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## Reimagining the Qur'anic Planet: From Linguistic Root to Visual Revelation

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### Abstract

This paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the imagery interpretation of the statements related to planets in the Holy Quran. The research has examined in depth the lexical, linguistic, cultural and philosophical aspects of the word "planet". Its basic semantic basis in Arabic is based on "shining", "appearing" and "moving", which represent not only material phenomena but also spiritual indications.

The paper has made a selective study of all the relevant verses of the Holy Quran, whose interpretations have been presented in the context of the famous commentators: Maulana Maududi, Sayyid Qutb and Abdul Majid Daryabadi. At the same time, the scientific interpretation of these verses has been examined in the context of modern astronomy, which helps to understand the harmony between the cosmic allegories of the Quran and modern science.

A prominent aspect of the research is the visual interpretation, in which Quranic concepts are visualized through pictorial references and structural representations. This aspect not only deepens the understanding of the meaning but also provides the reader with a visual perception of the Quran's cosmic rhetoric.

The results show that the planetary images in the Quran are not mere scientific indications, but rather have deep spiritual and aesthetic insights, emerging as symbols of the wisdom, balance, and order of the Creator of the universe.

**Keywords:** Quran, commentary, planets, pictorial interpretation, universe, cosmic, scientific point of view

## 1. Introduction

The Holy Quran is the miraculous word of Allah Almighty, which presents very beautiful and effective moving pictures of various aspects of the universe and human life. These moving pictures are part of the virtue of the Quran that its words, sayings and statements contain not only meaning but also aesthetic and allegorical depths

Dynamic imagery in the Quran refers to the vivid, often kinetic, representations used to make abstract spiritual concepts tangible and relatable for readers. Studies highlight how the Quran employs both kinetic and abstract imagery such as in the portrayal of patience to engage readers emotionally and intellectually, using second- and third-person pronouns to create a sense of immediacy and visualization.<sup>1</sup>

The Quran's use of parables and mental imagery, especially in describing events like the Day of Resurrection, transforms intangible ideas into concrete, visual scenes, aiding comprehension and reflection.<sup>2</sup> The verses of the Quran also shed light on topics such as the rotation of the sun and moon, the change of night and day, the movement of the stars for guidance, etc. These moving pictures not only confirm astronomical facts but also invite knowledge and contemplation so that man can understand the power of Allah.

Nature imagery, including references to the earth and other celestial objects, is abundant in the Quran, serving both literal and figurative purposes to reinforce themes such as divine sovereignty, human responsibility, and the signs of creation. The earth and planets are personified or described in ways that model submission to God's will, making abstract spiritual concepts more accessible and vivid for readers.<sup>3</sup> These moving pictures not only describe the reality of cosmic movement but also contain a deep spiritual and allegorical meaning. The orderly movement of the universe is a symbol of Allah's wisdom and order in the world, which also serves as a source of inspiration for human morality, life and piety. Through such imagery, the Quran invites reflection on the natural world as a manifestation of divine order and power, using the movement and characteristics of planets and the earth to illustrate broader theological and moral lessons.<sup>4</sup>

### **Etymology and Meaning of Planet**

A planet exists in both an etymological, historical, sense, and a more astronomical modern definition. Its etymology shows ancient perceptions of the term whereas scientific definition of the term has evolved as human knowledge regarding the universe has developed.

## **Etymology in Major Languages**

**Greek and Latin Origins:** The English word "planet" comes from the Greek "planes" (πλανήτης), meaning "wanderer," and the Latin "planeta." Ancient Greeks used this term for celestial bodies that moved differently from the fixed stars, calling them "wanderers" because of their apparent motion in the sky<sup>5</sup>.

**Other Classical Terms:** In Roman tradition, Earth was called "Tellus" or "Terra," and in Greek, "Gaia," each with mythological significance<sup>6</sup>.

### **Ancient Definition**

Any celestial body that moved relative to the background stars, including the Sun and Moon.

### **Copernican Revolution**

Redefined planets as objects orbiting the Sun, removing the Sun and Moon from the list, and adding Earth.

### **International Astronomical Union (IAU) Definition**

A planet is a body with a mass below the threshold for deuterium fusion (about 13 Jupiter masses), orbiting a star, brown dwarf, or stellar remnant, and meeting certain mass ratio and orbital criteria. Must also be massive enough for self-gravity to make it round and to clear its orbital neighbourhood.<sup>7</sup>

### **Planets in Ancient and Indigenous Cultures**

- **Religious and Mythological Roles:** In Ancient Egypt, planets were linked to gods—Jupiter with Amun, Venus with Horus, and Mercury with Thoth playing roles in religious texts, rituals, and astrological predictions for individuals and rulers<sup>8</sup>. In Aztec culture, Venus was especially prominent, associated with gods like Quetzalcoatl and Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, and featured in myths, calendar systems, and rites of passage<sup>9</sup>. In the Inca world, Venus was tied to initiation rites and royal symbolism, though less is known about other planets<sup>10</sup>.
- **Symbolism and Social Order:** The number seven, representing the five visible planets plus the Sun and Moon, was considered sacred in many ancient cultures, influencing cosmological and religious systems<sup>11</sup>.

### **Planets in Astrology and Popular Belief**

- **Astrological Significance:** Planets have long been central to astrology, where their positions are believed to influence human fate, health, and personality. For example, Saturn is seen as a symbol of transition and rites of passage in contemporary astrology, echoing ancient mythic roots<sup>12</sup>.

- *Cultural Memory and Continuity*: Astrological traditions often preserve ancient cultural memories, maintaining symbolic associations from Mesopotamian and Hellenistic periods into modern practices <sup>13</sup>.

### **Modern Cultural and Philosophical Perspectives**

- *Planet as Concept*: In literature and philosophy, "planet" now often emphasizes the Earth's non-human, alien qualities, contrasting with terms like "world" or "globe" that suggest human control <sup>14</sup>. The planetary perspective is increasingly used in the humanities and social sciences to encourage thinking beyond human-centered views and to address global challenges <sup>15</sup>.
- *Moral and Social Dimensions*: Discoveries about planets, such as possible signs of life on Venus, can quickly elevate their cultural status, reflecting deep-seated values about life and morality across societies <sup>16</sup>.

### **Visual and Material Culture**

- *Art and Representation*: Planets have inspired art, models, and visualizations, serving as objects of fascination and as symbols of cosmic order, mystery, and change throughout history <sup>17</sup>.

### **In Arabic language**

- *Al-kawkab (الكوكب)*: This is the singular term for "planet" in Arabic, with the plural being al-kawakib (الكواكب). These terms appear in the Qur'an and classical Arabic literature<sup>18</sup>.
- Planet literally means "star" <sup>19</sup>. It has also been said that planet is "a well-known planet in the sky, and it is a star" <sup>20</sup>.
- *Interpretation in the Qur'an*: There has been debate among scholars about whether "الكوكب" refers specifically to a planet or could also mean a star. After examining various commentaries and Arabic lexical sources, most contemporary interpretations agree that "الكوكب" in the Qur'an refers to a planet.

Technically, the authors of the Great Cosmic Encyclopaedia consider a planet to be "a body composed of either solid, gaseous, or liquid materials, or a mixture of all of them, and it cannot undergo nuclear fusion, which is the process that occurs in the sun due to its small size. There are some giant planets that have a composition greater or lesser than that of a star, which is composed of hydrogen atoms with helium"<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, planets differ from stars in that they are "simple bodies positioned in the sky like a ring's gem, illuminating themselves, not the moon"<sup>22</sup>. They are also "celestial bodies that revolve around the sun and are illuminated by its light. There are nine: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto"<sup>23</sup>.

## 2. Quranic Description of Planetary Movements

There is very little direct mention of "planets" in the Holy Quran, but there are some verses that indirectly describe their dynamic and aesthetic imagery. In these verses, planets are shown to be included in the larger system of the universe, movement, prostration, and obedience to God. Below is a dynamic imagery interpretation of "planet" being presented in a research manner.

### 1. Rising and Setting of the Planet

The movement of the planet, its illumination, then disappearance, all these phenomena create a visual experience and a dynamic impression, which is the distinctive style of the Quran.

﴿فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْإِفْلِينَ﴾<sup>24</sup>

(When the night covered him over, he saw a star: he said: "this is my Lord." But when it set he said: "I love not those that set.)

### b) The astronomical Beginning of the Night

This process can be scientifically explained by the axial rotation of the Earth. The Earth completes one rotation on its axis in 24 hours, which affects the amount of sunlight reaching different regions<sup>25</sup>. When a part of the Earth is far from the Sun, night begins there, which is the result of the Earth's own motion, not the Sun's motion<sup>26</sup>.

### c) Planetary Observation

In Arabic, this word is used specifically for bright celestial bodies. Most commentators have described it as a "planet". Here, 'كَوْكَبٌ' is generally understood to refer to the planet Venus, which appears as the brightest celestial body in the evening. Scientifically, planets shine by reflecting sunlight, while stars produce light through their own nuclear fusion reactions<sup>27</sup>. The surface of Venus is covered with thick clouds of sulfuric acid, which reflect 75% of sunlight, which is why it appears extremely bright.

As Majidi said, "In the literal sense, any star can be meant, but obviously it will be a particularly important and bright star. Current research has shown that the two stars Jupiter and Venus were worshipped most vigorously among the ancient pagan nations."<sup>28</sup>

### d) The Scientific Process of "فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ"

The apparent setting of a planet is the result of the rotation of the Earth. As the Earth rotates on its axis, celestial bodies appear to move, although this is only an apparent motion<sup>29</sup>. This principle of physics indicates that no variable, finite, and mortal can be the true God. As shown in Figure 1.2.2.

**e) Hazrat Ibrahim's Arguments and Logical Rebuttal**

This event took place during the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). His people worshipped the celestial bodies (stars, planets, moon, sun). Hazrat Abraham (peace be upon him) spoke to his people in a debate style to explain the truth of monotheism: He pointed to the star and said, "This is my Lord." When the star set, he said, "I do not like those who disappear."

As Qutub said, "This is a depiction of Hazrat Ibrahim's (peace be upon him) self. When Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was disappointed that these idols did not correspond to the image of the true God in his nature, he probably hoped that the true God would be found in the form of planets and stars other than idols<sup>30</sup>.

The real relationship between human nature and the God of the worlds is a relationship of love, and this relationship of love is a heart-to-heart relationship. That is why Hazrat Ibrahim does not love those who drown. Therefore, it does not accept them as God. And the requirement of nature is that the God who is will be present and always loved." As visually summarized in Figure 1.2.1

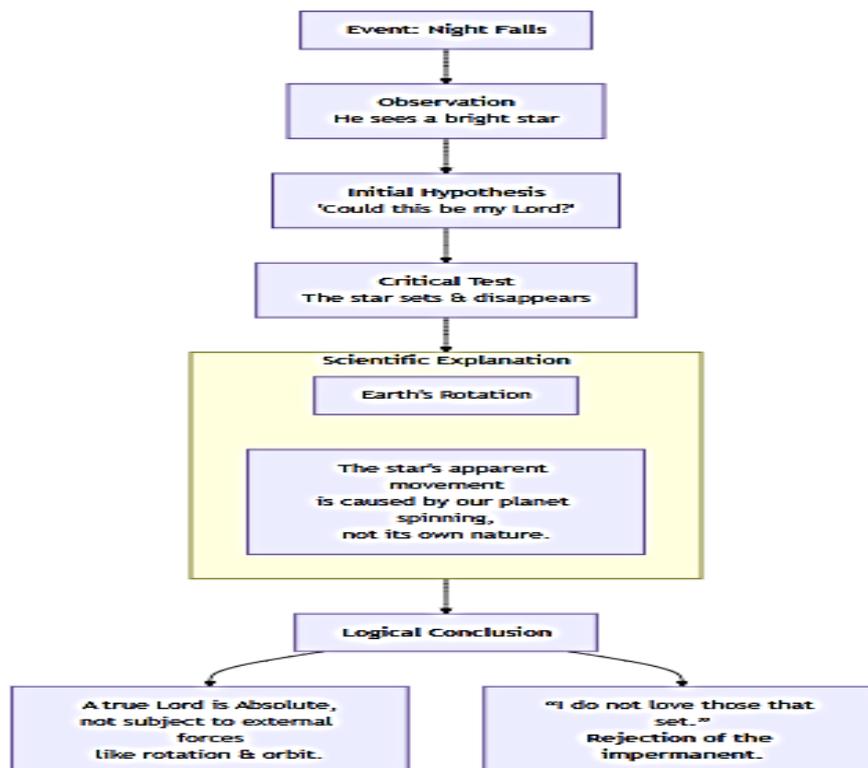


Figure 1.2.1: Surah Al Inaam 06:76



Figure 1.2.2: Rising and Setting of the Planet

Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/en/photo/cosmic-nebula-and-the-shining-stars-gm1183329518-332666733>

## 2. Collective Motion and Order of the Planets

﴿كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ﴾<sup>31</sup>

(All glide along, each in its own orbit.)

This comprehensive verse includes the sun, moon, earth, and other celestial bodies. The word "all" here encompasses the sun, moon, and all the other planets or stars. "فَلَكَ" is Arabic for a circular orbit or orbit, and "يَسْبَحُونَ" means "to float" a beautiful, graphic depiction of a smooth, continuous, balanced motion. This verse presents the movement of the planets in an artistic picture as if they were pearls floating in the ocean of space.

### a) System of Cosmic Motion

These verses refer to the continuous motion of all celestial bodies in the universe. Science has proven that galaxies, stars, planets, and other celestial bodies are in a swimming motion in their specific orbits<sup>32</sup>.

### b) The Concept of Gravitational Orbits

Every celestial body is bound by the gravitational field of a larger body. For example:

- The Earth moves around the Sun at a speed of 107,000 km/h
- The Moon revolves around the Earth at a speed of 3,683 km/h
- The Sun is moving around the centre of our galaxy at a speed of 720,000 km/h<sup>33</sup> Scientific perspectives

**Orbital Harmony:** Each planet revolves in its own specific elliptical orbit according to Kepler's laws<sup>34</sup>

As Maududi said, “The word, "فَلَكَ" is used in Arabic for the orbit of the planets and its meaning is different from the meaning of "سَمَاء" (heaven). The statement that "all are floating in one, "فَلَكَ" indicates four facts. One is that not only the sun and moon, but all the stars and planets and celestial bodies are moving. The second is that each of them has a "فَلَكَ", that is, the path or orbit of their movement. The third is that the "فَلَكَ" is not rotating with the stars, but the stars are rotating in the, "فَلَكَ". And the fourth is that the movement of the stars in the, "فَلَكَ" is happening as if something is floating in a liquid.<sup>35</sup>”

### c) **The Reality of Swimming Motion**

The Arabic word "يَسْبِخُونَ" (they swim) is a very precise scientific term. Astronomical objects appear to float in the fluid environment of space, although space is almost empty, but the motion of astronomical objects has smoothness and continuity like floating<sup>36</sup>.

### 4. **Balanced System**

The motion of each astronomical object is balanced with that of other astronomical objects. This balance is the result of the balance between gravitational forces:

- Balance of centrifugal force and gravitational force
- Phenomenon of orbital resonance
- Effect of tidal forces<sup>37</sup>

**Gravitational Balance:** As stated by Newton's law of gravitation, The precise balance of centripetal and centripetal forces in the motion of the planets. As shown in the Figure 1.2.3.

As Qutub said, “Every star and planet have a sphere or its own orbit. It cannot exceed its limits in its speed and rotation.<sup>38</sup>”

**Orbital Resonance:** Planets maintain a stable ratio in their orbital periods (e.g., the ratio of Jupiter to Saturn is 5:2)<sup>39</sup>

As Qutub said, “There are great distances between stars and planets. The Earth is 73 million miles from the Sun, and the Moon is 240 million miles from the Earth.<sup>40</sup>”

### 5. **Constant Motion**

The image of the Quranic phrase "يَسْبِخُونَ" (continually floating) is consistent with modern physics, because:

- Astrological objects move in a frictionless environment
- Their motion is in accordance with Newton's first law of motion

- This system is maintained despite cosmic expansion<sup>41</sup>. As clearly outlined in Figure 1.2.4.

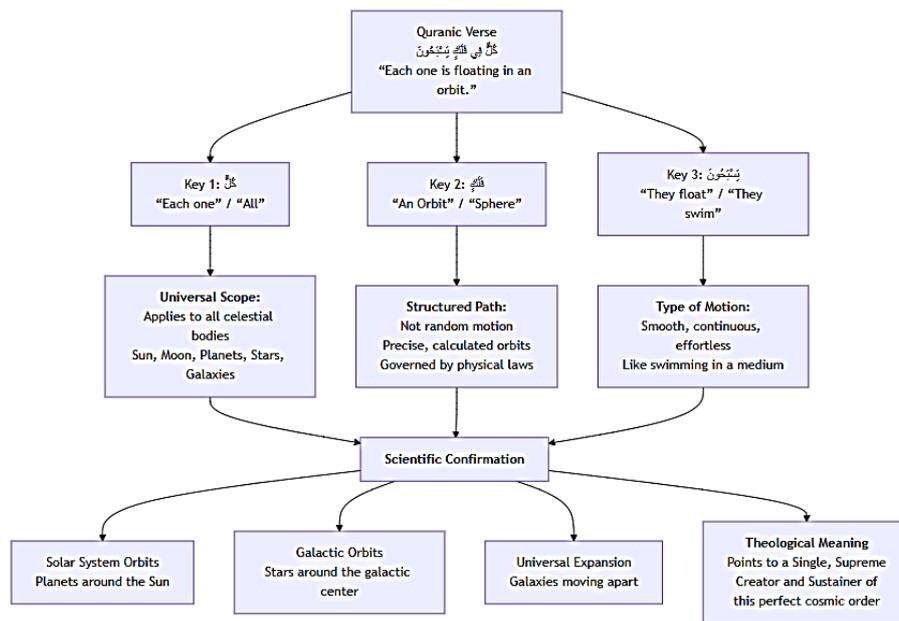


Figure 1.2.4: Surah Yasin 36:40

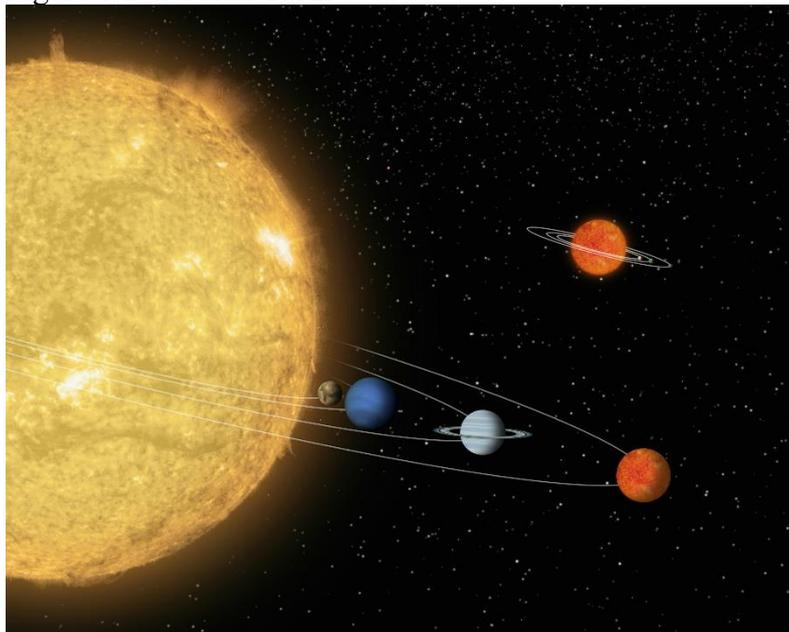


Figure 1.2.3: Collective motion and order of the planets

Source: <https://unsplash.com/photos/an-artists-rendering-of-the-solar-system-rZhFmS11Jow>

## Conclusion

This pictorial commentary shows the amazing correspondence between the Quranic statements and modern astronomy and geology. Planets are mentioned in the Quran on some occasions explicitly and on other occasions by implication. The planets are presented in the Quran not only as astronomical bodies but also as spiritual, aesthetic and dynamic entities. They are not only manifestations of order and order, but also signs of monotheism, divine power, and divine wisdom. These images do not simply provide information to the reader but also provide spiritual and intellectual awakening.

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