

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Qur'an and Science

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An Introduction

The pursuit of science is a worthy enterprise because it unlocks the secrets of the heavens and the earth, opens up the majestic vistas of the cosmos, elevates human culture, unlocks the door to moral choices and brings the human closer to divine presence.

From times immemorial, the torch of philosophical enquiry into the nature of things has been passed on from one civilization to another. The Egyptians, the Sumerians, the Indus valley inhabitants, the Chinese, the Arabs, the Mayans and the Aztecs have all carried this torch at one time or another.

For five hundred years, from 700 CE to 1200 CE it was the Islamic civilization that was in the vanguard of scientific work. The Muslims learned from the East and the West, invented the empirical method, advanced the discipline of mathematics and astronomy, laid the foundations of algebra and chemistry, and passed on the torch of learning to the Latin west.

The flame of scientific enquiry flickered on for another five hundred years, revealing vistas of art, architecture and astronomy, and occasionally flaring up as in the rockets of Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Finally, it died out.

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An Introduction (Continued)

The question is, why? Why did the scientific revolution not take place in Islam?

The reasons for the decay and disappearance of science in the Islamic world were complex and involved an interplay of philosophical, social, political, economic and religious currents. However, the principal reason appears to be an intellectual failure to accommodate the natural sciences within the Shariah.

The Qur'an, as the revealed Word, offers exhaustive references to Signs in nature which point to the subtle and sublime work of God. Indeed, the approach of the Qur'an to faith is empirical, drawing heavily upon the phenomena of nature and events in history. So, why did Islamic scholarship fail to reconcile science with faith?

We will take a fresh look at this question and offer a convincing way to place scientific enquiry squarely within the purview of the Shariah

Read.....

Read! In the Name of your Creator and
Sustainer,
Who created,
Created the human from a clot,
Read! By your Creator and Sustainer, the
most Bountiful,
Who taught by the Pen,
Taught the human what he knew not.
Qur'an, 96:1-5

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (العلق: 1).
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (العلق: 2).
اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ (العلق: 3).
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ (العلق: 4).
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (العلق: 5).

“Read!” was the First Command from Allah

“Read!”, said the Angel *Jibrael* to Prophet Muhammed.

“I cannot read”, said the Prophet

“Read! In the Name of your Lord, who created.....”

That was the dawn of the light of Qur’an upon the darkness of the world.

Allah swt willed that He be known. A Hadith e Qudsi narrates: “I was a hidden treasure. I willed that I be known. Therefore, I created”. The Qur’an declares: “I created not the jinn and human except that they (worship, know) serve Me”.

“Read!” was the First Command from Allah (continued)

The *jalal* (manifestation of divine attributes) is so intense that it overwhelms and blinds the human. Not even a great prophet like Moses could withstand a single ray of His *jalal* on Mount Sinai; so, he swooned. As a mercy to the human, Allah veiled Himself in layers of *kashaf* (He hid Himself behind curtains) so that the human may see his own self and the created world and not be blinded by the intensity of divine Light.

The purpose for the creation of the human is to know, serve and worship God. Knowledge begins with knowing God’s creation, namely, the cosmos. And that is what science is: a rigorous method and a process, based on observation and reason, to know the cosmos and through it to know God.

Physical Sciences in the Qur'an

- “Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of night and day, there are indeed signs for people of insight.”

Qur'an, 3:190



The majesty and diversity of Allah's creation

The majesty, diversity and extent of the cosmos is not comprehensible. We live in a multi-universe which may exist in parallel, one on top of the other, or exist in series like houses in a tree lined suburb. Each universe has more than 2 billion galaxies. Each galaxy has 2 billion stars. Each star has many planets.

Towards the outer fringes of a midsize galaxy, our milky way, is a midsize star, our own sun. Our planet, the earth orbits this planet like a speck of dust in the vast expanse of space. On this spec of dust there are 7 billion of us, each with an ego that stretches from one continent to the other.

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The majesty and diversity of Allah's creation (continued)

Each human is unique and is endowed with sight, hearing, speech and touch. There are billions of cells in each human, each cell a complete factory consisting of billions of DNA. Each loop of a DNA has enough information to fill books that can be stacked up to the roof of a 1000 story building. Need we enunciate more?

This is just one aspect of Allah's creation. There are other worlds, not physical and other creatures, some known, some unknown. Science provides a key to know something about this cosmos

Signs from Allah in Nature and History

“We shall show them Our Signs on the horizon, and in their own souls, until it becomes clear to them that it is the Truth”

Qur'an, 41:53

سُنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ
وَفِي أَنفُسِهِمْ
حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

Signs in nature, history and the human soul

- Allah made Himself be known (*tanzeelat*) in steps: (1) His *dhat* or essence which is known only to Himself (2) His *sifat* or attributes which are reflected in His creation (3) his *afa'l* or works that are immeasurable and incomprehensible. He created the human and hid Himself so that the human would not be overwhelmed and destroyed by the power of Allah's Light. Moses was shown but a ray of His light and he swooned. The curtains that separate the human from the divine make it possible for the human to look at himself, know himself and to witness Allah's creation. The sun must set before the stars become visible.
- To help the human find his way back to the divine, Allah has left His Signs in nature, history and the human soul. The study of nature is science. The study of the soul is tasawwuf. The study of history is the humanities. Each offers a method and a process that lifts a veil (*kashaf*) separating the human from divine presence.

Signs in nature, history and the human soul (Cont'd)

- The edifice of knowledge is supported on a stable three pillar foundation: science, history and the Self, all three of which are accessible through the Qur'an. The laws of Allah (shariah) are embedded in nature, in human affairs and in the innermost heart of the knowers. Revelation is the light that illuminates the tree of knowledge whose branches are *ilmul ibara* (science and shariah), *ilmul ishara* (tasawwuf) and *ilm ul laduni* (revelation and hidayah or divine guidance). The human is commanded in the Qur'an to look for His signs through *ilmul ibara*, *ilmu ishara* and *ilmu laduni*. Hikmah (wisdom) is a jewel that has three facets: shariah, science, tasawwuf (inner knowledge of the Self),

The awe and wonder of the cosmos

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth,
In the contrast between night and day,
In the ships that sail the oceans
For the benefit of humankind; and
In the rain that Allah brings down from the heavens,
And with it, gives life to a dead earth,
And the fauna of all kinds that it spreads,
And the winds that blow,
And the clouds that float, captured
Between the heavens and the earth,
There are Signs for a people who reason.

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي
الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ
اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ
كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ
وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ
(البقرة: 164).

Qur'an, 2: 164

Allah's creation is sublime

- Every divine command, each reflection of His attributes, individually and collectively points to His presence.
- What are some of the Signs in the alteration of the day and the night?
 - In the cyclic change from light to darkness there is moment when it is neither light nor darkness. This moment of “nothingness” in wave form inspired the ancient Mayans of Central America to invent the concept of zero which forms the basis of the decimal system. The same concept was invented by the Indus Valley and the Tigris Valley civilizations.
 - Successive changes from zero facilitate counting and form the basis of mathematics.

Allah's Creation is sublime

- The quiet of the night is the time for contemplation. It was on one such night that the first Ayah was revealed to the Prophet.
- For the astronomer, the night is the time to map the heavens.
- For the lone traveler in the darkness of space or the blue seas it is the time to find the guide star.
- For the spiritually inclined, the night is a allegory to the darkness of the soul just as the day is an allegory to the light of revelation.
- Night is symbolic of ignorance just as the light of day is symbolic of knowledge

Allah created the heavens and the earth to
manifest *Al Haqq*
(the Truth, Justice, Dynamic Balance)

- Allah created the heavens and the earth
In Truth (to manifest His Most
Beautiful Name, *al Haqq*)-
Indeed, in that are Signs for those with
certainty of faith.

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
(العنكبوت: 44)

Qur'an, 29:44

Al Haqq in creation

- Al Haqq is a comprehensive word. First, it is one of the Asma ul Husna (one of the beautiful Names of Allah). It means justice in human relations. In science, it means dynamic balance. In jurisprudence it means rights and responsibilities. In economics, it means what you own and what you owe. And so on.
- Allah is Al Haqq. What He creates is Al Haqq. His creation is not secular, as modern man maintains. It is steeped in the spirituality of Al Haqq.
- The justice and balance in the creation is a means to climb the ladder to the sublime Al Haqq, the Source of all justice and balance. Hence, science, as a means to find the dynamic balance in the cosmos, is a spiritual endeavor sanctioned by God's command.

The Bounties of Allah are countless: We must study them

- And if you count the bounties of Allah,
You cannot count them (they are countless);
Lo! Allah is indeed the Forgiver,
the Merciful.

وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (النحل: 18).

Qur'an, 16:18

The Bounties of Allah

- “And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom.”. Qur’an, 31:27
- Where can we begin to count the bounties of Allah? He alone is the source of life, knowledge and power. Let us just consider at the most elementary level:
 - Gravity is a bounty and a blessing. It holds the cosmos together and separates it. There would be no sun, no moon and earth without it.
 - The electromagnetic waves give us light and warmth. They help us see, sense, navigate and measure. Through thermal effects, they help create the winds, move the clouds, bring down the rain.

The Bounties of Allah (Cont'd)

- The atomic forces hold the atoms together and keep them apart. Every electron, every proton, every atom bears witness to His glory.
- Time is a mystery and a riddle which no man can fathom. It is the mighty arbitrator of change and the ultimate means for perception and knowledge. Time is a blessing and a bounty of God. It may not be a real entity but it facilitates comprehension of the movement of Allah's Grace on the canvas of history. As a Hadith e Qudsi commands: "O son of Adam! Do not abuse Time (*ad dhahr*). I am Time."

Apply Reason to Find His Laws (the Shariah of Nature)

“And He has subjected to you the night and the day,
And He has subjected to His laws the sun and the moon and the stars,
Indeed, in these are Signs for a people who apply reason.”

Qur'an, 16:12

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ
وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ
(النحل: 12).

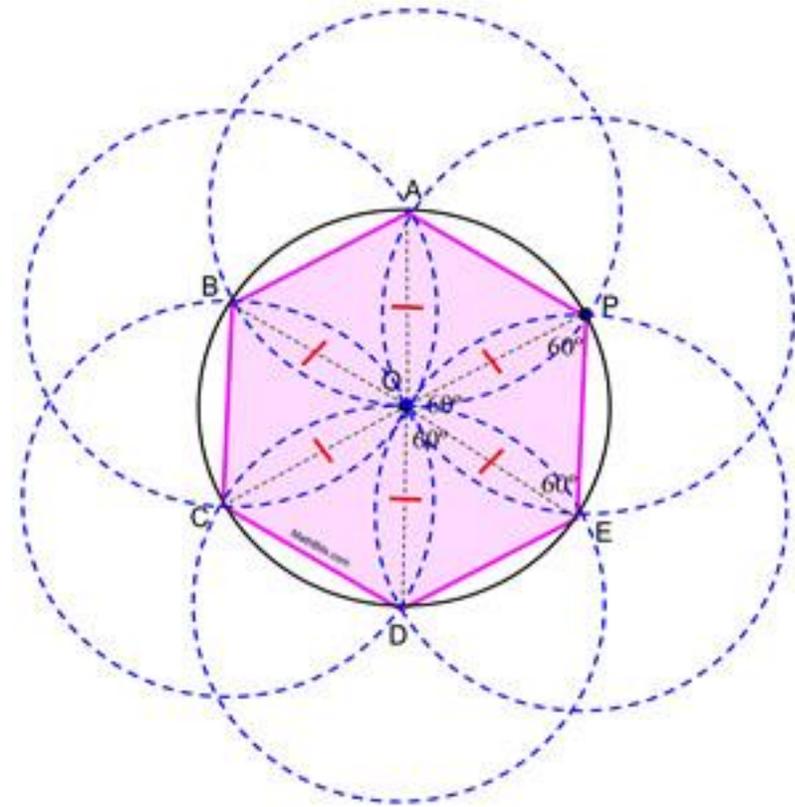
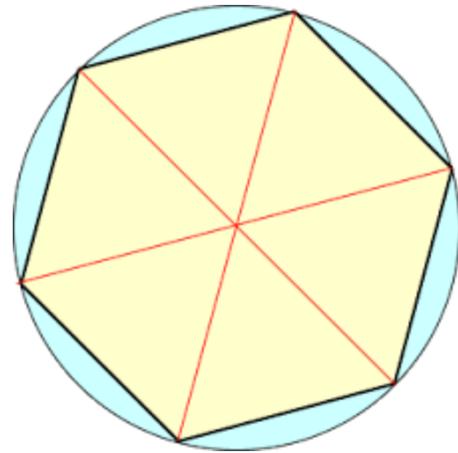
The Shariah of Celestial Mechanics

- In an unambiguous and clear pointer, this Ayah reminds us that Allah has subjected the sun, the moon and the stars to His laws. These are the laws of astrophysics and celestial mechanics.
- The laws of astrophysics and celestial mechanics constitute the Shariah of nature. The rotation of the earth around the sun results in day and night. Divine mercy has subjected the day and the night to the human. To find out how, the human must first understand the laws of physics. That is science.

The Shariah of Celestial Mechanics

- The times for prayer and contemplation, the internal time mechanisms of creatures, change of seasons, sowing and harvesting of crops, movement of the winds, rainfall, the rise and fall of ocean waves, the flora and the fauna on earth, indeed all life on this planet is a function of the rotation and movement of the earth, the moon and the sun. Allah has directed us to study and benefit from this knowledge.

Allah creates and repeats His creation
(so that we can understand it more easily)



Signs in the Spatial Dimension

- Space is a dimension of revelation and the one most accessible to us as humans.
- Space is an extension of a mere dot.
- A dot is the limit of space as it collapses to zero.
- If you stretch a dot, you draw a line. If you rotate the line, you make a circle. If you offset the circle, then rotate it and connect the centers of successive circles, you begin to see a myriad of geometrical shapes.
- Allah wants to make it easier for the human to find Him!

Signs in the Spatial Dimension

- Allah's work in nature is a beautiful manifestation of spatial geometry which at the same time is supernal, namely, it has innate beauty, order and proportion.
- It is this sublime supernal geometry that is exhibited in ancient Persian rugs as well as monuments such as the Taj Mahal.
- Islamic architecture exudes supernal geometry.
- The weavers of these rugs and the architects of the monuments were expressing their relationship to Tawhid through spatial geometry.

Repetition makes possible the construction of physical laws (and equations)

And He it is who originates creation,
Then repeats it -
Lo! That is easy for Him
And to Him belong
The supreme attributes in the heavens and the earth,
And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَهُوَ
أَهْوَنُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ فِي
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
(الروم: 27)

Qur'an, 30:27

Repetition in Creation is a Divine Mercy

- In His infinite mercy, Allah repeats His creation in space-time, creating patterns so that the human may reflect on these patterns and find the Signs to divine presence.
- Physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology, indeed all natural science would be impossible without repetitive patterns in Allah's creation. Every DNA molecule, every atom and every galaxy has a repetitive pattern to it.

Repetition in Creation is a Divine Mercy

- Allah shows his sublime works to all humans whatever their culture, race, color, origin or belief. His mercy is like sunlight that illuminates the earth, whether it be a rock or fertile soil. It is the human that puts barriers between divine light and human perception and either thanks the Giver for what He has given or denies it.
- Repetition makes it possible to capture the sublime beauty of creation through simple and easy to understand equations.
- Two well known equations are : $F=ma$, and $E=mc^2$

Unitary Laws of Physics governed the Origin of the Universe

Do the disbelievers not see
That the heavens and the earth
were indeed bound together,
Then We broke them asunder.
And We made all living things out
of water,
Will they then not believe?

Qu'ran, 21:30

أَوَلَمْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا
فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (الأنبياء: 30).

How is our known universe held together?

- According to modern theories, our known universe is expanding. Based on mathematical models, the idea of a “Big Bang” is well accepted. In other words, the heavens were held together before they were broken asunder. Billions of years went by and gradually, the galaxies and the stars were formed. The earth is a relatively young planet in cosmological times.
- Our current knowledge postulates that there are four geophysical forces that animate the universe: gravitational, electromagnetic, weak nuclear and strong nuclear.
- The question is: Was there a single force that held together the heavens before the currently known four forces emerged? Physicists are still working on this question.

Stars for Navigation on the Oceans and in the Darkness of Space

And He it is who created the stars
So that you use them to navigate
In the depths of darkness on land
And in the oceans (of water or space).
Behold! We have described in detail Our Signs
For a people who have knowledge!

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا
بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ
فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (الأنعام:
97).

Qur'an, 6: 97

Stars for Navigation in the Darkness of Space and the Oceans

In the darkness of space and on the blue oceans with no earth-based references, the space traveler or the sea captain must rely on the stars to fix his position and navigate to his destination. The astrolabe used by Muslim merchants in centuries bygone provides an example. In modern times, the Fine Guidance Sensor on the Hubble Space Telescope was used to “fix” the line of sight of the telescope to distant stars of magnitude 8 (faint stars as they existed billions of years ago). The same is true of other sensors as well as rockets and missiles.

This is an illustration of the Ayah, “And We have subjected to you all that is between the heavens and earth.”. This is science. A knowledge of the majesty of the heavens invites the soul to reflect on the power and glory of the Creator.

Orbital Mechanics, Mathematics and Physics

He it is who made the sun self
luminescent,
And the moon a reflector of light,
And decreed their orbits,
So that you know the number of years,
And (learn) mathematics,
Allah has not created it all
except in (dynamic) balance,
(He) explains the Signs in detail
For a people who have knowledge.

Qur'an, 10:5

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً
وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلَ
لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ
مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ
يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ
(يونس: 5).

The sun and the moon support mathematics and physics

The sun and the moon, the closest heavenly objects to the earth. serve multiple functions:

- Their rotations provide a basis for counting and mathematics
- The sun as a self-luminescent body provides us heat and light (electromagnetic waves) and helps sustain life on earth
- The moon as a reflective body provides guidance to travelers and affects ocean ways
- The sun is used as an allegory for the self-luminescent light from Allah while the reflected light of the moon is used as an allegory for the light of Muhammed (pbuh)
- The dynamic balance of heavenly bodies in motion forms the illustrative subject matter for physics, mathematics and astrodynamics.

The sun and the moon follow His laws (The Shariah of nature)

- And the sun moves in its determined orbit -

That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knower. (The Qur'an, 36:38)

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ
الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (يس: 38).

- And for the moon We have decreed the phases,
Until it becomes (shriveled) like an old stalk of a date palm.

وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَا مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ
كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ (يس: 39).

Qur'an, 36:39

The sun and the moon follow the Shariah of Nature

- The laws of the universe are the Shariah of nature. The orbits of the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars and the galaxies are ordained by divine decree. Just as the laws that govern human relations constitute the Shariah for a just society, the laws of the heavens constitute the Shariah of nature. The difference is this: whereas the human is given a limited choice to obey or not obey the commandments of Allah, the heavenly bodies obey the laws they are subject to.
- The laws of the heavens are amenable to physical and mathematical enquiry. The human is encouraged to study these laws, benefit from them and be grateful for the blessings therefrom. That is science!

The Sun and the Moon are Objects to be Studied

- And of His Signs
Are the night and the day,
And the sun and the moon.
Do not prostrate before the sun
and the moon,
But prostrate before Allah Who
created them,
If it is He alone that you worship

Qur'an, 41:37

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ
وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ
وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ
إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ (فصلت: 37).

The Sun, the Moon and the Stars as Signs for Tawhid

The sun, the moon and the stars are heavenly objects that become Signs on the path to divine presence through their appearance and their setting. They are objects to be witnessed, measured and studied. They are not to be worshipped. This observation is illustrated in the Qur'an by a parable of Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh):

Then, as darkness covered the night, he (Ibrahim) saw a star, he said: "This is my Rabb!". Then, when it disappeared, he said: "I do not love that which disappears."

And when he saw the illuminated moon, he said: "This is my Rabb!" Then, when it disappeared, he said: "If my Rabb does not guide me, I will indeed be among the people who are lost."

The Sun, the Moon and the Stars as Signs for Tawhid (Cont'd)

Then, when he saw the sun appear in its brilliance, he said: “This is my Rabb! This indeed is the greatest of them all!”. Then, when it set, he said: “O my people! I am tired of what you associate with (the Rabb).”

“Lo! I turn my existence in the direction of He to whom is owed the primal origin of the heavens and the earth as a Haneef (endowed with inner knowledge)and I am not one to associate partners with Allah.”

In this revelation, Prophet Abraham (pbuh) acts as a “scientist”. He postulates a theory, makes observations, finds the postulate incorrect and finally arrives the correct conclusion.

The Shariah (the laws) of Astrophysics

- The sun dare not defy (what is decreed for) it
And catch up with the moon,
Nor for the night to appear
before the day -
Lo! Each one rotates in its own
orbit!

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا
اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ
(يس: 40).

Qur'an, 36:40

The awe and wonder of celestial movements

- The earth, the sun and the moon are in dynamic balance. The rotation of the earth around its own axis causes night and day, a flattening of the earth at the poles and affects ocean tides.
- The rotation of the moon around the earth determines the lunar calendar. It also affects ocean tides, provides guidance for bird migration and influence the behavior of plants and insects.
- The sun swims in its own orbit in the milky way galaxy and carries the planets with it. Finally, if our predictions are correct, it will die out somewhere in the Hercules constellation.
- The movement of the planets, stars and galaxies is awe inspiring and manifests the *jalal* (majesty) of the Creator.

The mystery of the Pulsars, the piercing bright stars

By the heavens,
And that which visits by (the
darkness of the) night,

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ (الطارق: 1).
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ (الطارق: 2).
النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ (الطارق: 3).

And what will explain to you
What it is that visits by (the
darkness of the) night?

A bellowing piercing bright star!

Qur'an, 86:1-3

Pulsars, the piercing stars

- Pulsars are rotating compact stars that emit beams of electromagnetic radiation out of its magnetic poles.
- Since the energy is directed, it can be sensed from the earth only when they are pointed towards us. This makes the star appear in the darkness of night as “a blinking star”.
- The compact stars are very small in size but have the mass of several suns. Hence the emitted intermittent bursts of energy are very intense or “a bellowing, piercing bright star”.
- The bursts of energy are used in space navigation as well as accurate time keeping.

Study Science!

Study Science. It is a commandment of Allah.

Master it.

Use it for the well being of humankind.

Use it for the protection of the earth.

Use it a Sign to get close to the presence of Allah.