



The Qur'an and Science: Understanding Creation, Days, and the Seven Heavens

Izvor: <https://minbarlive.com/videos/universe-6-days-or-13-8-billion-years-science-keeps-confirming-the-quran>

This lecture explores how the Qur'an's account of creation in six days and references to seven heavens align with modern scientific understanding when properly interpreted. The speaker demonstrates that Qur'anic terminology—particularly the word "day" (yawm) and "heavens" (samawat)—refers to phases and reference frames rather than literal 24-hour cycles, resolving apparent contradictions between scripture and science.

SAŽETAK

This comprehensive Islamic lecture addresses the perceived conflict between Qur'anic descriptions of creation and modern cosmology. The speaker establishes foundational principles for interpreting scripture: recognizing the Qur'an as divine guidance rather than a scientific textbook, understanding the linguistic meaning of key terms, and examining multiple layers of meaning within single verses. The lecture explores how the Arabic word "yawm" (day) denotes periods or phases rather than fixed 24-hour units—supported by Qur'anic references to days lasting 1,000 or 5,000 years. The speaker then presents a sophisticated analysis of the "seven heavens," mapping them to nested reference frames in physics and astronomy: Earth's motion, the solar system, stellar neighborhoods, the galaxy, local galaxy groups, superclusters, and the observable universe. This framework demonstrates perfect alignment between Qur'anic structure and modern astrophysical understanding. The lecture further addresses Qur'anic descriptions of creation as a controlled, purposeful process and uses Zulqarnain's journey as an example of how the Qur'an employs human perspective and everyday language to convey profound truths. The speaker emphasizes the legacy of Islamic scholarship—highlighting scientists like Ibn al-Haytham, Al-Khawarizmi, Ibn Sina, and others who synthesized Qur'anic study with rigorous scientific inquiry. Finally, eight master keys are provided for evaluating claims of Qur'anic error: establishing Islamic proofs as foundation; distinguishing guidance from technical instruction; seeking deeper meaning; considering alternative perspectives; avoiding conflation of human interpretation with divine text; accounting for translation limitations; consulting genuine scholars over critics; and recognizing Islam's unique theological framework.

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The Arabic word "yawm" (day) in Qur'anic creation accounts refers to phases or eras with beginning and end points, not literal 24-hour cycles, as evidenced by the Qur'an itself describing days lasting 1,000 or 5,000 years (Qur'an 32:4, Qur'an 22:47)

The seven heavens (samawat) described in the Qur'an correspond to nested reference frames in physics and astronomy: Earth, solar system, stellar neighborhood, galaxy, local group, superclusters, and observable universe—each providing order and reference to everything within it (Qur'an 67:3, Qur'an 17:44)

The Qur'an is a guidebook for life and spiritual understanding, not a scientific textbook; it avoids technical details and uses relatable examples to convey meaning accessible across generations and educational backgrounds

Space has a fluid-like nature, bending around massive objects and creating invisible waves, consistent with modern astrophysical models and hinted at in Qur'anic language describing celestial motion (Qur'an 36:40)

The value of creation is measured by divine meaning and purpose, not physical size or mass; the Qur'an emphasizes humanity's spiritual significance despite Earth's physical smallness in the cosmos (Qur'an 17:44)

A single phrase in the Qur'an can carry multiple layers of truth simultaneously—all valid and intended by Allah—requiring rejection of the assumption that only one interpretation can be correct

Critics who claim scientific errors in the Qur'an often misunderstand human perspective language (such as the sun "setting") or confute human scholarly misinterpretations with divine text itself, as demonstrated in the account of Zulqarnain's journey (Qur'an 18:86)

Islamic civilization pioneered modern science through scholars like Ibn al-Haytham (optics), Al-Khawarizmi (algorithms), Jabir ibn Hayyan (chemistry), Ibn Sina (medicine), Al-Jaziri (robotics), and others who found complete harmony between deep Qur'anic study and rigorous scientific inquiry

Eight master keys for evaluating claims against the Qur'an: establish Islamic proofs as foundation; distinguish guidance from technical instruction; seek deeper meaning beyond wording; consider alternative perspectives; avoid blaming the Author for reader error; account for translation limitations; consult genuine scholars over critics; and recognize Islam's unique theological framework distinct from other religions

Reconciling Qur'anic and Scientific Timescales

The claim that the Qur'an describes creation in six days while science establishes a timeline of billions of years presents what many consider a fundamental contradiction. However, this apparent conflict dissolves when we examine what the Qur'an actually means by "day" and what modern science has discovered about the structure of the universe. On one hand, new scientific confirmations of Qur'anic ideas emerge regularly. On the other hand, some verses seem to contradict modern science at first glance. The question becomes: which interpretation is correct, and how do we resolve these tensions?

The foundation for understanding this issue requires clarity on a single crucial point: is the Qur'an a divine book? Without establishing this foundation, analyzing specific details becomes meaningless. If we accept the Qur'an as truth, then difficult or unclear points become questions for exploration rather than proof of error. Not knowing an answer today does not mean the book is wrong—it simply means we are still learning. Conversely, if this foundation has not been settled in one's mind, no answer will truly satisfy. This represents the first golden rule of Qur'anic interpretation: recognizing Islamic proofs and understanding the big picture is essential before attempting to resolve individual verses.

The Meaning of "Day" in the Qur'an

Surah Al-Sajdah, verse 4, states: "Indeed, We created the heavens and the earth and everything in between in six days, and We were not even touched with fatigue." Science tells us the universe took billions of years to form. Yet the Qur'an appears to say six days. How can these statements coexist?

The critical question is: what does "day" actually mean in the Qur'an? When we hear the word "day," we automatically think of a 24-hour cycle. But how logical is it to use a 24-hour measurement for a period when the earth and sun did not yet exist? The Qur'an could not possibly mean that the earth rotated six times on its axis before the earth was created. The answer lies in understanding the original Arabic word used in the Qur'an and its true linguistic context. The word "yawm" does not refer exclusively to 24 hours. It refers to a period, a phase, or an era with a beginning and an end. In this sense, the six days are actually six major phases or stages of creation as designed by the Creator of the universe.

Time cannot be measured solely by our 24-hour cycle. In the vast dominion of creation, planetary rotation varies dramatically. A day on Jupiter lasts only about ten hours, while on Venus a single day lasts longer than an entire year. The Qur'an itself explains that the measurement of a day changes depending on context and reference point. In one verse, it states that the angels and Gabriel ascend to Allah during a day,

the extent of which is 5,000 years. In another verse, it mentions a day whose length is 1,000 years. By our counting, the Qur'an itself clarifies that "day" is not a fixed 24-hour unit but a relative measure.

Purpose Beyond Duration

Why does the Qur'an emphasize these six periods of creation? The answer is not primarily about how long the process took. It is about how creation was designed. If the universe took 15.8 billion years instead of 13.8 billion years, this would not fundamentally change our lives or understanding. What matters is that creation occurred stage by stage, demonstrating that the universe emerged through a controlled, programmed process. Even what appears chaotic is actually under perfect control. Everything follows a process. Everything is measured. Everything has a purpose.

The mission of scientists is to discover exactly what those six phases represent. When we examine modern scientific findings about the formation of the universe, the alignment with this six-stage framework is remarkably consistent. Creation follows a journey that fits perfectly into six major stages, beginning from a singular point and culminating in the life we observe today. The Qur'an and scientific discovery point to the same truth, simply expressed in two different languages.

The Qur'an as Guidebook, Not Textbook

Understanding the purpose of the Qur'an is essential to resolving apparent contradictions with science. Allah does not speak only to a small group of scientific experts. He speaks a language that reaches every heart, regardless of time period or educational background. This leads to the second golden rule: the Qur'an is not a textbook of science. It is a guidebook for life. The Qur'an does not discuss subjects for their own sake, but always to introduce the artist—to introduce our Creator. Whether one is a scientist or a shepherd, the Qur'an teaches the way to look at creation and understand its purpose.

This is why the Qur'an avoids technical details like dinosaurs or complex scientific terminology, and instead focuses on simple, relatable examples such as the camel and the fly. These examples serve a spiritual and moral purpose, accessible to all believers across generations, rather than serving as detailed scientific instruction.

The Seven Heavens: A Question of Reference Frames

A deeper mystery emerges when we examine what modern science calls the "observable universe" and what the Qur'an refers to as "samawat"—the heavens. In Surah Al-Mulk, Allah says: "He is the one who created seven heavens, one above the other. You will never see any imperfection in the creation of the Most Compassionate. So look again. Do you see any flaws?" At first glance, we see only one vast, endless

space. So what do the seven layers actually mean? Is this a scientific fact we have not yet discovered? Or are we interpreting it incorrectly?

The key to understanding the seven heavens lies in grasping how reference frames work in physics and astronomy. Imagine sitting on a high-speed train holding a cup of coffee. To you, the coffee is perfectly still. But to someone standing on the platform outside, that same coffee is moving at 200 kilometers per hour. Who is right? Both are. Speed and motion have no meaning without a reference point. To define how something moves, we must first ask: compared to what? Nothing in the universe moves on its own. Everything moves within a larger system, and each heaven provides a fixed reference point for everything contained within it.

The Nested Hierarchy of Reference Frames

Your car moves relative to the earth. The earth moves relative to the sun. So the first heaven is the earth frame of reference. The second heaven is the solar system, with our sun at its center. Yet our sun is not stationary either. It moves at 19 kilometers per second in a particular direction. We understand this motion only by using nearby stars as our reference point. Therefore, the third heaven is the stellar neighborhood. Those stars, in turn, rotate around a galactic center called the Milky Way. So the fourth heaven is the galactic frame.

The fifth heaven is the local group—a cluster of about fifty galaxies, including Andromeda. At this scale, we measure how entire galaxies move relative to each other. The sixth heaven is the realm of superclusters. At this massive scale, thousands of galaxy groups flow together like glowing rivers of gravity, moving in relation to one another. The seventh heaven is the observable universe itself, the ultimate frame of reference. Here, the expansion of space itself provides the frame for all motion. The seventh heaven contains everything.

This is a perfectly nested hierarchy where each lower system finds its meaning and reference point within the higher one. Each level of organization—from the individual, to the planetary, to the stellar, to the galactic, to the supercluster, to the universal—operates within its own frame while being encompassed by a larger frame. This structure mirrors exactly what the Qur'an describes: seven heavens, one above the other, each providing order and reference to everything within it.

The Fluid Nature of Space in Islamic Scholarship

Great Islamic scholar Zaman offers a distinctive perspective on the nature of space. The motion of planets is less like an airplane flying through the air and more like a fish swimming through water. Space bends around stars and creates invisible waves, almost like a vast cosmic ocean. Modern astrophysicists often model the universe as a giant, flowing fluid. The Qur'an hinted at this fluid-like nature centuries ago. Surah Yasin describes the sun and the moon with a very specific word—it says the sun and

moon swim along in their own orbits, which is a perfect physical definition of this phenomenon.

Even a hadith of the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ describes space as **Muji**, which means a restrained wave. This fluid-like structure is consistently emphasized throughout the Qur'an. Space changes its character depending on the mass it interacts with. In our solar system, the sun bends space into a deep gravity well. At a galactic scale, space is bent under the collective weight of billions of stars, guiding them into a massive rotating disk. These distinct interactions transform the universe from a random pile of matter into hierarchical layers, with each layer behaving as a different environment with its own laws.

Seven Heavens as Divine Architecture

If the Creator has classified this complex structure as seven-fold, then seven it is. But one must ask: could those who claim the universe cannot have seven layers be missing the deeper message behind it? Why does the Qur'an insist on the phrase **seven heavens** instead of simply saying **heavens**? It is a message about total control. Defining the exact boundaries of a system proves that you are its architect, or at least that you know it inside out. Allah manages seven different layers with seven different sets of laws, yet it is all one unified act. He is simultaneously managing the flight of a bird in the first layer and the drift of a galaxy in the fourth. To Him, the micro and the macro are one single, perfectly ordered system.

This reveals our third golden rule: do not just look at the wording; try to understand the meaning behind it. In Surat Al-Isra, Ayah 44, it says that the seven heavens, the earth, and all those in them glorify Allah. The seven heavens are on one side of the scale and the earth is on the other. Even though the earth is like a grain of sand in the universe, it is the center of meaning. It is an exhibition of divine art. It is the field where the seeds of the hereafter are planted, and it is home to humanity's greatest guides—thousands of prophets, including our beloved Messenger Muhammad ﷺ.

The Value of Creation Beyond Physical Measure

The value of something is not measured by its physical size, its speed, or the minerals it contains. This reveals our fourth golden rule: the Qur'an gives value to things not by their matter, but by their meaning. This is why the question of whether God really cares about us in this immense universe should never cross your mind. Our scholars have offered various other interpretations as well. For example, some suggested that the entire observable universe—everything we see—is actually just the first heaven. Beyond that, there are six more layers that remain completely beyond our observation.

As more ideas are put forward, we must avoid a common trap. We often assume that only one of these views can be correct, because with our limited minds, we usually

mean only one thing with our words. But Allah's knowledge is eternal. His speech can contain every layer of truth at once. This leads us to our fifth golden rule: a single word of the Qur'an does not just represent one meaning. It acts as a key to different wonders at once.

Multiple Truths and Six Days of Creation

This logic may be applied perfectly to the creation of the universe in six days. Just as there are multiple valid insights into the seven heavens, there can be six distinct accurate interpretations of these six days. They can all be true and all be intended by Allah at the same time. However, we must distinguish between inaccurate interpretations and valid ones. For example, a popular view was that the seven heavens refer to the seven visible planets in our solar system. It was a logical guess for its time, but as science discovered more planets, this theory collapsed. Some critics then claimed that the Qur'an was proven wrong. But they only debunked a theory of a human being. You cannot blame the author for the reader's misunderstanding. Proving one theory wrong does not mean you have destroyed the truth. You have simply cleared the way for the other six.

If you ever hear that science disagrees with the Qur'an, remember this: you are likely looking at a human interpretation that missed the mark. Throughout this discussion, we have highlighted Quranic miracles in the light of so many Islamic proofs. These conflicts remain as a puzzle waiting to be solved. Not knowing an answer today just means we are still learning.

Zulqarnain's Journey and Perspective

Let us apply these rules to one last misunderstood verse: the journey of Zulqarnain, a powerful ruler who, when describing his famous expedition to the West, is recorded in the Qur'an as saying that he came to the setting of the sun and found it setting into a muddy spring. At first glance, this might look like an old flat-earth misconception to a disbeliever. Critics ask: how could a giant star larger than Earth physically crash into a pool of mud?

The answer is actually hidden within the very words they are attacking. The Qur'an does not say the sun physically sank into a muddy pool. The exact phrasing is that he found it setting. Here, the Qur'an uses everyday human language to describe a traveler's view. It is acting as a camera, capturing the exact horizon view. All we know from the Ayah is that he was marching west. We do not know where he started, nor where he ended up. And yet, with just a single line, the Qur'an delivers a brilliant description of the exact location where the centuries-old event took place.

The Horizon at Journey's End

Zulqarnain stood at a point where a giant ocean looked just like a boiling, muddy spring. His journey to the west took him to the very edge of the continent, right before a massive ocean—probably the Atlantic. It was the middle of summer. The extreme heat was baking the swamps and marshlands along the coast, causing massive steam to rise. Zulqarnain was not looking at a clear horizon; he was looking through a thick blanket of rising mist and fog. And that is how he watched the sunset from the shore.

But there is more to consider. Remember, we said that a single phrasing in the Qur'an can carry multiple layers of meaning. That is actually a brilliant pattern we see all over the Qur'an. It sometimes defines the massive planet Earth as a secure cradle, the blazing sun as a simple lamp, and the moon as a gentle lantern in the boundless dominion of Allah. How should the largest ocean on our planet be described? The grandest ocean is nothing more than a tiny hot spring when described from the perspective of the One who created all things.

Divine Speech and Human Understanding

Our Lord uses a language that establishes common ground between human perception and His own majesty. Even today, we say the sun is setting, and no one corrects us by saying the earth is rotating. Everyone understands the context, yet unfortunately, most modern critics are looking for a fight instead of seeking meaning. People who haven't spent even an hour studying the language or the context are often the first ones to claim the Qur'an is scientifically incorrect. Think about it: you wouldn't ask a mechanical engineer to perform open heart surgery. You would go to a surgeon. So why do we treat the Qur'an any differently?

The Problem with Uninformed Criticism

If someone spends their time attacking the Qur'an or builds their platform on criticizing Islam, don't expect an objective analysis. If you want the truth, you must go to the experts. One deep, expert-level analysis is worth more than one hundred internet-style empty critics. These critics think they have found a huge mistake—a mistake that centuries of Muslim scientists supposedly completely missed. Do they really think the greatest minds in scientific history have never read the Qur'an? Islamic history is filled with hundreds of brilliant scientists, astronomers, and mathematicians who spent their lives studying both science and the Qur'an. We are talking about a civilization that pioneered science itself. The modern world we know today was built upon their efforts.

The Golden Age of Islamic Scholarship

Take Ibn al-Haytham, for example, the father of modern optics. Alongside him were scientists like Al-Khawarizmi, the mind behind the algorithms you are using to watch

this video right now. Jabir ibn Hayyan founded modern chemistry and built the world's first laboratory in the eighth century. Look at Ibn Sina, whose medical encyclopedia served as the ultimate authority in European universities for half a millennium. Consider Al-Jaziri, the father of robotics and mechanical engineering, and Ibn Khaldun, the founder of sociology and historiography. They all approached the Qur'an with deep analytical minds, yet they found absolute harmony within its verses.

Look at Fatima al-Fihri, the visionary woman who founded the world's oldest continuously operating university. Back then, in the West, if a woman touched science, she would face torture and execution. But in the Islamic world, Mariam al-Eliya was doing mathematics and engineering that Europe wouldn't even dream of for centuries. She crafted a highly complex astronomical calculator named the astrolabe. Ibn al-Baitar, Al-Jahiz, Al-Zahrawi, Al-Biruni, and Al-Battani—the list goes on and on. That is why a Muslim professor, Fuat Sezgin, once said that Western civilization is the child of Islam.

Eight Master Keys for Evaluating Claims Against the Qur'an

So from now on, when someone tells you they have found an error in the Qur'an, you can simply smile because you have the master keys to evaluate such claims.

First, focus on the proofs of Islam so that a single question doesn't shake your entire foundation. Second, ask whether they are treating the Qur'an like a physics textbook instead of a book of guidance for life. The Qur'an describes the universe not to teach us chemistry or astronomy, but to introduce the Artist behind creation. Third, don't just look at the wording; try to understand the meaning behind it. They might be missing the deeper meaning the Artist wants to show.

Fourth, consider whether Allah could be directing our gaze elsewhere and asking us to look from an entirely different perspective. When the Qur'an mentions a creation, perhaps it is not focusing on its everyday physical function. Fifth, ask yourself whether you are blaming the Author for the reader's mistake. Never confuse a human scholar's wrong guess with the flawless word of God. Sixth, ask yourself whether you are reading the Creator's exact words or just the translator's limited vocabulary. You cannot squeeze the majestic divine speech into a single, simple, translated word. You may be trying to pour an ocean into a tiny cup.

Seventh, ask yourself whether you are seeking the truth from the experts or from those who are only looking for a fight. If you truly want to understand the Scripture, you must sit with the scholars who devoted their lives to it, not the deniers who profit from attacking it. Eighth, recognize that Islam is not like other religions, so don't read it as if it is. Out of one hundred religions, only one of them can be true. Logically, ninety-nine of them must be wrong, and of course they will contradict science or logic. If you bundle the true religion together with those ninety-nine flawed ones, you are not

being objective. You are just being lazy. You are judging a religion by a history that is not its own.

The Timelessness of the Qur'an

While man-made ideas gather dust, the Qur'an simply remains ever fresh. It doesn't get old; it only grows younger with every age. Every time science takes a step forward, it doesn't move away from the Scripture. It moves deeper into it. Remember, history is no stranger to arrogant critics who mock the Qur'an based on flawed ideas of their time. Today, those flawed theories are forgotten, and those critics are left alone in their graves with their regrets. After all, even science changes—what it denies today it might accept tomorrow.

If we apply these keys, the illusion of contradiction disappears. Think of the universe as a book written by the Creator. Science focuses only on the weight of the book, the size of the font, the paper, the ink, and the structure of the sentences. But it can never read the letter. The Qur'an, however, is the translation guide for the universe. It reveals the meaning behind all creation, allowing us to read the messages of the Creator. If you separate the Qur'an from science, you will spend your whole life just counting the letters of the Book of Universe. But you will never actually understand the message. Since both books were written by the same Author, a contradiction between them is logically impossible.

Qur'an 32:4 (Surah Al-Sajdah, verse 4)

Qur'an 22:47

Qur'an 67:3 (Surah Al-Mulk)

Qur'an 17:44 (Surat Al-Isra, Ayah 44)

Qur'an 36:40 (Surah Yasin)

Qur'an 18:86 (Journey of Zulqarnain)

Hadith describing space as Muji (restrained wave)

#Qur'anic exegesis and interpretation (tafsir)

#Qur'an and modern science reconciliation

#Islamic cosmology and the seven heavens

#Linguistics and meaning of Qur'anic terminology

#Islamic Golden Age scientific achievements

#Reference frames in physics and astronomy

#Creation narrative and timeline