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Critical Reexamination of the Event of the Splitting of the Moon in Light of the Noble Qur'an

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Abstract

In Islamic heritage, three perspectives are presented regarding the incident of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar). Two of these perspectives affirm the event as a miraculous sign supporting the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH), a view supported by most Islamic scholars. On the other hand, the rationalist minority considers the incident as a symbolic reference to apocalyptic signs linked to the Day of Judgment. This study adopts a comprehensive and impartial approach to analyze the arguments of both sides. Ultimately, it supports a purely Qur'anic perspective, identifying the moon splitting as synonymous with the "Khusuf al-Qamar" mentioned in Surah Al-Qiyamah, marking it as one of the signs and precursors of the Resurrection.

Keywords: Qur'an; Moon Splitting; Critique; Rationalist Perspective.

Introduction

The event of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) is one of the miracles attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Islamic tradition, with references reportedly appearing in the Qur'an. This phenomenon has been a recurring subject of discussion in Hadith collections and interpretations of the Qur'an. This section critically reviews the traditional perspective, which views the event as a miraculous occurrence, alongside the Qur'anic-centric interpretation. Most research conducted on the moon splitting focuses on its affirmative aspects, aiming to establish it as a miracle during the Prophet's time. This discussion is often embedded within narratives of other prophetic miracles. Reports and accounts of the moon splitting incident are found in various hadith, historical, and exegetical sources [1].

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These hadiths are narrated in Sunni sources through five companions: Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbas, Jubayr ibn Mut'im, Anas ibn Malik, and Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman. Additionally, a single narration attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib appears in *Sharh Mushkil al-Athar* by Al-Tahawi. In Shi'i sources, a mursal narration (chainless report) is attributed to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq in *Tafsir al-Qummi* [2], and another narration is attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib in *Amali* by Shaykh Tusi [3].

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a critical textual and thematic exegesis approach. As the research centers on the Qur'anic representation and interpretation of the moon-splitting phenomenon (*Inshiqaq al-Qamar*), the methodology is grounded in non-numerical analysis, emphasizing meaning, context, and theological implications rather than statistical generalization. The study adopts a hermeneutical-critical framework to explore both the linguistic structure and theological significance of relevant Qur'anic verses. The primary data sources include the Qur'anic text itself, particularly verses from Surah Al-Qamar (54:1–2) and Surah Al-Qiyamah (75:8–9), alongside Hadith collections (e.g., *Sahih Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*) that report the event. Additionally, the study draws upon classical exegetical works such as *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, and *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, as well as modern and reformist commentaries by scholars like Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, and Jawad Mughniyah. These sources provide a comprehensive spectrum of interpretive traditions – traditionalist, rationalist, and Qur'anic-centric.

The data collection process is conducted through systematic literature review and documentary analysis. This includes identifying and extracting interpretations, linguistic patterns, and theological arguments from primary texts and exegetical literature. Attention is also given to hadith criticism, particularly evaluating the authenticity and epistemological weight of reports related to the moon-splitting event, including their chains of transmission (*isnad*) and content (*matn*). For data analysis, the study uses critical thematic interpretation, focusing on how the concept of the moon splitting is framed within the Qur'anic discourse and how it aligns or diverges from traditional miracle narratives. Thematic mapping is applied to organize the multiple views – literal, metaphorical, eschatological – across various scholarly traditions. Furthermore, linguistic analysis of the Arabic text is conducted to assess verb tense usage, rhetorical structure, and syntactic relationships that inform the temporal and theological reading of the verses.

To ensure validity and academic rigor, the study employs source triangulation, comparing classical and contemporary sources across different

sectarian and methodological orientations. Moreover, argumentative consistency is assessed by examining the coherence of each interpretive position in light of the Qur'an's broader theological framework, particularly regarding divine signs, natural law, and eschatological motifs. In summary, this research methodologically integrates textual analysis, comparative exegesis, and critical theology, aiming to present a holistic Qur'anic interpretation of Inshiqaq al-Qamar. By prioritizing the Qur'an's internal linguistic and thematic coherence over external narrations, the study aspires to contribute to a deeper, theologically grounded understanding of the event, free from dogmatic or polemical presuppositions.

Result and Discussion

Chain of Authenticity of the Narrations

The authenticity of these narrations is evaluated based on the principles of hadith criticism. The key findings regarding the narrators and their chains of transmission are summarized below:

Narration from Ali ibn Abi Talib: This narration is deemed weak due to the presence of Hadij ibn Mu'awiyah in the chain. Ibn Hajar in *Taqrib al-Tahdhib* explicitly categorizes Hadij as unreliable (da'if) [4]. **Narration from Hudhayfah:** This narration is mauquf (stopped at the companion level) and merely references the first verse of Surah Al-Qamar without affirming the moon splitting. Al-Daraqutni in *Kitab al-'Ilal* considers it weak [5]. **Narration from Abdullah ibn Umar:** The narration is weak due to the presence of Al-A'mash, who is known for tadlis (concealment in transmission). Ibn Hajar in *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* mentions this weakness [6]. **Narration from Ibn Abbas:** This narration is mauquf because Ibn Abbas did not witness the event. Additionally, the presence of narrators like Al-Kalbi and Isma'il ibn Ziyad weakens the chain [7].

Narration from Jubayr ibn Mut'im: This narration is munqati' (interrupted), as the primary narrator, Jubayr's father, was a disbeliever who died before accepting Islam. This is supported by *Kitab al-Jarh wa al-Ta'dil* [8]. **Narration from Anas ibn Malik:** This narration is both mauquf and mursal because Anas ibn Malik was not present in Mecca during the event. Ibn 'Asakir in *Tarikh Dimashq* points out this issue [9]. **Narration from Ibn Mas'ud:** Among the seven chains attributed to Ibn Mas'ud, only two are considered authentic. These chains are validated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in their respective collections [10].

Interpretative Theories on the First Verse of Surah Al-Qamar

Islamic scholars have presented various interpretations of the first verse of Surah Al-Qamar: "*The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split.*" (54:1)

These interpretations can be categorized into five main perspectives. Four of these are outlined in *Al-Nukat wa Al-Uyun*, while the fifth is based on Ibn Abbas's commentary on the verse's context of revelation [11].

Figurative Interpretations of the Moon Splitting Symbolic Interpretations of Moon Splitting

This perspective views the moon splitting as a metaphor for "clarity of the matter and its manifestation." It interprets the verse not as a physical event but as an indication of the obviousness and inevitability of divine truth. This view is attributed to Abu Muslim Muhammad ibn Bahr al-Isfahani, a Mu'tazilite scholar. Support for this interpretation is drawn from Arabic literary expressions, such as the following poetic verse [12]:

أقيموا بني أميَّ صدور مطيكم ... فإني إلى قومٍ سواكم لأميل
فقد حمت الحاجات والليلُ مقمَرٌ ... وشَدَّتْ لطياتٍ مطايا وأرحلُ

This metaphorical usage reflects the clarity and resolution of important matters. Reformist scholars such as Rashid Rida [13], Mustafa Sabri [14], and others have revisited this interpretation in modern times.

Literal Figurative Meaning

This interpretation suggests that the moon splitting refers to the separation of darkness from the moon during its rising, similar to the "splitting" of dawn, which separates darkness and light. The following poetic verse illustrates this metaphor [15]:

فلما أدبروا ولهم دويٌّ ... دعانا عند شقِّ الصبح داعي

Here, the "splitting of dawn" symbolizes the emergence of light from darkness. Similarly, the moon's rising can metaphorically be described as a "splitting." However, this interpretation has not gained significant acceptance among traditional scholars [16].

Literal Interpretations of the Moon Splitting at the Time of Resurrection

In this interpretation, the moon splitting is viewed as an eschatological event that will occur during the second blast of the Trumpet, signaling the onset of the Resurrection. Prominent proponents of this view include Hasan al-Basri,

Ibn 'Ata, Abu Bakr al-Asamm, 'Ubad ibn Sulayman, and Hisham al-Futi, along with several philosophers. In modern times, rationalist scholars such as Tantawi, Maraghi, Jawad Mughniyah, Mustafa Mahmoud, and others have supported this perspective [17].

Moon Splitting During the Prophet's Era

This perspective, held by the majority of traditional exegetes, asserts that the moon splitting occurred as a miraculous event during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime. Numerous hadith collections refer to this event, which is regarded as a sign affirming the Prophet's truthfulness [18].

Lunar Eclipse During the Prophet's Era

Some scholars, such as Ibn Ashur and Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, interpret the verse as referring to a lunar eclipse. They base this view on the linguistic overlap between "eclipse" (*Khusuf*) and "splitting" (*Inshiqaq*), and rely on narrations such as that of Ibn Abbas regarding the verse's context of revelation [19].

The Incident of the Moon Splitting in Islamic Discourse

The event of the moon splitting (*Inshiqaq al-Qamar*) has consistently been a topic of debate and reflection among Islamic scholars, including exegetes, theologians, and philosophers. This event, regarded as a miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), has inspired varied interpretations. Three primary perspectives can be identified in the discourse surrounding this event:

The Traditionalist Approach

This approach relies heavily on hadith collections and Qur'anic exegeses, accepting the moon splitting as a historical event that occurred during the Prophet's lifetime. Proponents of this perspective view the incident as a miraculous sign supporting the Prophet's truthfulness and rely on the reports transmitted through various companions to affirm its authenticity. The traditionalist approach dominated classical Islamic scholarship and continues to be widely accepted in mainstream Islamic thought.

The Rationalist Approach

Rationalist scholars, particularly those influenced by the Mu'tazilite tradition and modern reformist thought, have questioned the plausibility of such an event within the natural order. They either deny the incident's occurrence as

a physical phenomenon or reinterpret it in symbolic or metaphorical terms. For example, some argue that the splitting of the moon refers to its appearance during the Prophet's era, marking the clarity of divine truth rather than a literal cosmic event. This approach reflects a preference for harmonizing religious narratives with reason and natural laws.

Qur'anic Reflections

This study adopts a purely Qur'anic perspective, analyzing the moon splitting within its linguistic, contextual, and theological framework. The Qur'an describes this event using terms that emphasize its connection to the eschatological signs of the Day of Judgment, aligning with the broader Qur'anic themes of cosmic transformation and divine accountability.

Proponents of the Traditionalist Approach

The vast majority of exegetes and hadith scholars from both Sunni and Shi'a traditions align in affirming, based on narrations, that the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) was a historical event during the era of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Despite Qurtubi's assertion, citing Al-Qushayri and Mawardi, that the prevailing opinion (qawl al-jumhur) regarding the first verse of Surah Al-Qamar is that this incident pertains to the apocalyptic events of the Day of Judgment [20], such an interpretation is neither evident in the commentaries of Al-Qushayri nor Mawardi.

Both scholars, like most other exegetes, affirm that the moon splitting occurred during the Prophet's time. More surprisingly, Al-Qushayri even considers the inability of those outside Quraysh to witness the moon splitting as an independent miracle, demonstrating its exclusivity to the Prophet's contemporaries in Mecca [21]. Similarly, Mawardi, in his commentary, supports the occurrence of the moon splitting in the Prophet's era and does not endorse the eschatological interpretation attributed to him [22].

Arguments Supporting the Moon Splitting During the Prophet's Era

Proponents of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) as a historical event during the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) time support their claims on two primary arguments: the mutawatir (mass-transmitted) nature of the narrations and the apparent linguistic and contextual meaning of the second verse of Surah Al-Qamar.

Mutawatir Narrations, Consensus, and Agreement Among Exegetes

The narrations regarding the moon splitting have been reported through multiple companions with numerous chains of transmission in authentic hadith collections [23].

Hadith scholars and commentators assert that these narrations are mutawatir (mass-transmitted). The majority of Islamic exegetes interpret the moon splitting as a historical event during the Prophet's time [24].

The Linguistic and Contextual Implications of the Second Verse of Surah Al-Qamar

The apparent meaning of the verse supports the argument for the moon splitting as a past event:

Use of the Past Tense in "Inshaqqa"

The verb *inshaqqa* (split) is used in the past tense, which indicates an event that has already occurred. Commentators emphasize that using the past tense to describe a future event requires a contextual clue, which is absent in this case [25].

The Verb "Ra'aw" and Physical Observation

The verse states:

"*And if they see a sign, they turn away and say, 'This is continuous magic.'*"
(54:2)

The verb *ra'aw* (saw) explicitly refers to physical sight, indicating that the event was observed directly by witnesses [26].

Context of the Verses and Their Relation to the Prophet's Miracle

The context of the verses suggests that the splitting of the moon is presented as one of the Prophet's miracles. If the event were to occur during the Day of Judgment, the Quraysh's objection and their description of it as *sih'run mustamir* (continuous magic) would be illogical [27].

Rationalist Arguments Against the Moon Splitting During the Prophet's Era

Throughout Islamic history, various rationalist groups have denied the occurrence of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) as a cosmic event. While many of their opinions did not find lasting prominence in Islamic intellectual heritage, Evidence suggests that groups like the Jahmiyya, Kharijites, and many Mu'tazilites, and some philosophers held views opposing the orthodox position. These dissenting views were often labeled as deviant (shadh) or heretical (mubtadi'a) and were frequently marginalized or erased, with their proponents accused of misguidance, disbelief, or heresy.

Historical Rationalist Objections

Zajjaj's Commentary: Zajjaj, in his *Ma'ani al-Qur'an*, refers to a group of innovators (mubtadi'a) in his era who rejected the moon splitting. **Ibn al-Subki's Critique:** Ibn al-Subki states that the majority of philosophers rejected the moon splitting based on the impossibility of rupture (kharaq) and rejoining (iltiyam) in celestial bodies. He asserts that such views have been refuted in foundational theological principles.

Some rationalists argued that if such an event had occurred, it would have been observed worldwide. Ibn al-Subki counters this by labeling these rationalists as atheists and suggesting that since the event occurred at night, many might have been asleep or unaware. He likens this to a solar eclipse, which, if unpredicted by astronomers, might go unnoticed by many [28]. Prominent rationalists, such as Hasan al-Basri, Nazzam, 'Ata', Jahiz, Abu Bakr al-Asamm, 'Ubad ibn Sulayman, and Al-Futi, along with some Mu'tazilites and philosophers, also questioned the moon splitting. However, detailed evidence for their rejection of the incident is scarce, as their views were often dismissed or misrepresented by opponents. They typically cited reasons such as the lack of global observation and the metaphysical impossibility of rupture and rejoining in celestial bodies [29].

Modern Rationalist Objections

In the resurgence of rationalist thought, this issue has been revisited extensively. Reformist scholars like Rashid Rida, Tantawi, Maraghi, Jawad Mughniyah, Mustafa Mahmoud, Fadlallah, Qasimi, Abd al-Karim Khateeb, and others have denied the moon splitting as a miracle during the Prophet's era, often relying on intra-Qur'anic evidence. They argue that the Qur'an does not support sensory miracles for the Prophet and interpret the first verse of Surah Al-Qamar either metaphorically or as a reference to the approach of the Day of Judgment [30].

Contemporary Reinterpretations

In the face of modernity, contemporary rationalist movements have analyzed the moon-splitting narrative critically, often viewing it as a mythical or symbolic element in Muslim belief. These thinkers emphasize the Qur'an's perceived negative stance on sensory miracles for the Prophet and interpret the first verse of Surah Al-Qamar as an allegory or a sign of the impending Day of Judgment. Key figures in this movement include Muhammad Arkoun, Hassan Hanafi, Abd al-Majid al-Sharafi, Bassam al-Jamal, Muhammad Abed al-Jabri, Muhammad Shahrou, and Muhammad Ghazali [31].

Arguments Against the Moon Splitting

Opponents of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) during the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) era present several arguments based on Qur'anic evidence, rational reasoning, and the analysis of historical and theological context. These arguments can be summarized as follows:

The Qur'an Restricts the Prophet's Miracle to the Qur'an Itself

According to explicit Qur'anic verses, the only miracle of the Prophet Muhammad that was presented as a challenge (tahaddi) to the Arabs is the Qur'an itself [32]. In an authentic hadith reported in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, the Prophet said:

"No prophet has been given miracles except those through which people believed, but what I have been given is a divine revelation that Allah has inspired to me. I hope, therefore, to have the most followers on the Day of Resurrection [33]."

Rashid Rida highlights the inconsistency of accepting the narration of Anas ibn Malik (who was only five years old at the time of the alleged incident) while also believing that the disbelievers demanded a miracle, and the moon splitting occurred. Additionally, he questions the narration attributing the request for this miracle to the Jews, as Surah Al-Qamar is Makki, and the Jews were not present in Mecca [34].

The Moon Splitting Is Not Listed Among the Qur'an's Proposed Miracles

The Qur'an consistently mentions the Qur'an itself as the only miracle offered in response to the disbelievers' challenges. If the moon splitting had indeed occurred as a miracle, it would logically be included among the miracles requested by the disbelievers in the Qur'an [35].

Absence of Prerequisites for a Miracle

For a miracle to fulfill its purpose, prerequisites such as a set time and public announcement to maximize its impact must be met. However, reports indicate that the Prophet merely witnessed the moon splitting and said, "Bear witness," without using it as a direct argument for his mission. By contrast, during the solar eclipse coinciding with the death of his son Ibrahim, the Prophet clarified that such celestial events are natural phenomena unrelated to human life and death [36].

Priority of Performing Requested Miracles

If the Prophet were to perform a miracle, it would logically be one explicitly requested by his opponents to conclusively prove his truthfulness, as seen in the tradition of previous prophets [37].

Absence of Punishment for the Disbelievers

According to established principles, divine punishment often follows a miraculous sign when rejected by disbelievers. However, there is no record of any punishment being inflicted upon the Quraysh or those who allegedly requested the moon splitting. Commentators such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Baghawi, who emphasize this principle, remain silent on its application to this event [38].

Lack of Widespread Reporting of a Global Phenomenon

An event as significant as the moon splitting would have been widely reported and transmitted as mutawatir (mass-transmitted). However, the narrations related to this event are singular reports (khabar al-ahad) and are primarily attributed to individuals who may not have witnessed it directly. Even if reports from five companions are accepted, they fall short of achieving the status of tawatur [39].

Consistency of Divine Laws

Rashid Rida, while rejecting the Greek philosophical notion of the impossibility of rupture and rejoining in celestial bodies, argues that the immutable nature of divine laws, as emphasized in the Qur'an, precludes such an event. The moon splitting, in his view, would represent a disruption of these established laws [40].

Rationalist Critique of the Arguments Supporting the Moon Splitting

This section explores the rationalist critiques of the traditionalist interpretations of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar), particularly focusing

on the Quranic evidence cited by traditionalists. These critiques, rooted in interpretative analysis and rational reasoning, challenge the arguments supporting the moon splitting as a historical event.

Rationalist Interpretations of the Key Qur'anic Verses

The Meaning of the Second Verse of Surah Al-Qamar

The second verse of Surah Al-Qamar states:

"And if they see a sign, they turn away and say, 'This is continuous magic.'"
(54:2)

Rationalists argue that the conjunction *wa* (and) in this verse is a present-tense conditional marker (*wa haliyyah*), referring to the ongoing behavior of disbelievers in response to any divine sign, rather than describing a specific historical event. The conditional structure (*wa in yaraw* – if they see) implies continuity, encompassing past, present, and future behaviors of rejection and denial.

Rashid Rida highlights that if the verse specifically referenced the moon splitting, the Qur'an would have used a direct and definitive statement, such as:

"They saw [the sign] and turned away, saying: 'This is continuous magic.'"

The use of the conditional form broadens the context to describe the disbelievers' general response to divine signs rather than referring to a singular, historical event [41].

The Coherence Between the Two Clauses in the First Verse of Surah Al-Qamar

The first verse of Surah Al-Qamar states:

"The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split." (54:1)

Rationalists argue that the phrase "and the moon has split" should be understood in the context of the phrase "the Hour has drawn near," as both are presented in the same sentence and share a temporal and thematic relationship.

Linguistic and Rhetorical Analysis:

The conjunction *wa* in *wa inshaqqa al-qamar* is interpreted as *wa al-ma'iyyah* (conjunction of accompaniment or simultaneity), indicating that the two events—the drawing near of the Hour and the splitting of the moon—occur together or within the same eschatological framework.

The semantic coherence of the verse suggests that both clauses describe events related to the Day of Judgment, not a past miracle.

Supporting Exegetical Views:

Maraghi: Argues that the conjunction wa connects the nearness of the Hour with the splitting of the moon as future events, emphasizing their eschatological context [42].

Qattan: Highlights the intrinsic connection between the two phrases, concluding that the splitting of the moon is an event of the Day of Judgment rather than a historical miracle [43].

Rationalist Critique of the Justifications for Non-Observation and Lack of Punishment

Throughout history, proponents of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) have offered various justifications for why this extraordinary event was not observed globally and why divine punishment did not follow its rejection by the disbelievers. These justifications are critically analyzed below from a rationalist perspective.

Non-Observation of the Moon Splitting in Other Regions Due to Natural Conditions

Proponents argue that factors such as nighttime, cloud cover, or sleep might have prevented people in other regions from observing the moon splitting. Rashid Rida critiques this argument, stating that it is implausible for an astronomical event of this magnitude to have gone unnoticed by observers outside Mecca. He argues that numerous people worldwide regularly observe the moon, and the suggestion that no one outside Mecca witnessed the event is highly improbable. Furthermore, Rida emphasizes that even within Arabia, there should have been ample testimony from neighboring regions such as Ta'if and Medina. However, the lack of historical records or reports from these areas undermines this justification [44].

The Short Duration of the Event

Some proponents claim that the moon splitting occurred over such a brief period that it was not observable in distant regions. Rationalists counter this by questioning the validity of such a miracle. If the event was so brief as to be indistinguishable from an illusion, it would fail to serve as definitive proof of the Prophet's truthfulness. Rida notes that such fleeting phenomena are more likely to be dismissed as magical illusions or optical tricks, further undermining their credibility as evidence of prophethood [45].

Divine Intervention Preventing Observation in Other Regions

Ibn Hajar, citing Al-Khattabi, argues that if the moon splitting had been observed in non-Muslim regions, it would have been dismissed as sorcery, necessitating divine punishment. To avoid this, God may have limited the event's observability to Mecca. Al-Qushayri adds that the lack of observation itself could be considered a separate miraculous phenomenon. Similarly, Qurtubi suggests that God may have deliberately diverted people in other regions from witnessing the event, framing this as a type of "divine sparing" (صرفه إلهية).

Rationalists respond by stating that this explanation not only fails to resolve the issue but exacerbates it for the following reasons: Lack of Local Testimonies: Even within Arabia, there are no substantial records from neighboring towns like Ta'if or Medina regarding the event. Contradiction with the Purpose of Miracles: If the purpose of miracles is to serve as irrefutable evidence for prophethood, restricting their observability undermines their intended function. Inconsistency in the Application of Punishment: If the sparing of other regions was to prevent divine punishment, why were the Quraysh spared, despite rejecting the miracle and labeling it as magic? [46].

Lack of Historical Evidence from Non-Islamic Sources

Proponents sometimes cite alleged references to the moon splitting in non-Islamic sources, such as reports from India. Rashid Rida dismisses these claims, arguing that isolated and unverifiable reports from anonymous travelers lack scholarly credibility. He further points out that if such evidence existed, it would have been widely documented in Islamic sources following Muslim expansions into these regions [47].

Absence of Punishment Following Rejection

Some commentators argue that the absence of divine punishment was due to the Prophet's presence among the Quraysh, delaying their punishment. They cite instances such as the Battle of Badr, where the Quraysh suffered defeats, as evidence of delayed retribution [48]. Rationalists critique this argument:

Lack of Immediate Punishment: According to divine law, the rejection of a sensory miracle should result in immediate and catastrophic punishment, as seen with previous nations. Delayed retribution, such as defeat in battles years later, does not align with this principle. Purpose of Punishment: The Qur'an emphasizes that punishment following the rejection of miracles serves as direct retribution for disbelief. Events like the Battle of Badr, which also involved the loss of Muslim lives, do not fulfill this role.

Inconsistency in Divine Laws: If the presence of the Prophet prevented punishment for the Quraysh, it contradicts the established precedent where prophets and believers were removed before divine retribution was delivered [49].

Critique of the Alleged Mutawatir Nature of the Moon Splitting Narrations

The claim that the narrations of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar) are mutawatir (mass-transmitted) has been critically examined and challenged by various scholars, particularly those emphasizing analytical and rational approaches. Below are the primary critiques raised against the alleged mutawatir status of these narrations:

Disagreement Among Proponents Regarding the Mutawatir Status

Prominent Islamic scholars, especially those known for their precision and analytical rigor, have expressed doubts about the mutawatir status of the moon splitting narrations, noting significant disagreements:

Al-Ghazali: Al-Ghazali, one of the leading thinkers in Islamic thought, asserts that none of the Prophet's miracles, except for the Qur'an, has reached the level of mutawatir that results in definitive knowledge. He states:

"No definitive mutawatir exists regarding the non-Qur'anic miracles of the Prophet [50]."

Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni: Al-Juwayni argues that the moon splitting narrations have not achieved mutawatir status. He cites scholars such as Al-Halimi, who interpret the incident as related to the eschatological events of the Day of Judgment, and supports this view with Qur'anic evidence [51]. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani: Ibn Hajar, like Al-Ghazali, notes that none of the Prophet's miracles, except the Qur'an, has reached definitive mutawatir status. He highlights that the moon splitting narrations are disputed and cannot be considered definitively mutawatir [52]. Qasimi: Following the views of Muhammad Abduh, Qasimi critiques Ibn Kathir's claim of mutawatir narrations, emphasizing that singular reports (ahad) cannot serve as a basis for doctrinal certainty. Qasimi also refers to opinions from Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Al-Fanari to reinforce his argument [53].

Rejection of Mutawatir Status by Opponents

Opponents of the moon splitting narrative contend that the related narrations are singular reports (ahad) that lack consistency and coherence. Furthermore, they argue that no marfu' (directly attributed to the Prophet) narrations exist that explicitly describe the disbelievers requesting the miracle.

For instance: Rashid Rida: Rida highlights that even the narrations found in authentic collections such as Sahih al-Bukhari do not mention any explicit challenge from the disbelievers. Moreover, the mursal (chainless) narration by Anas, which mentions such a challenge, is deemed weak according to hadith principles [54]. Sayyid Fadlallah: After examining the chains of transmission, Fadlallah concludes that the narrations lack definitive certainty and that some of the narrators did not personally witness the event [55].

Philosophical and Epistemological Concerns Regarding Mutawatir Narrations

Difference Between the Reliability of Witnesses and the Truth of the Event

Mutawatir narrations, even if accepted, guarantee only the sincerity of the witnesses, not the factual accuracy of the event itself. For example:

Idol worshippers justify their practices based on ancestral traditions, which they report as universally accepted.

Christians unanimously assert the crucifixion of Jesus, a claim that Muslims reject based on Qur'anic evidence.

In both cases, the sincerity of the claimants does not validate the truth of the event.

Possibility of Sensory Errors

Mutawatir narrations rely on sensory observations, which are prone to misinterpretation. For instance:

Ibn Ashur acknowledges the possibility of mistaken observations or illusions regarding celestial phenomena.

Al-Halimi records an incident where another alleged splitting of the moon was observed in Bukhara, witnessed by various people, but interpreted differently based on local contexts [56].

Qur'anic Reflections on the Splitting of the Moon

According to Qur'anic usage, the root *shaqq* signifies rupture and transformation, which occur in either a physical or a metaphysical context. The linguistic interpretations of this root—such as *kharq* (tearing), *qat'* (cutting), *khilaf* (contradiction), and *sad'* (splitting)—all trace back to this essential meaning. Based on this linguistic foundation, the Qur'anic terms derived from this root can be explained as follows:

Rupture and Transformation in the Qur'an

Rupture and Change in Physical Objects

Refers to splitting and transformation in natural entities like rocks, earth, and sky:

"But some of them split open and water gushes forth [57]."

"The earth shall split apart, and the mountains will collapse [58]."

"On the Day when the sky splits open with clouds and the angels are sent down in successive ranks [59]."

Separation in Beliefs

Indicates division in faith or opposition to belief:

"If they believe in the same as you believe in, they will be rightly guided; but if they turn away, they are in schism [60]."

Fracture in Relationships

Reflects discord and separation in human and familial relationships:

"If you fear discord between them, appoint an arbiter [61]."

Rupture in Faith

Denotes separation from the path of guidance and opposition to the Messenger:

"Whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him [62]."

Rupture in Endurance

Expresses hardship and difficulty in bearing torment:

"Indeed, the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe [63]."

Severe Hardship

Indicates extreme struggle and hardship:

"You would not have been able to reach it except with great difficulty [64]."

Gravitational Disruption and Transformation of Celestial Bodies

Denotes fundamental changes in celestial structures, such as the collapse of the heavens:

"And the sky will split apart, becoming fragile on that Day [65]."

"When the sky splits open and becomes rose-colored like oil [66]."

The First Verse of Surah Al-Qamar

"The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has split [67]."

This verse comprises four words and two harmonious clauses connected by the conjunction *wa* (and). Without a doubt, the first clause pertains to the Day of Judgment (*As-Sa'ah*), and consequently, the second clause must also relate to it. Thus, the splitting of the moon and the nearing of the Hour are inherently connected. Both clauses use the past tense to signify eschatological proximity, which will be clarified further.

However, the exact nature of the moon's splitting remains unclear from this verse alone. To determine what type of splitting occurred on the moon as the Hour approached, it is necessary to examine other Qur'anic verses.

The Moon's Condition During the Day of Judgment

The Qur'an explicitly describes the condition of the moon during the Day of Judgment in Surah Al-Qiyamah:

"They ask: 'When is the Day of Resurrection?' So, when vision is dazzled, and the moon is darkened, and the sun and the moon are joined [68]."

Sequential Stages:

First, the moon undergoes *khassf* (darkening).

Subsequently, the moon and the sun merge.

Linguistic Roots of *Khassf*:

The root meaning of *khassf* includes diminution, rupture, and splitting [69]. The term *khassf* is also used for lunar eclipses, where the moon's light diminishes due to Earth's shadow.

Interpretation of *Khassf* in an Eschatological Context

Three considerations distinguish the *khassf* described in Surah Al-Qiyamah from natural lunar eclipses:

The *khassf* in this verse is an exclusive sign of the Day of Judgment, distinct from recurring natural phenomena.

The result of this *khassf* is the merging of the moon and the sun, which does not occur during ordinary lunar eclipses.

Scientifically, the merging of the moon and sun could occur due to:

A celestial body colliding with the moon.

The entry of a black hole into the solar system.

The sun's transformation into a black hole alters the gravitational balance [70].

Linking Khasf al-Qamar to Inshiqaq al-Qamar

The linguistic meaning of khasf (diminution, rupture, splitting) and the preceding points suggest that the most plausible interpretation of khasf al-qamar is that it aligns with inshiqaq al-qamar (splitting of the moon). This rupture triggers the merging of the moon and sun, marking the first stage of cosmic upheaval leading to the Day of Judgment.

Thus, the splitting of the moon mentioned in Surah Al-Qamar signifies the same event as the khasf al-qamar in Surah Al-Qiyamah. This rupture is one of the primary signs of the Hour, as indicated by the pairing of the clauses, *"The Hour has drawn near"* and *"the moon has split."*

Contextual Analysis of the Opening Verses of Surah Al-Qamar in Light of Surah Al-Anbiya

Similarities Between the Opening Verses of Surah Al-Anbiya and Surah Al-Qamar

The tone and apparent structure of the opening verses of Surah Al-Qamar closely align with those of Surah Al-Anbiya. In Surah Al-Anbiya, after mentioning the approaching of the Reckoning (Iqtirab Al-Hisab), the verse highlights the heedlessness and disregard of the disbelievers, as well as their dismissal of divine signs as magic. Similarly, the verses of Surah Al-Qamar describe the heedless and mocking attitude of the disbelievers toward the signs of Allah.

Given that during the actual event of the Day of Judgment, there will be no heedlessness or disregard – instead, disbelievers will express deep regret for their earthly negligence and acknowledge their wrongdoing – this clarifies that the verses serve as a warning. They urge humanity to recognize that the Day of Reckoning is certain to arrive, yet the disbelievers persist in their habitual rejection, mockery, and dismissal of divine signs as magic. They remain oblivious to the inevitability of accountability and fail to realize that all matters will ultimately reach their destined conclusions, as emphasized in the phrase, *"And every matter is settled [71]"*.

Linguistic and Conceptual Parallels Between Surah Al-Qamar and Surah Al-Anbiya

Use of the Past Tense to Indicate Certainty of Future Events:

In both Surahs, the verb “Iqtirab” is used in the past tense (Mazi) to emphasize the certainty of the event. In Arabic eloquence, this indicates that the event is so assured from Allah's perspective that it is described as though it has already occurred:

In Surah Al-Qamar: *“The Hour has drawn near [72]”*

In Surah Al-Anbiya: *“The Reckoning for mankind has drawn near [73]”*

Beginning the Verses with Warnings About the Day of Judgment:

Both Surahs open with key warnings about the inevitability of the Day of Judgment:

Surah Al-Qamar mentions the nearness of the Hour.

Surah Al-Anbiya warns about the impending Reckoning for all of humanity.

Conceptual Parallel in Describing the Reaction of Disbelievers:

The behavior of disbelievers toward divine signs is described in similar terms in both Surahs:

In Surah Al-Qamar: *“And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: ‘This is magic continuing.’”*

In Surah Al-Anbiya: *“But they are in heedlessness, turning away.”*

Central Focus on Divine Signs and Human Response:

Both Surahs highlight divine signs and the dismissive reaction of the disbelievers:

In Surah Al-Qamar, the disbelievers regard the signs of Allah as mere magic: *“If they see a sign, they turn away.”*

In Surah Al-Anbiya, the disbelievers trivialize the revelations by treating them as play: *“No mention comes to them from their Lord, except that they listen to it while they are at play.”*

Rhetorical Structure of Contrast and Opposition:

Both Surahs utilize a rhetorical structure of contrast and opposition:

In Surah Al-Qamar: *"And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: 'This is magic continuing.'"*

Divine signs versus the disbelievers' rejection and mockery.

In Surah Al-Anbiya: *"The Reckoning for mankind has drawn near, while they are in heedlessness, turning away."*

The nearness of accountability versus the heedlessness of humanity.

Emphasis on the Persistent Rebellion of Disbelievers:

Both Surahs underline the consistent stubbornness of disbelievers in their path of misguidance:

In Surah Al-Qamar: *"And they followed their desires, but every matter is settled."*

This statement affirms that all matters, whether disbelief or faith, will culminate in their ultimate consequences.

In Surah Al-Anbiya: *"No mention comes to them from their Lord, except that they listen to it while they are at play."*

The disbelievers persist in their mockery and denial, even when faced with new revelations.

The Connection Between the Opening Verse and the Subsequent Verses in Surah Al-Qamar

If the splitting of the moon (Inshiqaq Al-Qamar) referenced in the first verse pertains to a past event, and the subsequent verse seeks to continue narrating the event, the natural linguistic flow would maintain the past tense. However, the second verse transitions to a present conditional structure:

"And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: 'This is magic continuing.'"

This shift indicates that the *wa* (and) in the verse functions as a new thematic introduction rather than a continuation of the narrative. It describes the habitual state of the disbelievers: despite the certainty of the Hour and the signs that accompany it, they persist in their mockery and rejection.

The linguistic and rhetorical coherence within the verse suggests that the opening clause pertains to the eschatological reality of the Day of Judgment. The subsequent verses align with the Qur'anic practice of contrasting divine truths with human denial, highlighting the disbelievers' obliviousness despite the undeniable certainty of the Hour.

Mention of Iqtirab and Inshiqaq in the Past Tense From Allah's Perspective

Beyond the rhetorical explanation that the past tense (Mazi) conveys certainty about future events, it is essential to recognize that from Allah's perspective, time is non-linear. Allah transcends temporal constraints, as past, present, and future are relative constructs experienced within the material world. Temporal relativity, as explained in modern physics, demonstrates that time perception diminishes as speed approaches the speed of light [74]. For beings at such velocities, time ceases to progress. From Allah's perspective, the Hour and its signs are near, regardless of how distant they may seem to humanity.

This relativity is echoed in the Qur'an, where the disbelievers, on the Day of Judgment, will swear that they remained on Earth for no more than an hour:

"They will swear they had remained but an hour [75]."

Similarly, what humanity perceives as distant, Allah describes as near:

"Indeed, they see it as distant, but we see it as near [76]."

Thus, the use of the past tense in "The Hour has drawn near" is not metaphorical but reflects the divine perspective. From Allah's viewpoint, the Hour and its accompanying signs, including the splitting of the moon, are imminent, even if humanity perceives them as far off by their temporal standards.

Qur'anic Reflections on Cosmic Phenomena and the Day of Judgment

The Qur'an frequently employs vivid descriptions of celestial phenomena as precursors or signs of the Day of Judgment. These descriptions serve to underscore the majesty and inevitability of divine accountability.

Destruction and Renewal of the Cosmos:

"When the sun is folded up, and when the stars lose their light [77]."

"On the Day when the sky will be like molten brass, and the mountains will be like tufts of wool [78]."

Disruption of Natural Laws:

The Qur'an describes the heavens splitting apart, the earth quaking, and the stars scattering. These cosmic upheavals symbolize the breakdown of the natural order, paving the way for the divine reckoning:

"And the sky will split apart, for it will that day be fragile [79]."

"The earth shall disclose her burdens [80]."

Human Accountability Amidst Cosmic Changes:

These verses often juxtapose the grandeur of cosmic changes with the accountability of individual humans, reminding them of their insignificance before divine power:

"When the trumpet is blown, there will be no ties of kinship between them that day, nor will they ask after one another [81]."

Conclusion

This study has critically examined the incident of the moon splitting (Inshiqaq al-Qamar), exploring its interpretations within Islamic heritage and offering a Qur'anic-centric perspective. The key findings emphasize the complexity of the event's portrayal and its theological significance. (1) **Reevaluating Traditional Interpretations:** The majority of Islamic scholars view the moon splitting as a miraculous event supporting the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). However, this interpretation relies heavily on narrations that, despite their wide transmission, face notable challenges regarding authenticity and consistency. (2) **Rationalist Contributions:** Rationalist scholars and modern reformists challenge the historical authenticity of the event, suggesting symbolic or eschatological interpretations. They argue that the event aligns with broader Qur'anic themes of cosmic transformation, warning humanity of the impending Day of Judgment. (3) **Qur'anic-Centric Perspective:** By focusing on the Qur'an, this study situates the moon splitting within an eschatological framework. The Qur'anic pairing of the splitting of the moon with the nearness of the Hour (54:1) underscores its role as a precursor to the Resurrection rather than a historical miracle. Further analysis links this event to the Khasf al-qamar described in Surah Al-Qiyamah (75:8-9), emphasizing its theological relevance to cosmic upheavals on the Day of Judgment. (4) **Challenges to Historical Accounts:** The study highlights the weaknesses in chains of transmission, the absence of corroborative non-Islamic sources, and the inconsistency with the Qur'an's emphasis on immutable natural laws. These factors call into question the plausibility of a historical moon-splitting event. (5) **Broader Implications:** The moon splitting, as portrayed in the Qur'an, serves as a powerful symbol of divine power, the inevitability of cosmic transformations, and the accountability awaiting humanity on the Day of Resurrection.

In conclusion, this research supports a Qur'anic interpretation of the moon splitting, aligning it with eschatological phenomena that signify the approach of the Hour. This perspective not only harmonizes with the Qur'an's theological and linguistic themes but also offers a cohesive understanding of the event's

significance in Islamic thought. By moving beyond debates over its historicity, the study highlights the Qur'anic emphasis on divine accountability, cosmic order, and the ultimate reality of the Resurrection.

Author Contributions

Seyyed Taghi Al-Mohammad: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Project administration. **Nahleh Gharoavi Nayini:** Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

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