

Darkness and Light in Creation: Qur'anic Reflections and Cosmic Parallels

Qur'anic Verses on Creating Darkness and Light

"Praise be to God, Who created the heavens and earth and made the darknesses and the light..." (Qur'an 6:1) ¹. In this opening verse of *Surat al-An'am*, the Qur'an explicitly mentions God *"appointing darknesses and light"* as part of creation. Similarly, *Surat al-Nazi'at* describes the formation of the heavens: **"He dimmed its night and brought forth its daylight."** (Qur'an 79:29) ². Notably, darkness is mentioned before light in both verses. This sequence invites reflection: Why would scripture emphasize the creation of **darkness prior to light**? Classical Islamic commentators observed a subtle indication of order here – darkness representing a primordial state, and light symbolizing the emergence of illumination or life ³. As the 12th-century scholar Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī notes, the Qur'an often lists night before day *"to indicate that darkness is non-existence and light [is] existence... Now non-existence precedes existence, [thus] indicating the origin (innovation) of things."* ³. In other words, the *primordial nothingness* (symbolized by darkness) logically comes before the *actual being* (symbolized by light).

While these verses have spiritual and natural dimensions (night and day, guidance and misguidance), they also resonate in an intriguing way with modern cosmology's account of the universe's beginning. After the Big Bang, our universe indeed went through a profound *"darkness before light"* phase. Let us first explore this scientific perspective – the **cosmic "Dark Ages"** – and then return to how Qur'anic commentators and mystical traditions understand the meaning of darkness and light.

The Cosmic "Dark Ages" After the Big Bang

Contemporary astrophysics teaches that the early universe was initially hot and bright, filled with a glowing plasma. But after about 380,000 years, as the universe expanded and cooled, it entered a *dark era* ⁴ ⁵. During this period – known to astronomers as the **cosmic Dark Ages** – no stars or galaxies existed yet. The universe had become transparent (light from the Big Bang's afterglow decoupled and streamed freely as the cosmic microwave background), but **there were not yet any new light sources**. As NASA explains, *"Following this [recombination] are the cosmic dark ages – a period of time after the Universe became transparent but before the first stars formed. Until a few hundred million years after the Big Bang, the universe was a very dark place. There were no stars, and there were no galaxies."* ⁵ ⁶. In this cold, dark expanse, matter was mostly neutral hydrogen gas, clumping gradually under gravity. Eventually, gravity did its work: the first stars ignited perhaps **200–400 million years** after the Big Bang, marking the end of the Dark Ages ⁷ ⁸. With those first stars' light piercing the darkness, the universe experienced its **"cosmic dawn."** Galaxies began to form, and the process of reionization (the ultraviolet light from new stars stripping electrons from hydrogen atoms) commenced, bringing an end to the dark epoch ⁹ ¹⁰.

In simple terms, science has confirmed a literal period of **darkness before light** in the chronology of creation: a cosmic night followed by a cosmic morning. This timeline strikingly mirrors the poetic language of Qur'an 79:29 – *"He darkened its night and brought forth its daylight."* One could say that, after the Big Bang,

the “night” of the universe prevailed until the **“daylight” of the first stars** shone. Of course, the Qur’an is not a science textbook detailing cosmological epochs. Yet the thematic parallel is thought-provoking: the scripture’s sequence of darkness-then-light at creation is exactly how modern cosmologists describe the universe’s earliest chapters. The **Dark Ages in cosmology** – that long, starless night – may thus be seen as a concrete physical counterpart to the Qur’anic motif of initial darkness giving way to light.

It’s important to clarify that classical Qur’anic commentators did not know of the cosmic Dark Ages as we do today. When they read verses like 6:1 or 79:29, they primarily understood “darkness and light” in reference to **night and day**, or metaphorically to **ignorance and guidance**. Nonetheless, the Qur’an’s phrasing is broad and deep enough that believers today can marvel at how it *“captures the principle of an ordered creation, even if not detailing scientific timelines.”* Many ancient creation myths spoke of chaotic beginnings, but the Qur’an emphasizes an intentional, staged creation ¹¹ ¹². The idea that **darkness precedes light** fits into this orderly unfolding. In what follows, we will explore theological and philosophical reflections on these verses – from mainstream Sunni exegesis to mystical insights – and see how they enrich our understanding of “darkness” beyond the physical sense alone.

Sunni Tafsir: The Creation of Darkness and Light

In Sunni thought, God is the **absolute Creator of all things**, which includes even immaterial or negative things like “darkness.” Qur’an 6:1’s statement that Allah *“originated the darknesses and the light”* was significant in Islamic theology: it affirms that light *and* darkness are under divine creation and control, countering dualistic notions that might attribute evil or darkness to an independent force. Classical commentators like **Imam al-Rāzī** engage deeply with this phrase. In his *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Rāzī first analyzes the language: the verb *ja’ala* (“made/appointed”) in Arabic can take one object or two, and here it takes a single object (“darknesses and light” as a pair) meaning God **brought them into being** ¹³ ¹⁴. More philosophically, Rāzī ponders the nature of darkness itself: is it a **thing created** or just an absence? As noted above, he inclines to see darkness as the *relative non-existence* that logically comes before the production of light ³. In an elegant reflection, he says God mentioned night before day in the Qur’an because *“darkness (non-existence) precedes existence (light)”* ³. Thus, the Qur’an alludes to the **origin of things from nothingness** – a point in line with Islamic doctrine that God created the world *ex nihilo* (from nothing).

Other Sunni exegetes focus on the plural form “darknesses” (*ẓulumāt*, in Arabic) versus the singular “light” (*nūr*). They found meaning in this grammatical detail. Many explain that **light is mentioned in the singular to signify its unity and source in the One Truth**, whereas “darknesses” being plural indicates the many forms or degrees of darkness (literal and figurative) ¹⁵ ¹⁶. As one commentary puts it: *“Light is one, but the possible degrees of darkness are innumerable – essentially, darkness is merely the absence of light.”* ¹⁵. In the physical sense, this resonates with how **light has a single nature** (electromagnetic radiation, photons) whereas darkness simply denotes *many possible ways light can be lacking*. In the moral and spiritual sense, truth and guidance are ultimately one – coming from the singular Light of God – whereas the paths of error are many and variegated. The Qur’an elsewhere says, *“Allah is the Guardian of those who believe; He brings them out from darknesses into light.”* (2:257) – again using the plural for the multiple shadows of misguidance and the singular for the unified light of faith ¹⁷ ¹⁸.

Sunni scholars also tied Qur’an 6:1 to a profound theological concept: **guidance vs. misguidance** as light vs. darkness. The famous exegete **Ibn Kathīr** mentions a hadith (Prophetic tradition) on the authority of the Companion Ibn Mas’ud that directly connects creation in darkness to spiritual guidance. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: *“Allah created His creation in darkness, then He showered His Light upon them. Whoever*

was touched by that Light, he is guided; and whoever it missed, he is astray.”¹⁹ . This striking narration uses **darkness as a metaphor for the initial state of unformed potential** – or human souls not yet guided – and the sprinkling of divine light as the gift of faith and knowledge that reaches some and not others. This hadith became a commonly cited explanation in tafsirs for why disbelief and ignorance are termed “darkness,” while faith and knowledge are “light.” **Imam al-Qurṭubī**, for instance, in his commentary on 6:1, says the verse hints that “darkness and light are not independent, self-subsisting entities like the heavens and earth; rather, they are contingent qualities” – darkness being the **state of things without God’s light**, and light being the **active illumination provided by God**.

It’s also worth noting how Sunni commentators used these verses to rebut philosophical errors of their times. The Qur’an clearly situates **Allah as the source of both light and darkness**, implying *nothing in creation is outside His power*. This refuted, for example, Zoroastrian-influenced ideas of a dualism (a god of light vs. god of darkness). It also addresses any notion that darkness/evil has real substance apart from being the lack of good. The consensus was that **God’s creation is fundamentally “light”** in the sense of existence and goodness; darkness is a secondary state, often equivalent to *non-being or non-guidance*. Therefore, “*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth*” (Qur’an 24:35) in both a physical and metaphysical sense²⁰ ¹⁶ . He illuminates the universe with literal light (e.g. the sun, stars – all created by Him), and He illuminates hearts with the light of truth. Without His creative command, the cosmos would be utter darkness; without His guidance, human souls would be in darkness.

Mystical Tafsir: Light as Knowledge, Darkness as Ignorance

Alongside the juridical and theological commentators, **Sufi mystics** also reflected on these verses, often interpreting them on a more symbolic level. A beautiful example comes from the early mystic **Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896)**. In his esoteric commentary, Tustarī agrees with the outward meaning (night and day created by Allah), but he adds an *ishāra* (spiritual allusion): “*The inner meaning of this verse is that light is knowledge (‘ilm) and darkness is ignorance (jahl)*.”²¹ . In other words, when the Qur’an speaks of God making darkness and light, it is also hinting that **all knowledge and wisdom is a divine illumination**, and ignorance/falsehood is like a darkness that was also allowed to exist as part of the human condition. This aligns perfectly with the hadith mentioned earlier and general Islamic wisdom that “*knowledge is light and ignorance is darkness*.” The mystics frequently speak of the “**nur Muhammadi**” (Primordial Light of Muhammad or of guidance) as the first thing God created, and how all prophets and saints inherit that light to dispel the darkness of misguidance.

Later Sufi commentators, such as **Ahmad ibn ‘Ajība** (d. 1809) in his *Al-Bahr al-Madīd*, similarly weave together exoteric and esoteric meanings. Ibn ‘Ajība often begins by explaining the plain meaning (God created physical darkness of night and light of day as signs of His power). Then in the mystical *ishāra*, he might say for instance: *the “darknesses” signify the veils of the ego and worldly illusion, and the “light” is the singular light of tawhīd (Divine oneness) shining in the heart*. Indeed, the Qur’an’s choice of plural vs. singular supports that: there are many veils and forms of ignorance (darknesses) but **only one light of Truth**. In Sufi poetry and prose, **light** often symbolizes the presence of God or the enlightened state of the soul, while **darkness** symbolizes the nafs (lower self), heedlessness, and separation from God. Sunni mystics were still within the fold of Qur’anic meanings – they were simply extending the analogy. For example, they noted how Qur’an 79:29’s phrase “*He darkened its night and brought forth its dawn*” can be read as: *God sometimes veils the soul in a night of isolation or trial, then He brings forth a dawn of enlightenment*. After all, “*after hardship comes ease*” (94:5-6) and after the darkness of any spiritual struggle comes the light of realization.

The alternation of night and day in the sky thus reflects an inner alternation of states within the seeker of God.

Another mystical reflection ties back to cosmology in a metaphysical way: Some Sufi philosophers equated **darkness with the created world itself in its state of separation from the Creator**, and **light with the divine presence that gives the world existence and meaning**. The 12th-century Spanish mystic Ibn 'Arabi wrote of the world as essentially a locus of **divine self-manifestation** – without God's light, the world would be "dark" and unreal. This is reminiscent of Qur'an 24:35 (the *Light Verse*), which says *"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth"* and then elaborates a parable of light upon light. In a commentary on that verse, one scholar explains: *"Everything which gives light and illuminates other things has received its light from Him; it has no light of its own... Without His Light, there is nothing but darkness."* ²² ²³ . The mystics take this further: **the only true existence is God (the Absolute Light)**, and the creation is like shadows – *ẓulumat* – given form by His light. In this regard, *darkness* can symbolize the ontological poverty of creation (it's nothing on its own), and *light* symbolizes God's act of **bringing everything from non-existence into being**. Remarkably, this circles us back to Rāzī's point about non-existence preceding existence. The Sufis just express it with more poetic imagery: we are shadows illuminated by the Light of lights.

In sum, mystical tafsirs agree with Sunni doctrine but add a rich layer of symbolism: **"darkness" is not only the physical absence of light but the spiritual absence of divine guidance, and "light" is not only photons from stars but the illumination of the heart by God**. Thus the creation of darkness and light in the Qur'an hints at God's provisioning of both challenges and guidance for mankind – He created the night of trials and ignorance as a backdrop against which the light of faith shines meaningfully. As the Qur'an says, *"Nor are the blind and the seeing equal; nor are darknesses and the light"* (35:19-20), urging us to become people of light (knowledge, belief) rather than remain in manifold darkness.

Cosmological Verses and Thematic Narrative

The Qur'anic mention of darkness preceding light in creation is part of a broader cosmological narrative in the scripture. The Qur'an invites us repeatedly to contemplate the skies, the earth, and their origins as signs (*āyāt*) of divine wisdom. Several verses can be woven together to form a rough storyline of creation that intriguingly parallels modern cosmology – albeit in metaphorical language.

For instance, Qur'an 21:30 famously states: **"Do the disbelievers not realize that the heavens and the earth were once one mass, and We split them apart? And We made every living thing from water. Will they not then believe?"** ²⁴ . Many have likened this to the **Big Bang** and the idea that all matter and space began in a single dense point (a "joined entity") before expanding. Classical scholars like *al-Tabari* interpreted the verse in simpler terms – e.g. the heavens and earth were fused together in an undifferentiated state of **"smoke"** or **water**, until God separated and shaped them. But either way, the Qur'an asserts a **common origin** and a dramatic separation, which accords with the scientific understanding that the universe expanded from an initial unity ²⁵ . It also alludes to the prevalence of **water** in life's origins, something science today also emphasizes (life on Earth began in the oceans, and water is essential for life as we know it).

Next, Qur'an 41:11-12 describes the early heaven as **"smoke" (dukhan)** – a staggering image: *"Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: come willingly or unwillingly... So He completed them as seven heavens in two days and inspired in each heaven its affair, and We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps (stars)...."* ²⁶ . The term "smoke" here fascinated many commentators. They said it

means a kind of **primordial vapor or mist**. In modern terms, one is tempted to see a parallel with the **gaseous nebulae** of the early universe – the clouds of hydrogen and helium that filled space after the Big Bang (indeed, astrophysicists describe the early universe as filled with hot gas). The verse goes on to mention **seven heavens** with their own “laws” (or “assignments”), which some scholars like al-Rāzī intriguingly interpreted as possibly indicating multiple realms or even multiple universes with distinct properties ²⁷ ²⁸. Rāzī deduced from Qur’ān phrases like “Lord of the **worlds**” that God’s creation might extend to many worlds or cosmic domains, not just ours ²⁹. This is remarkably consonant with today’s speculation about **multiverses** or at least the vastness of space containing innumerable galaxies – ideas utterly foreign to Aristotle’s closed, Earth-centered cosmos that prevailed in ancient times ³⁰.

Crucially, “*We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps*” is understood to mean **stars**, which the Qur’ān elsewhere says are like lamps or torches in the sky. Thus, the Qur’ān depicts that after the heaven was initially smoky and unformed, God ordered it into multiple heavens and *filled the nearest heaven with stars*. Note how this sequence mirrors cosmic history: first a **dark, opaque universe**, then organized structures and **star-light adorn the skies**. The Qur’ān emphasizes God’s “**firm design**” and “*decree for each heaven*” – implying that the cosmos follows set laws (what we recognize as physics). Indeed, modern science marvels at how universal constants and natural laws allowed matter to coalesce into stars and galaxies. The Qur’ān’s language is in harmony with the idea of an **ordered, law-bound universe**: “*He established Himself on the Throne [i.e. assumed command]... He regulates all affairs*” (10:3, 13:2).

Another relevant verse is Qur’ān 51:47: “**And the heaven We built with might, and indeed We are expanding it.**” ³¹. The phrase “*inna la-mūsi’ūn*” in Arabic can mean “We are expanding (it)” or “We are its expander.” Many contemporary Muslims see here a reference to the **expanding universe**, one of the most significant discoveries of modern astronomy. Classical commentators offered various renderings (some thought it meant “We made it vast” or “We provide ample provision in it”), but a minority like Imam Rāzī even mused whether it could imply a literal expansion of the heavens – centuries before Edwin Hubble observed galaxies receding. Today, the standard scientific view is that space itself has been stretching since the Big Bang, just as the Qur’ān accurately conveys with the verb “*We expanse it*” ³¹. When you combine 21:30 (the initial separation), 41:11 (the smoky heavens), and 51:47 (continuous expansion), you get a picture of a dynamic, evolving universe amazingly in line with what we know now: an origin from a singular creation event, an early phase of darkness/gas, then formation of luminous stars, and ongoing expansion of space.

Returning specifically to the **theme of darkness and light**, we see it echoed in these cosmological verses. The “lamps” adorning the sky in 41:12 imply that **before stars, the heaven had no light** – a dark canopy. Qur’ān 21:33 also says, “*And He is the One who created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon – each floating in an orbit.*” The alternation of night/day is one of the most frequently cited signs of God in the Qur’ān. In fact, the **regularity of darkness turning to light** is a daily reminder built into creation of resurrection and renewal. The Qur’ān asks us to reflect: “*He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night... Indeed in that are signs for those who reflect*” (39:5). For early Muslims, the cycle of night giving way to dawn was a natural symbol of Allah’s power to bring the dead to life and to guide those in error to truth. In a spiritual sense, **every dawn** is like a mini reenactment of *light triumphing over darkness by God’s command*. And on a cosmic scale, we now know that dawn eventually *did* come for the young universe as well.

Thus, Qur’ān 79:29 – “He darkened its night and brought forth its daylight” – can be seen as a summary of the entire process: God established a period of darkness (cosmic night), then produced the light (cosmic

morning). Many classical commentators like *al-Qurtubī* and *Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī* explain 79:29 in the context of God perfecting the sky: i.e. “*He made the sky such that it has a dark night and a bright day.*” They note that the verse attributes night and day **to the heaven** (“*its night... its daylight*”) because it’s by the movement of the heavenly bodies (the sun in particular) that night falls and day breaks ³² . In simple terms, Allah caused the sky to alternate between darkness and light once the creation was set in motion. If we overlay modern insight: this alternation was only possible *after* the first light sources existed. The cosmic night had to end before “daytime” could occur anywhere. Early Earth itself experienced no true daylight until the sun and other stars had formed. So the Qur’anic narrative can accommodate both an **epochal** understanding (first a universe with no stars = night, then a universe lit by stars = day) and the **daily** understanding (each 24-hour cycle on Earth has night then day by God’s decree). The two scales – cosmic and terrestrial – mirror each other as a sign of fractal harmony in Allah’s design. As the Qur’an says: “*Indeed in the alteration of night and day and in what God has created in the heavens and earth are signs for people who are God-fearing*” (10:6).

Philosophical Reflections on Light and Darkness

Beyond scripture and science, **light and darkness carry deep philosophical meanings** in many cultures, including the Islamic intellectual tradition. Philosophers, theologians, and poets all have used the duality of light/dark to discuss being and non-being, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, presence and absence. We have already touched on several Islamic perspectives: Rāzī equating darkness with non-existence, Tustarī equating it with ignorance, etc. These echo a general truth: **we as humans naturally associate Light with all positive, real qualities**, and Darkness with negation or lack.

This intuition was systematized by medieval philosophers. For example, in Neoplatonic thought (which influenced Muslim thinkers like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and the *illuminationist* Suhrawardi), **light is the principle of existence and intelligibility**. Suhrawardi in the 12th century even built a whole metaphysics around light: he described God as the “**Light of Lights**” (drawing from the Qur’an’s Light Verse) and all creation as a cascading hierarchy of lights, with darkness corresponding to the lowest, most material level of reality. In such a view, *darkness isn’t a competing force to light; rather it is the diminishing of light*. Evil, likewise, was often defined by Muslim theologians as simply the **absence of good**, paralleling how darkness is absence of light ¹⁵ . This resolves the problem of how a Good, All-Powerful God can create “dark” things – those dark things have no independent existence; they are just what you get when there is less light (less goodness) in a thing. The Qur’an hints at this when it says Allah “*guides to His light whom He wills*” but leaves others in darkness – the darkness is not an active entity He *wills for its own sake*, but a result of withholding light (guidance) due to His wisdom or justice.

From a *metaphysical* angle, one can contemplate that **before creation, only God existed – an absolute Light**. When He created the world, in a sense He “**withdrew**” or **concealed some of His light** to allow a space for other beings to exist (a concept somewhat similar to the kabbalistic notion of *zimzum* or the Sufi notion of “God being a Hidden Treasure who manifests creation to be known”). This act of creation could be seen as producing, initially, a kind of *shadow or darkness since nothing can shine as He shines*. But then God gives of His light to creation – imparting existence, life, and consciousness (which are forms of light). Thus the world oscillates between the traces of God’s light within it and the inherent darkness of anything lacking the full presence of God. When we do good or gain knowledge, we are said to increase in light; when we sin or indulge in ignorance, we “darken” our hearts. The Qur’an in 2:257, as cited, describes believers as people of light and disbelievers as dwelling in layers of darkness. Philosophically, this establishes a binary: **truth/ reality = light; falsehood/illusion = darkness** ¹⁶ .

One can also reflect on the *psychological* symbolism: Humans have an innate yearning for light – we are drawn to understanding, clarity, hope (all described as light). We fear and dislike darkness – confusion, despair, evil (all described as darkness). The Qur'an taps into this innate symbolism to communicate its message. It's an example of what some scholars call the "*fitra-based language*" of the Qur'an – it uses universal natural phenomena to signify spiritual truths because God designed us to find those analogies meaningful. Day and night are universally experienced; nearly every culture has used them as metaphors. The Qur'an repeatedly says things like: *"Is one who was dead and We gave him life and light by which he walks among people, like one in darkness from which he cannot emerge?"* ³³ ³⁴ . Such rhetorical questions appeal immediately to our sense that **life and light are better** than **death and darkness**.

Even modern philosophy and literature continue with these themes. We speak of the "Enlightenment" for an era of intellectual flourishing, or "dark ages" for times of ignorance. We say "shed light on the matter" when we want to explain something. We refer to evil deeds as "dark deeds" or a corrupt person as having a "dark heart." All of this traces back to fundamental human cognition that equates **light with existence, knowledge, goodness, safety** and **darkness with void, ignorance, evil, danger**. The Qur'an, being a divine message to all humanity, employs this symbolism with great effectiveness. Its verses about God creating darkness and light operate on multiple levels: the cosmological (literal creation of dark and light in the universe), the daily natural (night and day cycle), the moral (wrong vs right), the epistemological (ignorance vs knowledge), and the theological (absence of God vs presence of God).

We also find a philosophical insight in how **darkness and light require one another** for definition. If there were no light at all, we wouldn't even conceive of darkness (it would just be the null state, not a contrast). And if there were no darkness, we wouldn't fully appreciate light (notice how the stars become visible only against a dark sky, and how we rest at night and work by day – both serve a purpose ³²). The Qur'an alludes to this interdependence: *"We made the night and the day two signs. We erased the sign of the night (darkness) and made the sign of the day visible, that you may seek bounty from your Lord and know the count of years and reckoning..."* (17:12). Philosophically, one might say that aspects of God's wisdom are only manifest through creating a contrast: without the possibility of darkness, light would not shine forth in its glory. Thus, God's creation of both darkness and light is purposeful. The existence of darkness (whether understood as suffering, ignorance, or physical darkness) allows the light (relief, knowledge, physical illumination) to have meaning and to be appreciated as a blessing. In Islamic theology, this ties into the concept of "*relative evil*" – what we perceive as evil or darkness has a role in the greater good (for example, the pain of illness makes one cherish health; the error of sin makes one value guidance). As the Qur'an says, *"Allah alternates the night and the day – truly in that is a lesson for those who have insight"* (24:44). The **lesson** is precisely that everything has been created in pairs or contrasts, and through reflection on these we recognize the singular power and wisdom of the One who orchestrates it all.

Conclusion: An Integrative Perspective

Contemplating Qur'an 6:1 and 79:29 with both classical tafsīr and modern cosmology in mind leads to an enriching convergence of **science, philosophy, and faith**. Scientifically, we stand amazed that the actual universe had a *Dark Age* when not a single star shone – a fact unknown to pre-modern humanity – and that the first light (the cosmic "dawn") broke that darkness in a manner almost poetic. The Qur'an's millennia-old words, *"He made darkness and light,"* can now evoke in us not only the familiar cycle of night and day, but also the grand arc of cosmic history from a dark origin to a lit cosmos. This is not to claim the Qur'an taught astronomy in a textbook sense, but rather to appreciate what one writer called *"the Quran's language capturing the principle of an ordered creation"* that resonates with scientific discovery ¹¹ ¹² . It reinforces a

believer's conviction that **scientific truth and spiritual truth ultimately stem from the same Source**. The more we learn about the universe's beginning – the carefully calibrated sequence of events that led from darkness to light, chaos to order – the more we “perceive the signs of a Wise Sustainer” ³⁵ ³⁶ . As Qur'an 3:191 says: *“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for those of understanding... who reflect [and say], ‘Our Lord, You have not created this in vain, glory be to You!’”*

Theologically and philosophically, we gain a deeper appreciation of how **darkness and light are woven into the fabric of creation as a teaching tool**. The Sunni tafsīr heritage grounds us in the understanding that Allah, the one ultimate Creator, deliberately made both darkness and light for a *purpose*. The purpose of physical darkness (the night) includes rest, reflection, and the showcasing of celestial wonders (stars can only be seen at night). The purpose of spiritual darkness (error, tests, hardships) includes the exercise of free will, the emergence of virtues (for how would courage, patience, or repentance exist without trials?), and the contrast by which truth and guidance shine out all the more clearly. Meanwhile, the mystical insights remind us that in every moment, **what light we have is only by God's grace** – be it the light of our eyes or the light in our hearts. We are urged to seek that light, nurture it, and be grateful for it. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ famously said, *“Allahumma ij'al fī qalbī nūran”* – “O God, place light in my heart” – and also *“in my sight, in my hearing, on my tongue, in front of me, behind me, above me, below me... make me all light.”* This prophetic prayer captures the yearning of the soul to be completely illumined by God's guidance and mercy, to have *no spot of darkness within*. It resonates strongly with the Qur'anic theme that **Allah is the Light** and is the one who *“guides to His light whom He wills.”*

In an integrative tone, we can conclude that the Qur'an's commentary on darkness and light operates at **multiple complementary levels**. At the cosmic level, it subtly mirrors the actual chronology of the universe – an insight that inspires awe and contemplation in the modern mind. At the natural level, it sanctifies the rhythm of day and night – something we often take for granted – as an intentional sign of God's benevolence (imagine if there was only endless day or endless night; life would likely not survive or at least be miserable). At the moral level, it draws us to the Light of faith and knowledge, encouraging us to step out of whatever personal “dark ages” we might be in. Every person, in a sense, goes through periods of darkness (ignorance, confusion) before finding light (truth, clarity) – and the Qur'an speaks to that inner journey as well, offering itself as *“a light we have sent down”* to illuminate our path.

Finally, the interplay of darkness and light teaches us humility and hope. Darkness reminds us of our limitations – there are things we cannot see or know except if God wills to enlighten us. Light reminds us of God's care – that He has not left us in darkness without guidance. Just as He eventually lit up the universe with stars, He sent prophets and revelations as **beacons of light for mankind**. Sunni and Sufi commentators alike would say: the greatest of those lights is Muhammad ﷺ himself, described in the Qur'an as *“an illuminating lamp”* (33:46). Through him, the Qur'an came as *nur* (light) and *furqan* (criterion) to disperse the deepest darkness of shirk (idolatry) and jahiliyya (ignorance). In a beautiful twist, the **cosmic dawn** and the **spiritual dawn** coincide: The Prophet appeared in what history (somewhat Eurocentrically) calls the “Dark Ages” of late antiquity, yet from the Qur'anic perspective, *“There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book.”* (5:15). The advent of Islam was like a brilliant sunrise after ages of darkness for a misguided-weary world.

Contemplating all this, we are encouraged to marvel at the unity of truth in God's signs. Whether we gaze up at the night sky, filled with countless stars that emerged from the cosmic night ³⁷ ³⁸ ; or we study the pages of scripture, where parables of light and darkness abound – in both we find an **invitation to know the Creator**. The same God who set the stars ablaze also kindles enlightenment in receptive hearts. The

journey from darkness to light – cosmologically and spiritually – ultimately points to the purposeful grace of Allah. He brings forth light from darkness in the heavens and on earth, and He can bring forth goodness and guidance from the darkest situations in our lives. Thus, reflecting on Qur'an 6:1 and 79:29 in light of modern knowledge does not diminish their spiritual message – rather, it amplifies our awe. It compels us to say, as the Qur'an teaches, “Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. Exalted are You! Pour forth on us the light of Your mercy and knowledge.”

Sources:

- The Quran, translated (6:1; 79:27-33; 21:30; 41:11-12; 51:47; 24:35; etc.) 39 2 24 26 31 16 .
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