

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

THE SHAPE OF THE EARTH

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INTRODUCTION

Despite the use of select Quranic verses by many to support various theories (*e.g. geocentrism, flat-earth or a prevailing scientific thought*), it arguably remains noteworthy that the Quran has neither the intention to be a science book nor provide scientific data that would be incomprehensible (and thus, the idea seemingly false) to its reader. [1]

The Quran is foremost directed at the sensibilities and '*perceptions*' [2] of its readership, inviting them to observe the Lord's creation with a view to acknowledge His existence and Supreme Authority.

An example to support this position can be seen in verse 53:49 below:

053:049

"And that He is the Lord of Sirius (*Arabic: Shi'ira*)"

This pointed reference of the star seems to indicate some connection that the desert Arabs may have had with the celestial object, *possibly* as an entity of Pagan worship. The fact that Sirius was a point of fascination to the ancients appears to be attested by other ancient communities such as the Greeks, that referred to it as '*Seirios*' (glowing or scorching), which clearly denotes its brightness in the night sky. [3]

Thus, the Quran made reference to confirm what the Arabs *arguably 'knew'* in truth. For example, God did not reveal that He was the Lord of **the two stars Sirius** (a new scientific piece of information) which indicates the binary system that Sirius is part of (Sirius A and B). Such a revelation would only arguably serve to appear to the Arabs as outlandish or even false (even though it is true) and something that they could never verify. However, the Quran still remained correct in at least referencing one of the stars that the pagan Arabs would have been familiar with. This ensured that the underlying point remained that there was an Almighty Creator of the celestial object.

THE EARTH WAS LEVELLED AND SPREAD WIDE TO MAKE IT HABITABLE

The Quran appeals to the reader to ponder on how the earth has been made habitable for the purpose of humankind's needs. This includes travel with the ability to find a way in terms of roads / pathways / access (16:15, 20:53, 21:31, 43:10) [4] and control over certain animals so that they can also be used for transportation in order that more arduous terrain can be traversed (16:7).

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the common Arabic word '*ard*' which is often rendered in English as '*earth*' not only applies to the planet as a whole, but also signifies the physical land which earthly creatures inhabit.

030:002-3 (Part)

"The Romans have been defeated, in the nearest land (*ard*)..."

Therefore, it is not unusual for the Quran to furnish the reader with such analogies as the earth/land being **spread out, stretched, expanded, levelled**, (*sutiha* 88:20) or made **as a resting place, a couch or a carpet-like** for habitation (*bisat* 71:19, *firash* 2:22). Other terms such as '*madda*' (13:3, 15:19, 50:7, 84:3) have also used by the Quran to imply the action of stretching out, extending or spreading.

It is also notable how these statements are normally hedged within other narratives that also appeal to the habitable nature of the planet and how it has been designed to cater for civilisation's needs.

For example:

071:19-20

"And God has made for you the earth/land an expanse (*bisat*), (so) that you may go along therein in wide paths / traverse / find means of access / roads of passage"

From these narratives, one is forced to deduce that if the planet was extremely uneven with insurmountable terrain, this would arguably stunt civilisation's growth in many aspects. One only has to conjure up thoughts of a planet that was completely mountainous as an example, with little or no flat surfaces that could extend beyond a reasonable distance. This begs the question, how uninhabitable, inhospitable and arduous would it become for civilisation as a whole?

However, none of these verses are intended to provide unequivocal evidence as to the shape of the planet, be it flat or otherwise. Hence there is no cogent reason as to why such verses should be hijacked by flat-earth theorists to prove the entire planet as flat.

Similarly, those that argue that the earth is a 'globe' by citing various verses such as verse 79:30 and in particular, the Arabic word '*daha*', should also accept that the primary meaning of the verb '*daha*' means to spread out or to expand and does **not** necessarily indicate the shape of an ostrich egg per se. This primary interpretation is repeatedly accepted by the classical Arabic authorities / lexicographers.

The reference of '*daha*' is the ground or place in which an egg is laid or 'spread out' enough, in order that the egg (s) can find a suitable resting place. It is the expansion of the ground / space by the ostrich so that the eggs can safely find an abode and hatch which remains the focus of the term '*daha*'. In a similar fashion, the Lord also creates a hospitable flatter surface for humans to find a suitable abode so that they can grow and prosper. Therefore, the analogy remains quite apt.

"دَحَا دحا 1", (S, Msb, K,) first pers. دَحُوْتُ, (S,) aor. يَدْحُو, (Msb, K,) inf. n. دَحُوٌّ, (S, Msb, K,) He spread; spread out, or forth; expanded; or extended; (S, Msb, K;) a thing; (S;) and, when said of God, the earth; (Fr, S, Msb, K;) as also دَحَى, (Msb, K,) first pers. دَحَيْتُ, (K in art. دحى,) aor. يَدْحَى, inf. n. دَحَى: (Msb, and K in art. دحى:) or He (God) made the earth wide, or ample; as explained by an Arab woman of the desert to Sh: (TA:) also, said of an ostrich, (S, TA,) he expanded, and made wide, (TA,) with his foot, or leg, the place where he was about to deposit his eggs: (S, * TA:) and, said of a man, he spread, &c., and made plain, even, or smooth. (TA in art. دحى.) —

أُدْحُوَّةٌ, (K,) The place of the laying of eggs, (S, K,) and of the hatching thereof, (S,) of the ostrich, (S, K,) in the sand; (K;) because that bird expands it, and makes it wide, with its foot, or leg; for the ostrich has no [nest such as is termed] غُشْنٌ (S:) pl. أَحَادٌ (TA in the present art.) and اداحى [i. e., if not a mistranscription, أُدَايِيٌّ, agreeably with the sing.]: (TA in art. دحى:) and ↓ مَدْحَى [likewise] signifies the place of the eggs of the ostrich. (S.) [Hence,] ↓ بِنْتُ أُدْحِيَّةٍ A female ostrich. (TA.) " [5]

EARTH-LIKE OBJECTS - OBSERVABLE EVIDENCE

It is not uncommon to note adherents of the 'flat-earth' theory to cite '*observation*' as evidence of a flat-earth leaning on their interpretations of select Quranic verses and the observable surroundings.

The following verse clearly presents a cosmos that is teeming with earth-like celestial objects which begs the question, if the earth was indeed flat, where are then the 'flat-planets' in the observable realm?

065:012

"It is God who has created seven/several [6] heavens and of the Earth, the like of them."

It is noteworthy that the inner planets Mercury and Venus, and the outer planets, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn, were arguably known even to the ancient Babylonian astronomers in the 2nd millennium BC. Even today it is clear that these planets are not flat. Telescopes from the earth's surface can easily verify this.

Furthermore, it is not uncommon for those that propound the notion of a 'flat-earth' to **completely deny** the admission of all prevailing scientific knowledge, current photo or video evidence depicting the earth as a globe, instead referring it to be part of a large scale conspiracy to thwart the truth.

Therefore from a Quran's perspective, the burden of proof [7] remains on those that propound such a theory to find a '**flat-planet**' in our **observable solar system and / or beyond** in order to provide at least some credence to their theories.

To my knowledge, there is no such evidence to date.

FINAL THOUGHTS

1. The focus of the Quran's narrative is not to provide evidence for the shape of the earth per se, but rather to ponder over the vast realms of God's creation, with a view to acknowledge Him as the Creator and Supreme authority.
2. The Quran provides multifaceted examples through verifiable observations / perceptions of the planet and the wider cosmos.
3. There is **no evidence to date of any 'flat-planet'** in the observable realm of the cosmos. However, there is clear evidence of planets being globe-like / spheroid

supporting the view of the earth being a similar globe like object in light of verse **65:12**.

4. The Quran has no intention to present challenging concepts that would be blatantly unacceptable to the understanding / sensibilities / perceptions of the people or to present novel scientific observations which were impossible to observe (53:49) or verify. However, these signs do incorporate '*Divine fingerprints*' which could be better understood with the advancement of scientific discovery. After all, the Quran is a Scripture that needs to remain current, appropriate and consistent with time.

REFERENCES:

[1] **THE SUN SETTING IN MURKY WATERS**

http://quransmessage.com/articles/the_sun_setting_in_murky_waters_FM3.htm

[2] **SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES IN THE QURAN**

http://quransmessage.com/articles/science_miracles_FM3.htm

[3] Ibid

[4] **ROADS**

<https://www.facebook.com/joseph.a.islam/videos/280316405438827/4>

[5] **LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 3, Page 857**

Highlights in **bold text** are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[6] **ARE THERE SEVEN HEAVENS OR SEVERAL HEAVENS?**

http://quransmessage.com/articles/are_there_seven_heavens_or_several_heavens_FM3.htm

[7] **BURDEN OF PROOF - PROPHET ABRAHAM'S ^(pbuh) ARGUMENT**

http://quransmessage.com/articles/burdenofproof_FM3.htm

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