straight upon the Throne.” The Jews said: You are right, if you had finished, they said, with: “Then He rested.” Whereupon the Prophet got very angry, and it was revealed: “We have created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days, and fatigue did not touch Us. Thus be patient with what they say.””