

Commentary on Qur'an 36:77–83: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Perspectives

Abstract: Qur'an 36:77–83 concludes Surah *Yā Sīn* with a powerful proof of bodily resurrection, intertwining theology, rational argument, and natural analogies. These verses remind humans of their humble origin from a mere drop and challenge the skeptic who doubts revival of decayed bones ¹ ². Classical commentators like *al-Ṭabarī*, *Ibn Kathīr*, and *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* emphasize that the Creator who originated life from nothing can surely re-create it ³ ⁴. Philosophically, the passage dismantles the assumption that resurrection is impossible, highlighting that God's knowledge and power bridge any gap in reassembling our identities ⁵ ⁶. Scientifically, it draws on observable phenomena – human embryonic development, fire emerging from green wood, the vastness of the heavens – as signs of the divine ability to bring life from death ⁷ ⁸. The section culminates in a declaration of God's absolute sovereignty and the inevitability of our return to Him ⁹ ¹⁰. Together, these verses provide a holistic argument, engaging heart and mind, for the possibility and certainty of the afterlife in Islamic thought.

Close Reading and Classical Exegesis of Qur'an 36:77–83

36:77 – Human Origin and Arrogance

“Does not man see that We created him from a mere sperm-drop? Yet behold! he stands as an open adversary.” (36:77) The passage opens by reminding humans of their **humble biological origin** (*nutfah*, a drop of fluid). Classical exegetes marvel at the contrast between **man's lowly beginning** and his later arrogance ¹. Imām *al-Rāzī* notes how that fertilized drop – *something “despised” and insignificant* – was endowed by God with faculties of hearing, sight, intellect, and speech, elevating it to a fully formed human ¹¹. Yet, tragically, the same human turns into a **“clear adversary”** (**خصيم مبين, *khaṣīm mubīn***) who argues against his own Maker. *Abu 'Abdullāh al-Qurṭubī* comments on the astonishment of this situation: a being fashioned from a base fluid now **dares to dispute God's power** ¹². The verse thus sets a tone of irony and rebuke.

From a scientific perspective, modern embryology confirms that each human begins from a microscopic drop (the fusion of sperm and egg), containing all the genetic information to develop into a conscious being ⁷. This profound fact – unknown to the 7th-century audience – underscores the insight of the verse. If one reflects on one's **dependent, almost negligible genesis**, it should instill humility rather than hubris. Philosophically, as *al-Ghazālī* observed, recognizing one's created origin is key to overcoming the ego's illusion of self-sufficiency ¹³. Thus, 36:77 prepares the reader: **How can a creature that came from next to nothing deny the power of the Creator?**

36:78 – The Skeptic's Doubt: “Who will revive these bones?”

“And he strikes for Us an example, while forgetting his own creation. He says, **‘Who can give life back to bones after they have decayed?’**” (36:78). Here the Qur'an presents the **argument of a skeptic** who deems resurrection impossible. Early Islamic reports say this verse was revealed when a pagan elder –

identified in some narrations as *‘Ubayy ibn Khalaf* – picked up a crumbling bone, crushed it and blew it in the air, mockingly asking the Prophet ﷺ, “O Muhammad, are you claiming that Allah will resurrect this after it has turned to powder?” ¹⁴ . The Prophet replied, “**Yes, He will cause you to die, then resurrect you, then gather you in Hell**”, upon which these verses were revealed ¹⁵ . (In other reports, *al-‘Āṣ ibn Wā’il* did something similar ¹⁶ . In any case, the verse addresses *anyone* who denies the Afterlife ¹⁷ .)

The skeptic’s stunt “strikes a similitude” – essentially a cynical **demonstration-by-example** – yet he “**forgets his own creation**” in the process ² . Classical exegesis highlights the **irony**: this man finds **decayed bones** too far gone to ever live again, while ignoring that **he himself was created from nothing** ² . If God could create a living human from a droplet (and even earlier, create *Adam* from dust), why should re-creation from disintegrated bones be impossible? The unbeliever’s fallacy, as Imām *al-Rāzī* explains, is **projecting human limitations onto God** ¹⁸ . Because *we* humans cannot bring the dead back to life, the skeptic assumes God is likewise “helpless” – a grave error in analogy ¹⁹ . The verse exposes this flawed epistemology: the critic measures divine power by the yardstick of his **own experience**, forgetting that the One who created **nature’s laws can override them at will**.

Classical scholars also discussed a deeper **philosophical challenge** implicit here: the issue of **personal identity** in resurrection. The question arises, *if a person’s body has disintegrated and its atoms scattered, could the same person be reconstituted?* Some Hellenistic philosophers argued that reassembling dispersed matter would only create a *copy* of the person, not the original – unless some continuous element (like an immortal soul) remained through death ⁵ . *Al-Ghazālī* countered that **God’s perfect knowledge and the preservation of the soul bridge this gap** ²⁰ . The individual’s identity is not lost, because **the All-Knowing presides over the entire process**. The verse’s phrase “forgetting his own creation” can thus imply that the skeptic forgets the *non-material* aspect of his existence – the soul that God created and sustains. If God once breathed life into lifeless matter, He can surely do so again ²¹ .

Modern thinkers add that **matter and energy are never truly lost**, only transformed; every atom of those “dusty bones” remains somewhere in God’s dominion, ready to be called forth ⁶ . Thus, the question “Who will revive these bones?” is answered on multiple levels: **logically** (the One who created them first can recreate them), **analogically** (as subsequent verses will illustrate with natural examples), and **metaphysically** (the continuity of the self is safeguarded by God’s knowledge and the enduring soul). The Qur’an frequently quotes such doubts – “*When we are bones and dust, shall we really be raised as a new creation?*” – only to dismantle them with reason and reminders of God’s creative power ²² ²³ .

36:79 – Divine Answer: First Creation as Proof of Resurrection

“Say, ‘He who created them in the first place will give them life again, for He has full knowledge of every act of creation.’” (36:79). In this verse, God Himself provides the decisive answer to the skeptic’s question. The Prophet ﷺ is instructed to respond: **the same Creator who made human beings (and their bones) out of nothing “the first time” will revive them after death**. This is a classic Quranic argument: **the fact of initial creation is proof of re-creation**. As another verse asks rhetorically, “*Did We fail in the first creation? Yet they are in doubt about a new creation!*” ²⁴ . Indeed, originating life from non-life (as when every human begins as a mere drop) is no less miraculous than restoring life to decayed remains. Imām *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* observes that **by this logic, the greater feat (originating life) includes the lesser (restoring life)** – any deity capable of the extraordinary feat of creating life in the first instance can surely accomplish the “simpler” task of bringing it back ²⁵ . As an analogy: if a watchmaker can assemble a complex watch

from raw minerals, he can certainly reassemble a broken watch; how much more so can **the Divine Artisan**, with His unlimited knowledge, reassemble the human being.

Notably, the verse stresses **God's comprehensive knowledge**: "*He is All-Knowing of every creation (kulli khalq).*" Classical commentators like *al-Ṭabarī* and *Ibn Kathīr* explain that this means **God knows every detail of every creature** – every bone, fragment and particle, wherever it has gone ⁴. Nothing of a person is "lost" or forgotten by Him, even if it has dispersed through the earth. Elsewhere the Qur'an assures, "*We know what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a preserving Book*" (Qur'an 50:4), indicating that **the "blueprint" of our bodies and selves is perfectly preserved in God's knowledge** ²⁶. Resurrection, then, is not a reconstruction from faulty memory; it is a precise restoration by the One whose knowledge and power are absolute ⁴.

Theologically, verse 79 reinforces two of God's beautiful names: **al-Khāliq** (The Creator) and **al-'Alīm** (The All-Knowing). It links omnipotence with omniscience – God creates with perfect power and will restore with perfect knowledge of the original form ²⁷ ⁴. Some classical scholars even remarked that **God's knowledge itself sustains our existence**; when we die, that knowledge ensures we remain *in potentia* until the Day we are called forth ²⁸. In modern philosophical terms, one might say the *continuity of the self* is guaranteed by the unfailing "memory" of God. In simpler terms: **God never forgets His creation, even if we forget our own origin** ²⁸.

36:80 – A Sign in Nature: Fire from a Green Tree

"[It is] **He who produces for you fire out of the green tree, and behold! you kindle fire from it.**" (36:80). After the logical answer, the Qur'an now gives a **tangible example from nature** to illustrate God's power to bring forth life from death (or the unexpected from the unlikely). In the Arabian context, people commonly kindled fire by rubbing together twigs of certain desert shrubs. Classical Arab tradition (and Qur'ānic commentators) identify two green plants – *al-Markh* and *al-'Affār* – whose moist, green branches would spark when struck together ²⁹. As *Imam al-Qurṭubī* explains, these twigs, though full of sap ("green and full of water"), were used like fire-sticks: **rubbing them produces sparks and ignites a flame** ³⁰. It was an everyday desert marvel: **fire emerging from living, "wet" wood**. To the ancient Arab, this exemplified bringing opposites from one another – something moist and green yielding something hot and consuming.

The intended analogy, made explicit by many commentators, is that **if God can bring fire out of a green tree, He can bring life out of dried bones** ³¹. In other words, what seems impossible or contrary to nature occurs easily by God's will; **the resurrection of the dead is no more implausible than hidden fire residing within a leafy branch** ³². As one classical exegete put it, "The God who can create fire from green wood is *a fortiori* able to create life from dust" ³³.

Beyond the immediate analogy, this verse carries scientific nuances appreciated more fully today. Green plants are *repositories of solar energy*: through photosynthesis, a tree stores the sun's energy as chemical fuel in its wood. Fire is essentially the release of that stored energy. Thus "*fire from green trees*" is a poetic way of describing the **carbon cycle** – wood (even if fresh) contains combustible material that can ignite because of energy originally absorbed from sunlight ³⁴. The Qur'an elsewhere alludes to this: "*Have you considered the fire you kindle? Is it you who produced its tree, or are We the producer?*" (Qur'an 56:71–72) ³⁵. Indeed, humans did not create the natural fuel that makes fire possible; **God provided the trees as fuel**, whether immediately as wood or through ancient biomass that became coal and oil. Modern science thus

deepens our awe at this verse: the “green tree” is in fact a *solar energy factory*, and fire is a sign of energy transformation built into creation by the Creator ³⁴ ³⁶ .

Philosophically, verse 80 invites reflection on the unity of opposites under God’s command. **Life and death, moisture and flame** – all operate within the divine power. The One who can embed a spark in greenery can surely embed vitality in crumbled bone ³⁷ . *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* loved to point out such *‘ajā’ib* (wondrous phenomena) in nature that testify to an omnipotent will ³⁸ . Some scholars even saw in “*fire from the green tree*” a symbolic hint of resurrection: just as fire (a new, energetic life) can arise from something green and soaked with water, so too **new life will spring from graves** that were wet with rot ³⁹ . In practical terms, this verse functions as **empirical evidence**, encouraging the skeptic to observe a kind of mini-resurrection in nature. Just as a seemingly dead flint or dry twig sparks to life, **the dead human will spark to life at God’s decree**.

36:81 – From Cosmic Creation to Human Re-Creation

“Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes indeed – for He is the Supreme Creator (al-Khallāq), the All-Knowing.” (36:81). Now the argument reaches its zenith with a **cosmological proof**. The Qur’an asks: if God could create the vast heavens and earth, can He not recreate human beings (or create their likes) once more? This is reasoning by **greater-to-less**: the formation of the entire cosmos, with its unimaginable scale and complexity, is a far greater feat than restoring any individual person. As the Qur’an elsewhere states: “*Surely the creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most people do not know*” (Q.40:57).

Classical *mufasssīrūn* offer two nuances on the phrase “**create the like of them**”. Some, like *al-Ṭabarī*, interpret “*them*” as referring to the **deniers themselves** (i.e. God can create those *humans* anew or create others like them) ⁴⁰ . Others take “*them*” to refer to **things like the heavens and earth** – meaning, if He made the entire universe, He can surely make its likeness again ⁴⁰ . Either way, the point is clear: **no task is beyond an Omnipotent Creator** ⁴⁰ . The verse then emphatically answers its own question: “*Yes, indeed (balā)! – affirming that He is “al-Khallāq al-‘Alīm.”* *Al-Khallāq* is an intensive form of *Khāliq*, implying **the Supremely Creative**, who creates and re-creates endlessly and effortlessly ⁴¹ . And again He is tagged as *All-Knowing*, reinforcing that this creative power is coupled with limitless knowledge of “all things.”

Imam *al-Rāzī* frequently highlighted how the Qur’an uses the **cosmos as proof** of God’s ability. He might invite the reader: *look up at the clear night sky – if Allah could create billions of stars and the entire earth you walk on, why doubt His ability to resurrect you?* The Qur’an makes this argument repeatedly. For example: “*Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth and was not wearied by their creation, is able to give life to the dead?*” (Q.46:33) ⁴² . Modern cosmology has magnified our appreciation of what “created the heavens and the earth” entails. We now know the observable universe contains **billions or even trillions of galaxies**, each with billions of stars ⁴³ . The cosmic scale of creation is mind-boggling. When we reflect that **the Creator of all that is** – the entire space-time reality – is the One being questioned by a mortal about raising a few human bones, the skeptic’s doubt is exposed as absurd. Verse 81 thus drives home: **denying resurrection is as illogical as denying that the One who built a palace can rebuild a cottage** ⁴⁴ .

The divine name *al-Khallāq* (“The Supreme Creator”) appears only a few times in the Qur’an, underscoring here that God’s creativity is limitless and ongoing. In Islamic theology, no additional “effort” burdens God in creating or re-creating. The verse subtly hints this by mentioning that God “*was not wearied*” by making the heavens ⁴² . *Al-Ghazālī* and other theologians used such verses to refute the Aristotelian notion of an

eternal, static universe that precludes new acts of creation ⁴⁴ . Creation was not a one-time act that exhausted the Creator; it is a continuous possibility under His will. If He freely created everything from nothing, He can freely initiate **new acts** (like resurrecting the dead) whenever He wills. In sum, 36:81 ties the discussion back to **Tawhīd**, the oneness of God's power: **He alone made all things, so nothing – not even reviving the dead – can lie beyond His capacity** ⁴⁵ .

36:82 – God's Creative Command: "Be, and it is"

"His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it 'Be!' – and it is." (36:82). In this penultimate verse, the Qur'an beautifully describes the mechanism of Divine creation: **not through toil, process or need of material, but by pure command**. When God wills to create anything, He simply says "*kun*" (Be), and the thing instantaneously comes into existence ⁴⁶ . The phrase "*kun fa-yakūn*" ("**Be, and it is**") **appears multiple times in the Qur'an (e.g. 2:117, 3:59, 19:35, 40:68) as the ultimate expression of *God's effortless power**. Classical commentators clarify that this "**speech**" is **metaphorical** – it's not that God literally pronounces "Be" in human language; rather, it signifies that **no sooner does He will a thing, than it comes to pass** ⁴⁷ . *Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī* said: "God's 'Kun' is His swift execution of His decree, not a voiced word." In other words, for God the moment of intention and the moment of existence are one and the same; **there is zero interval between His command and its fulfillment** ⁴⁷ .

From a philosophical and theological standpoint, this verse is foundational. It affirms **creatio ex nihilo** – creation from nothing by God's sheer will. Medieval Islamic theologians (*mutakallimūn*) like the Ash'arites cited this verse to assert that **God is the direct cause of all existence**, needing no pre-existing matter ⁴⁸ . *Al-Ghazālī*, in refuting the philosophers, leaned on concepts like *kun fayakūn* to argue that the world began by God's command at a chosen time and can end and begin again likewise ⁴⁹ . The verse also introduces the term "**amr**" (command/affair) in a creative context, which has intriguing connections to the concept of **the soul (rūḥ)**. In Qur'an 17:85, we find: "They ask you concerning the soul. Say: 'The soul is of the *amr* (command) of my Lord...'" This led some scholars to deduce that the human soul is a direct creation by God's command – not made of earthly elements, but of a higher, immaterial order ⁵⁰ . Thus the soul, being from the divine *amr*, is not subject to decay as the body is; it endures and can be returned to a body at resurrection. In a sense, *kun fayakūn* underpins the reality of the soul: just as God says "Be" and matter exists, He says "Be" and a living soul comes into being ⁵¹ . (Ultimately, as the verse about the soul concludes, "You have been given but little knowledge" of its nature (Q.17:85), reminding us that the soul belongs to the divine mystery.)

Modern thinkers sometimes draw parallels between "*Be, and it is*" and the scientific notion of a universe originating from a "big bang" or from quantum indeterminacy – not to conflate scripture with physics, but to note that even science points to a beginning of time, space and matter (a creation moment). Verse 82 assures us that **God's will is unfettered by time**: strikingly, it says "He says to it: 'Be,'" even before the thing exists – and *then* "it is" ⁵² . God addresses the nonexistent as if it already were, and it becomes. This conveys an irresistible, unfailing decree: nothing can prevent what God intends from becoming reality. In the context of resurrection, the implication is that **reviving billions of humans at once is utterly effortless for God**. With a single command, the *Trumpet of Resurrection* will sound and "*all will rise*" (cf. Qur'an 36:51–52) just as easily as light fills a dark space at the flip of a switch ⁵² .

Classical commentators often connect *kun fayakūn* to the scene of Judgment Day: "*On the Day He calls you, you will respond*" instantly (Q.17:52) – the dead will *be* at His summons ⁵² . Imām *al-Rāzī* adds a subtle insight: sometimes God's "Be" results in things that develop through stages, yet this too is by immediate

command. For example, a human embryo does not appear fully formed in an instant; it grows over time. But that entire developmental process is itself **set in motion and guaranteed by God's initial command** ⁵³. Thus *kun fayakūn* is compatible with both the instantaneous and the gradual – whether through miracle or natural law, **in every case it is God bringing it about** ⁵³. Ultimately, verse 82 drives home the conclusion of the argument: *Divine Omnipotence* in creation has no barriers. God wills, and it becomes – “*fa-yakūn*”. No complexity, no multiplicity of tasks, no lapse of time can hinder the realization of His intent. For someone doubting resurrection, this is the final piece: a God whose creative act is that effortless can surely **“reassemble” all lives for judgment without the slightest difficulty**.

36:83 – Conclusion: God's Glory, Universal Dominion, and Our Return

“So glory be to Him in Whose hand is the dominion (malakūt) of all things, and to Him you will be returned.” (36:83). The passage culminates in this majestic declaration of **God's transcendence and sovereignty**. “*Fa-subḥāna-lladhī...*” – “*So glory be to Him...*” – signifies that God is utterly above any imperfection or inability that the disbelievers might have imagined. After this series of proofs of His power, the Qur'an ends with *tasbīḥ* (glorification), as if to say: *Exalted and perfect is the One who can do all this*.

It then affirms that **all things – absolutely everything in existence – are under God's complete dominion**. The phrase “*in Whose hand is the malakūt of all things*” uses the intensive term *malakūt* (dominion, kingdom) ⁵⁴. Classical lexicons note *malakūt* is essentially *mulk* (kingship, ownership) with added emphasis ⁵⁴. *Al-Zamakhsharī* explains it as meaning the *entire* realm, seen and unseen, belongs to God ⁵⁵. Ibn Kathīr adds that *malakūt*, like the pattern *jabarūt* (power), implies **overwhelming sovereignty** ⁵⁶. Some scholars distinguish *mulk* and *malakūt* by saying *mulk* refers to the physical world and *malakūt* to the spiritual or unseen realm. Ibn Kathīr, however, cautions against restricting it: *malakūt*, in his view, covers *everything*, the totality of creation, material and immaterial ⁵⁶. In any case, the meaning is that **everything, absolutely everything, is in God's “hand”** – a metaphor for His power, ownership, and control ⁵⁴ ⁵⁷.

It is worth noting the anthropomorphic phrase “*in Whose hand*”. Classical theologians (especially the Ash'arites and Māturīdites) remind us this is figurative (*majāz*), indicating power and authority, not a literal hand, for God is exalted above physical attributes ⁵⁸. Thus “*in His hand*” means **under His total control and protection**. The verse echoes others like “*Blessed is He in Whose hand is the dominion (al-mulk)*” (Q.67:1), reinforcing that **ultimate authority rests with Allah alone**. No idol, no force of nature, no human power has any true ownership or say over resurrection (or anything else); all dominion belongs to the One who will command it. This directly rebuts any pagan notion that reviving the dead is out of reach because some other force governs life and death – in truth, **the entire cosmos is in God's hand**.

Finally, the verse – and Surah *Yā Sīn* – ends with an inevitable personal reminder: “*to Him you will be returned.*” After establishing God's ability to resurrect, it closes by **addressing the listener directly: you (plural) will be brought back to God**. Each soul will return to stand before its Lord ¹⁰. This is both a warning and a reassurance. It warns the deniers that accountability awaits – there is no escape from the return to God's dominion. And it gives hope to believers that injustices will be righted and God's promise of reward will be fulfilled. Classical commentators often note the shift here from third person to second person: after speaking *about* the skeptic (“Does man not see... he says...”) the address now turns to *us* the audience (“you will be returned”) ⁵⁹. This rhetorical turn makes the message urgent and universal: **we are all encompassed in this fate of returning, so we must be prepared** ⁵⁹. As another verse says, “*To Allah belong the keys of the heavens and earth... then He will bring you back*” (Q.39:44) – the one who gave you life will surely bring you back to face the consequences of what you did ⁶⁰.

In sum, verse 83 crowns the passage with three themes: **God's transcendence** (*subḥānallāh* – He is glorified far above the impotence humans ascribe to Him), **God's kingship** (*malakūt* – His absolute reign over all existence), and **the certainty of our meeting with God** (the *return*). Philosophically, this concluding verse ties the intellectual arguments back to spiritual submission. Having contemplated these signs and proofs, the only appropriate response is to declare “*Glory be to God!*” and acknowledge His total authority ⁶¹. It also resonates with the idea of returning to our Source: all things came from God's command, and all things will return to His judgment. Mystical commentators (Sufis) sometimes speak of creation coming from the Divine Presence (*ʿālam al-malakūt*) and returning to it ⁶¹. Here *malakūt* can imply that unseen divine realm of command and control – to which every soul returns when it leaves the physical body. For the everyday believer, the verse is a potent reminder to live with the end in mind: **we came from a drop and we will go back to God** ⁶². In between, how could we forget our lowly origin or our ultimate destination? As *al-Ghazālī* advised, keeping these verses in heart renews one's awareness of the Hereafter and one's humility before the Almighty ⁶³.

Philosophical Reflections: Resurrection and its Denial

The passage under discussion engages not only theology but also deeper **epistemic and metaphysical assumptions** about resurrection. The Qur'an shows keen insight into the **mindset of the deniers** and challenges their assumptions on multiple fronts:

- **Projection of Human Limits onto God:** As noted, Imām *al-Rāzī* identified the skeptic's error as a kind of anthropomorphism in reverse – treating God as if He were bound by human limitations ¹⁸. The disbelievers assumed that since **humans find resurrecting the dead impossible, it must be impossible per se**. This reflects an epistemology limited to empirical observation: they had *never seen* dry bones come back to life, so they declared it “unbelievable.” The Qur'an corrects this by asserting God's agency beyond and above natural causation. It invites us to reason from the **seen to the unseen**: we *have* seen the wonders of first creation (embryos grow, seeds sprout, etc.), so why deny the second creation by an all-powerful God? Belief in resurrection, then, is portrayed not as a blind leap but as a logical extension once one accepts the premise of an omnipotent Creator ²³ ⁴⁵. The passage implicitly calls out the **fallacy of incredulity** – assuming that because *we* cannot imagine or replicate something, **God** cannot do it either. In Islamic theology, doubting God's power to resurrect is seen as doubting God's power *tout court*, which borders on denying God's very nature as *Almighty*.
- **The Continuity of Personal Identity:** A classic metaphysical concern is how the *same person* can exist again after the total dissolution of the body. If one's physical components are scattered and even recycled into other organisms, in what sense is the resurrected individual *the same*? Islamic thought answered this through the concepts of the soul (*nafs* or *rūḥ*) and God's all-encompassing knowledge. The text alludes to this by saying God is All-Knowing of every creation, and by the reference to the soul being from God's *amr* (command) ⁵⁰. Essentially, the **identity** of a person is preserved by God – the soul remains in His keeping after death, and He has a perfect record of one's being ⁴ ²⁸. Thus, when the body is reassembled (however God chooses to accomplish that), the *form* is reconstituted and the *same soul* is breathed into it once more. Classical scholars like *al-Ghazālī* were adamant that resurrection is **reconstitution, not replacement** ²⁰. The Qur'an's emphasis that God can “*perfectly restore even fingertips*” (75:4) underscores that *every fine detail* of our original body can be restored ⁶⁴ ⁶⁵. In modern terms, one might say that the **information content** defining us is fully known to God; He can therefore instantiate “us” again without any loss of

identity. This provides a theistic resolution to identity puzzles that secular philosophy still grapples with (such as thought experiments of teleportation or cloning).

- **Materialism vs. Divine Causality:** The skeptics in Makkah, while they believed in Allah's existence, were essentially **empirical materialists** regarding life and death – “when we're dead, we're just dust.” The Qur'an challenges this by pointing to phenomena that a crude materialism cannot easily explain: the origin of life from non-life, the fine-tuning of the world for life, and the existence of the soul. The phrase “*forgetting his own creation*” can imply that the skeptic is **forgetting the miracle of consciousness and life** that he himself embodies ²¹. Even today, the question of how life and mind arise from matter is profound. By reminding us that we are more than our material components (having a soul from God's command), the Qur'an is asserting a form of **dualism** – that human persons are not *just* a collection of atoms, but have a spiritual core. This undercuts the assumption that reassembling atoms is all there is to resurrection; rather, the soul's continued existence means the person is still “there” to be raised.
- **Rationality of Belief in Resurrection:** The Qur'an's argument in 36:77–83 is notable for appealing to **reason and observation** rather than blind faith. It employs what philosophers call **a fortiori reasoning** (from greater to lesser, in 36:81) and **analogy** (in 36:80 and the repeated “first creation vs. new creation” motif) ²⁴ ³¹. This reflects the Islamic view that revealed truth is harmonious with reason. *Al-Ghazālī* in his works argued passionately that bodily resurrection is rational once we accept God's existence and omnipotence ⁴⁹ ⁶⁶. He and others wrote refutations of thinkers (like Ibn Sina/Avicenna) who, under Greek philosophical influence, found bodily resurrection irrational. The Qur'an's multi-pronged argument prefigures many points in those later debates. It shows that **empiricism has limits** (one cannot inductively declare something impossible just because one hasn't seen it), and that **metaphysics matters** (if reality includes an omnipotent God and an immaterial soul, resurrection becomes perfectly plausible).

In summary, the Qur'anic perspective provides a framework where belief in resurrection is not a naive fancy but an outcome of coherent principles: *God is all-powerful and all-knowing; humans are more than mere matter; the One who initiated existence can re-new it*. Modern secular worldviews, which might deny any afterlife as “wishful thinking,” often do so by presupposing either that God does not exist or that He is not actively involved with matter. But as Islamic scholarship often points out, **scientific discoveries** in cosmology and biology have, if anything, made belief in a powerful Creator **more** reasonable (e.g. the universe having a beginning, the intricate information in DNA). The same God-centric premise that explains those phenomena also supports belief in resurrection. Thus the Qur'an positions faith in the afterlife as **intellectually sound** and indeed integral to a truly coherent understanding of existence ⁶⁷.

Scientific Reflections: Decomposition, Regeneration, and the Cosmos

While the Qur'an is not a science textbook, verses 36:77–83 intriguingly anticipate or resonate with certain scientific ideas, using the natural world as a **sign (āyah)** to make theological truths accessible. Reflecting on these verses from a modern scientific standpoint can enrich our appreciation:

- **Bodily Decomposition and Conservation of Matter:** When the Qur'an mentions decayed bones and scattered dust, the skeptic's assumption is that they are *gone forever*. Today, we understand that

matter is conserved. The atoms of a human body do not vanish; they disperse into the environment (into soil, air, other organisms). As one modern writer remarked, “*every atom of our bodies is traceable to ancient stars*” – in other words, the **materials of life are part of a grand cycle**. The Qur’an indirectly alludes to this continuity by insisting that God’s knowledge spans “*all regions of the earth*” where bones might disperse ⁶⁸. In a sense, resurrection could be seen as the ultimate recycling: the scattered bits of a person are gathered (by the One who alone knows their every location) and reassembled. Interestingly, Qur’an 75:3–4 highlights **fingertips** – which modern forensic science recognizes as uniquely identifying each person (fingerprint patterns) – and says God can even restore those perfectly ⁶⁴ ⁶⁹. Science today confirms that fingerprints are extremely individual and complex. If even we humans can use a fingertip to identify someone, surely the Creator who fashioned that detail can re-fashion it. The mention of fingertips can be seen as symbolizing *all the fine details* that make you “you” – none of it is beyond God’s power to regenerate.

- **Embryology and Regeneration:** Verse 36:77’s reference to creation from a *nutfah* (sperm-drop) is one of many Qur’anic reminders of **human embryonic development** (see also 22:5, 23:12–14). Modern biology has charted this process in astonishing detail, from fertilization to fetal growth. The Qur’an draws a lesson: if God already performs the miracle of assembling a human gradually from a droplet (which itself comes from nutrients, which come from soil...), why doubt His power to reassemble a person again? In 22:5, after describing the embryo’s stages, the Qur’an says “*thus We clarify (Our power) to you*” ⁷⁰ ⁷¹ – i.e., the **womb is a site of daily miracles** that should dispel doubt about resurrection. Furthermore, certain organisms in nature exhibit **regenerative capabilities**: a severed planarian worm can regrow into two worms; some lizards regrow tails; plants sprout anew from cuttings. While these are not resurrection, they show that the information needed to rebuild an organism is often retained in even a small fragment. By analogy, one could say the *information* (or design) for a human is always retained by God, no matter what happens to the material form. Modern science also allows phenomena like cloning (creating a genetic copy from a single cell) – again a far cry from reviving the dead, but evidence that **life’s building blocks, given the right command, can yield a complex organism**. All this can broaden our imagination: if such things are possible in nature, what of the One who set nature’s laws?

- **Fire from Green Trees – Energy Transformations:** Verse 36:80’s example of lighting fire with green wood finds a new resonance in light of chemistry and ecology. We now know that when wood burns, it releases energy stored via **photosynthesis**. The “green tree” converted sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide into complex hydrocarbons; fire simply reverses that, releasing heat and light. So “*producing fire from the green tree*” is in fact a **scientifically precise image** for what is happening. The Qur’an’s question in 56:71–72 (“*Is it you or We who produced the tree for the fire?*”) reminds us that **humans did not create the fundamental processes that allow combustion** ⁷². We now understand those processes more deeply: the **carbon cycle**, the role of oxygen, etc. Such understanding can increase our awe at how finely tuned the world is. If God designed the ecosystem such that even lush plants carry latent fire, how easily He can design the resurrection ecosystem where dry bones carry latent life. Another subtle connection: the Qur’an in 36:80 chose *green tree* (a living thing) as the source of *fire* (often a symbol for energy or even *life-force*). It thereby ties **life, death, and new life** together. Modern astrophysics tells us that the elements composing our bodies (carbon, iron, etc.) were forged in the hearts of stars (which then exploded). In a poetic sense, *we come from stardust – from fire* – and the Qur’an says we also come from water and earth. Thus, the cycles of nature are complex, but **everything originates from God’s creative act** and can be recombined in astonishing ways.

- **Cosmological Scale and Cycles:** Verse 36:81 points to the **heavens and earth**. Today we speak of the universe's origin in the Big Bang, the formation of galaxies, stars, planets, and the eventual fate of the universe. Some cosmologists even entertain cyclic models of the universe (collapse and rebirth). While the Qur'an doesn't outline cosmology in modern terms, it emphatically states that the cosmos was *created* (had a beginning) and that it will *end* and be recreated on the Day of Resurrection (Q.21:104 likens the universe's undoing to rolling up a scroll). The **immensity of the cosmos**, as we now know it, hugely amplifies the force of Qur'anic arguments. When 36:81 was revealed, "heavens and earth" to listeners meant the vast sky with sun, moon, and stars – already impressive. Now we realize each star is a sun, many with their own planets, and there are uncountable billions of them. Yet all that complexity and size is, in Islamic understanding, **effortless for God to create and manage**. As 36:82 put it, it's just "Be!". This gives a kind of **scientific sublime** to the idea of resurrection: if God can marshal subatomic particles into atoms, atoms into molecules, and molecules into living cells (which science confirms *did* happen on Earth), then bringing back a formerly living arrangement of atoms (a human) is not difficult in comparison. Furthermore, science reveals a world of **constant transformations**: stars explode and their matter becomes the seeds of new stars and planets; a dead organism's elements become part of other organisms. In the grand conservation of energy and matter, nothing truly "ceases to exist" – it only changes form. The Qur'an's promise is that God will *reassemble* and *re-enliven* us from those forms we dissolved into. From a physical perspective, one might compare it to a masterful 3D printing: the raw material always exists, it's the *pattern* that needs to be reimposed – and God retains the pattern. Indeed, Qur'an 56:62 reminds the skeptics, "*You have already known the first creation, so why do you not take heed?*" ⁷³ – pointing out that **existence itself, and each cycle of life, is evidence of God's ability to do as He wills**.

In short, modern science, rather than undermining the Qur'anic worldview, in many ways **echoes its signs**. The more we discover about the universe – from the micro-level of DNA to the macro-level of galaxies – the more "*everything is a miracle*," as one commentator put it ⁷⁴. The Qur'an's arguments for resurrection encourage us to look at **nature's recurring miracles** (birth after gestation, spring after winter, fire from wood, rain reviving dead land) and see them as analogues, hints of the greater miracle to come. For a believer engaged in science, each discovery can be an opportunity to say "*subhānallāh*" – Glory be to God – who authored such a marvel ⁷⁵. Far from being at odds, the Qur'anic perspective can integrate scientific understanding into a wider vision of reality where **faith and reason, the spiritual and the physical, all point to the same truth: the universe is purposive and sustained by an Intelligent Power, and our lives too will not end in meaningless dust**.

Thematic Epilogue: First Creation as an Analogy for Afterlife in the Qur'an

The argument presented in Qur'an 36:77–83 – that **the One who created life first can create it again** – is a recurring theme throughout the Qur'anic text. This passage in *Yā Sīn* is perhaps the most comprehensive single treatment, but many other verses make the same logical and analogical case for the Afterlife. Below, we highlight a few key places where the Qur'an uses the **analogy of first creation** (or other natural analogies) to argue for resurrection, echoing the themes of our passage:

- **Surah Al-Isrā' (17:49–52):** The disbelievers ask, "*When we are [mere] bones and dust, shall we really be raised up as a new creation?*" (17:49). The response comes: "*Say [O Prophet], 'He who created you the*

first time will restore you” ⁷⁶ . They then shake their heads and ask when it will be, to which the Prophet is told to say, *“Perhaps it will be soon”*. Verse 52 continues: *“On the Day He calls you, you will answer with praise of Him and think you had only remained [in the world] a little while.”* This passage directly mirrors *Yā Sīn* 36:78–79: the **skeptic’s query about crumbled bones** and the reply to remember **the first creation** ⁷⁷ . It adds the detail that when resurrection happens, the doubters will realize how short their worldly life was. The emphasis is that for God, **raising the dead is as easy as calling someone who steps forth immediately** ⁷⁸ .

- **Surah Al-Ḥajj (22:5–7):** This is a powerful appeal to both **embryology and botany** as evidence of resurrection. *“O mankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then consider that We created you from dust, then from a drop of sperm, then from a clinging clot, then from a lump of flesh – formed and unformed – that We may make things clear to you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will until an appointed term, then We bring you out as infants... And you see the earth barren, but when We send down water, it stirs and swells and produces of every lovely kind. That is because Allah is the Truth and He gives life to the dead and He is capable of everything. And because the Hour is coming, no doubt about it, and Allah will resurrect those in the graves.”* (22:5–7) ⁷⁰ ⁷¹ . In this remarkable passage, **human development from conception to old age** is described in detail, and **the revivification of dead land by rain** is given as a parallel – both to demonstrate God’s power to bring life from lifelessness. The logical connective “that is because” in verse 6 explicitly links these observations to the conclusion that **Resurrection is true and inevitable** ⁷⁹ . It’s essentially a Quranic *scientific argument*: *if you doubt resurrection, look at the natural facts of life – your own origin and the rejuvenation of nature – and realize that God who orchestrates these can resurrect the dead as well*. The inclusion of “dust” as our ultimate origin (echoing Adam’s creation) and the statement *“He is capable of everything”* tie directly into the themes of 36:77 and 36:81 ¹ ⁸⁰ .

- **Surah Al-Wāqī‘ah (56:57–62):** Here a series of rhetorical questions drives the point home: *“We created you, so why do you not believe? Have you considered the semen that you emit? Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death among you, and We are not to be outdone – [we are] not incapable – in replacing you with others like you and recreating you in forms you do not know. And you have already known the first creation, so will you not take heed?”* ⁸¹ ⁸² . **This passage covers many of the same elements:** God’s role in procreation (**you only “emit” the drop, but God forms the baby**), **the decree of death**, and **a clear statement that God could replace or transform us if He wanted and that nothing prevents Him from doing so** ⁸² . The line *“forms you do not know”* (56:61) intrigued classical commentators – some understood it as *“bringing you back in an unknown form on Resurrection Day,”* perhaps alluding to the new conditions of existence then ⁸³ . Others, like Mujahid, took it generally: *“God can create you in any form He wishes.”* Either way, it asserts God’s creative freedom. **Finally, 56:62 says we already know the “first genesis,” implying: we know from our own existence that God can create complex life;** that knowledge should make us receptive, not skeptical, to the idea of a new genesis in the Hereafter ⁷³ . *This directly parallels Yā Sīn* 36:77 and 81. Ibn Kathīr, commenting on 56:62, says it means, *“You have seen how We created you the first time from a drop of despised fluid; so why do you doubt that We can bring you back again?”* ⁸⁴ .

- **Surah Al-Qiyāmah (75:3–4):** This Makkan surah confronts the doubters head-on: *“Does man think that We will not assemble his bones? Yes indeed – We are able to even perfect his fingertips.”* ⁸⁵ The mention of **bones** echoes the skeptic’s words in 36:78 and 17:49. The emphatic answer *“Yes, indeed”* (balā) is identical to 36:81’s tone. And the specific reference to **restoring fingertips (banān)** is profoundly insightful ⁶⁴ ⁸⁶ . As the *Ma‘āriful-Qur‘ān* commentary notes, fingertips represent one of

the **smallest and most intricate parts** of the human body, and today we know they carry unique fingerprint patterns ⁶⁹ ⁸⁷ . By stating that God can assemble those exactly as they were, the Qur'an conveys that no detail is beyond His power – **the resurrection will not be a rough approximation, but an exact restoration of each person** ⁸⁸ ⁸⁹ . This resonates with the end of 36:83, which implies God's complete dominion over "*all things*". The classical exegete *Al-Jalālayn* explains 75:4 as: "*We are able, in addition to assembling the bones, to reshape even his fingers, just as they were – despite their smallness. So how much more so the larger bones!*" ⁹⁰ . In other words, if one accepts that God can do the "harder" thing (precisely reform billions of tiny finger bones and skin whorls), it is foolish to think He cannot do the "easier" (the bigger parts). This same *afortiori* logic permeates the Qur'anic approach.

Other passages also tie creation to resurrection (e.g. Qur'an 30:19 and 30:50 mention giving life to dead earth as a sign; 46:33 closely parallels 36:81; 40:68 repeats "*His command is only 'Be' and it is*"). Taken together, these verses form a consistent Qur'anic worldview: **the God who originated life, and who continually revives life around us, will revive the dead for the final judgment** ⁹¹ ⁹² . The analogy of first creation is not only logical proof but also serves to *engage the imagination*. By relating the unseen future event (resurrection) to observable present and past events (birth, growth, rain, spring, etc.), the Qur'an anchors doctrine in the signs accessible to all people.

Conclusion

In Qur'an 36:77–83, we have a vivid example of the Qur'an's unique discourse – weaving **scientific insight, philosophical reasoning, and theological doctrine** into a seamless tapestry ⁹³ ⁹⁴ . Classical scholars were deeply impressed by how these few verses manage to *dismantle doubt and fortify faith* ⁹⁵ . We have seen how early authorities like al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī and Fakhr al-Rāzī unpacked these verses: providing context (the incident of the crumbled bone), grammatical and lexical nuances (*malakūt* vs. *mulk*), and rational arguments (greater vs. lesser, human arrogance vs. origin) rooted in their intellectual traditions. We also saw philosophical giants like al-Ghazālī engaging the same issues of identity and possibility, finding harmony between Qur'anic teaching and sound reason.

Modern perspectives, informed by science, do not detract from these verses – rather, they add new layers of awe. The human being's journey from a microscopic cell, the energy hidden in green trees, the mind-boggling expanse of the universe, the uniqueness of each person's fingerprints – *today we know that everything is a miracle* when seen through the lens of knowledge ⁷⁴ . Each of these realities reinforces the Qur'an's message: **the God who gave us life in the first place can revive life from death**, just as He brings forth wonders from every corner of creation ⁹⁶ .

Ultimately, the passage connects the **micro-level** (a drop of fluid, a single soul) with the **macro-level** (the galaxies, the entire dominion of being) under one Lord ⁹⁷ . It also links the **past** (our creation), **present** (the signs around us), and **future** (our return to God) in one narrative: *from Him we came, by His power we live, and to Him we shall return* ⁹⁸ . The appropriate response, as the Quran ends, is to glorify God and acknowledge that we will indeed be brought back to Him. A Muslim theologian, scientist, or philosopher reading these verses is invited to marvel at the coherence between God's revealed word and His created world. For the believer, these arguments are not mere abstractions – they nurture an **ākhirah-consciousness**, a living awareness of the life to come that inspires gratitude, humility, and moral responsibility ⁷⁵ . As Imam al-Ghazālī reportedly said, *Yā Sīn* is "*the heart of the Qur'an*" because it awakens people to the reality of resurrection ⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ . In an age of scientific advancement and philosophical

skepticism, the heart of the Qur'an continues to beat, offering a message that speaks to both **the intellect and the soul**: *Glory be to the One in whose hand is the dominion of all things – and to Him you will be returned.*

9 10

Sources: Classical and modern tafsir works and analyses were used in this commentary, including *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (which records the bone-crushing incident and explains terms like *malakūt* ¹⁴ ⁵⁴), *Al-Rāzī's Mafātih al-Ghayb* (noted for integrating rational arguments ¹⁰¹ ¹⁰²), and *Al-Qurṭubī's Jāmi' li-Aḥkām* (which detailed the fire-from-tree practice ³⁰). Modern scholarly work, such as Zia H. Shah's analysis "*Surah Yā Sīn – Arguing from the First Creation to Afterlife*", provided scientific and philosophical insights that complement the classical exegesis ⁹⁹ ³⁴. Quranic cross-references (17:49–52, 22:5–7, 56:57–62, 75:3–4, etc.) were examined through translations and commentaries to illustrate the Qur'an's unified approach to this theme ⁷⁷ ⁷¹ ⁶⁵. These sources collectively show the enduring relevance of Qur'an 36:77–83 in discussions of faith and reason, as it engages both **ancient skepticism** and **modern questions** with a profound, timeless wisdom.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34
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