

## THE COLLAPSE OF THE UNIVERSE: ANALYSIS FROM THE GLORIOUS *QUR'AN* AND SIGNS IN THE UNIVERSE<sup>o</sup>

Kitota Abdillah<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This review takes as its central pre-occupation to look at the strong correlation between three verses in the Qur'an; namely 21:30; 51:47 and 21:104, and recent scientific discoveries in the field of Astronomy. While Qur'anic scholars have produced a large corpus of review articles on the origin and expansion of the universe in the light of modern science, the component of the ultimate fate of the universe has so far received little attention. The specific focus of this article is on the aspect of the collapse of the universe as expressed in the Qur'an; by considering the strong correlation between these three verses, and the state of current scientific knowledge on this subject. The review uses the Thematic Approach [Uslub Tafsir Al-Maudhu'i] and Synoptic Approach [Uslub Tafsir Ijmali] of what has been revealed in these verses and other related verses, as compared to what has been presented in various modern literatures in Astronomy. The findings show that the exposition of the Qur'an in verses 21:30; 51:47 and 21:104 has traversed the subject of Astronomy from the origin to expansion and ultimate collapse of the universe. It is hoped that this modest contribution may generate the interest of other scholars to do more research in this area.

**Keywords:** *Collapse, Universe, Big Bang, Galaxies, Primeval Atom, Inflationary Epoch*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The glorious *Qur'an* contains the actual and intact words of Allah (S.W.T) revealed to His final Messenger, Muhammad (S.A.W), in 7<sup>th</sup> century. It contains about 6,236 verses. Among these verses, about 1,844 (-30%) verses point to various signs of

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<sup>1</sup> Biology department, Faculty of Science, Muslim University of Morogoro. Email: [abdillahkitota@mum.ac.tz](mailto:abdillahkitota@mum.ac.tz).

creation that fall under different disciplines of science such as Astronomy and its branch of Cosmology, Biology (Botany & Zoology), Chemistry, Physics, Oceanography, Meteorology, Agriculture, Soil science, Medicine etc.<sup>2</sup> Generally, these creation verses point to three aspects of creation: the origin of the universe including how He originated it, the on-going expansion of the universe and contraction of the universe which explains the ultimate fate of the universe.

### *The origin of the universe*

In Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:117 and Surah Fātir, 35:1, Allah (S.W.T) has described Himself as the originator of the heavens and Earth:

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

*Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is.*

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:117)

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَّثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ ۗ يَزِيدُ فِي الْخَلْقِ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

*[All] praise is [due] to God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, [who] made the angels messengers having wings, two or three or four. He increases in creation what He wills. Indeed, God is over all things competent*

(Surah Fātir, 35:1)<sup>3</sup>

He has also alluded as to how He originated the creation of the seven heavens and Earth in Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30, Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:9-12 and Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:27-30:

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ ۖ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

<sup>2</sup> See Qur'an: Msingi na Dira ya Sayansi na Teknolojia, by A. Kitota (2021), p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> In the tafsir of this verse, Al-Imam Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-Adhwim has reported that, Ibn 'Abbas (R.A) said, "I did not know what *Fāṭiri As-Samāwāti wa al-Ard* meant until two Bedouins came to me disputing over a well. One of them said to his companion, '*Ana Fatartuba*,' meaning, 'I started it.' Therefore, what is implied here is that, Allah (S.W.T) is the Originator of the seven heavens and Earth.

*Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?*

(Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30)

قُلْ أَنتُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ رَبُّ  
الْعَالَمِينَ

*Say, "Do you indeed disbelieve in He who created the earth in two days and attribute to Him equals? That is the Lord of the worlds*

(Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:9)

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رِوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَامًا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً  
لِلنَّاسِ لِيُنذِرَ

*And He placed on it [i.e., the earth] firmly set mountains over its surface, and He blessed it and determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance in four days without distinction – for [the information of] those who ask*

(Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:10)

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا  
طَائِعِينَ

*Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, "Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion," They said, "We have come willingly*

(Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:11)

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا  
بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

*And He completed them as seven heavens within two days and inspired [i.e., made known] in each heaven its command. And We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps [i.e., stars, for beauty] and as protection. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing*

(Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:12)

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْفًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ ۗ بَنَاهَا

*Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? He [i.e., God] constructed it*

(Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:27)

رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا

*He raised its ceiling and proportioned it*

(Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:28)

وَأَعْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا

*And He darkened its night and extracted its brightness*

(Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:29)

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا

*And after that He spread the earth*

(Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:30)

### The on-going expansion of the universe

He has also alluded as the lowest heaven is in on-going expansion. The following verse reveals:

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

*And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander*

(Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47)<sup>4</sup>

### The collapse of the universe

He has also alluded the on-going expansion will be reversed back to its original form. In the following verse we read:

<sup>4</sup> In this verse, two things have been described in terms of power and ability: creation of galaxies; which according to Al-Imam Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azīm and many other commentators, is by strength (*quwwa*) (i.e., gravitational force and centrifugal force) that hold them together in their paths, and their on-going expansion which is due to a certain form of energy not known in detail to humans. This form of energy is what is called dark energy.

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۗ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ ۗ وَعَدَّا عَلَيْهَا  
 إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

*The Day when We will fold the heaven like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records. As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. [That is] a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, We will do it*

(Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104)

To the moment, the collapse of the universe by considering the correlational review between these three aspects as alluded in their respective verses as shown above has yet to be published. Therefore, the findings of this review are offered as a modest attempt to fill this gap. It is hoped that this review may rekindle the interest of other scholars to mount further research in this area. It may also encourage thoughtful non-believers to reflect more on the authenticity of the Qur'an, for it is inconceivable that prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), could, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century and without the aid of telescopes like that used by Edwin Hubble, discover the astounding cosmic facts mentioned in it.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *The views of Ibn 'Abbas (R.A)*

In Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30, the Qur'an states quite categorically that initially, the heavens and Earth were as a single entity (joined mass) and this was the first form of their creation.<sup>5</sup> Then He separated them into smoke and Earth.<sup>6</sup> In the Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:9-12, the Qur'an states that thereafter He created the Earth without spreading it. Then from that smoke, He created seven (7) heavens; one above another.<sup>7</sup> Then He completed the creation of the seven heavens by adorning the lowest part of the first heaven; the nearest heaven or the lowest heaven, by placing lamps and guards.<sup>8</sup> According to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (R.A) as

<sup>5</sup> According to other verses of the glorious *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, before this creation *Allah* (S.W.T) had already created other things such as *Al-Lūh al-Mahfūz* (The Preserved Tablet), water, 'Arash etc. And this was the creation of the first phase.

<sup>6</sup> Or steam according to Qatadah as reported by Al-Imam Ibn Jarir At-Tabari in his commentary (*Tafsīr Al-Ṭabārī*).

<sup>7</sup> As stated in the Surah Al-Mulk, 67:3.

<sup>8</sup> The Arabic word used here to mean the lowest heaven is *samā'*. According to Muhammad Asad in his commentary, *The Message of Qur'an*, the noun *samā'* denotes; primarily, anything that is spread like a canopy above any other thing. Its plural form is *samāwāti*. To my mind, according to my interpretation of the creation verses, when it is used in its plural form (*samāwāt*), it implies the seven heavens, and subsumes the

reported by Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Raz in his commentary Tafsir al-Kabir/Mafātih Al-Ghayb, in the Surah Al-Inshiqāq, 84:1-2, the building blocks of the universe are galaxies (in Arabic, *majarrat*). Hence, these lamps are the galaxies; the very huge collections of the giant clouds of dust and gases (nebulae), septillions of stars and their systems: planets, moons, asteroids, comets etc; all held together by the combined gravitational force of all of its matters.<sup>9</sup> Then He completed the whole creation of seven heavens and Earth by spreading the Earth and placing in it mountains lest it should shake with us. Then according to Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30 and Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:10, He sent down rain onto the Earth from the lowest heaven, from the first atmospheric layer called troposphere. And from this blessed rain, He measured therein its sustenance for its dwellers, i.e., mankind and other living and non-living organisms.

The foregoing description is according to Ibn 'Abbas (R.A) as reported in Sahih Al-Bukhari.<sup>10</sup> He uses the narrative order employed in Surah An-Nāziat, 79:27-30 in which the mention of creation of seven heavens precedes that of the Earth, as confirmation of the correctness of his view. Therefore, according to the glorious *Qur'an*, the origin of the lowest heaven is smoke that originated from that very single entity from which originated the seven heavens and Earth.

However, in Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47, the *Qur'an* indicates that the lowest heaven is in continuous expansion. Considering that the building blocks of the lowest heaven are galaxies, this means that, galaxies are expanding in space as Muhammad Asad put it in his commentary. When the *Qur'anic* verses 21:30 and 51:47 are read together it is quite evident that the stated on-going expansion is the result of the separation of the single entity mentioned in Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30.

### *The signs in the universe*

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abstract concept of the forces emanating from Allah (S.W.T); since He is, in the metonymical sense of this word, above all that exists. When it is used in its singular form (*samā*), it implies the spatial universe in which all aggregations of matter and celestial bodies; such as stars, planets, moons, asteroids, comets, and galaxies in general, suspended in space within a system of unceasing motion determined by centrifugal forces and gravitational attraction.

<sup>9</sup> See Horizon: Exploring the Universe, by Seeds and Backman (2020), p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhari, volume 6. Ḥadīth number 4815. Tafsir of Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

In the year 1927, a Belgium cosmologist and Catholic priest George Lemaitre suggested that the universe is expanding.<sup>11</sup> Four years later, on May 9, 1931 he published a purely qualitative argument of less than 500 words which suggested that, the said on-going expansion could be traced by going back up to a single entity which was very dense (compressed) and hot.<sup>12</sup> He called this single entity “primeval atom” [or cosmic egg].<sup>13</sup> It has also been called a “point of singularity.”<sup>14</sup>

It is estimated that in an inflationary epoch, about  $10^{32}$  second after that great expansion (Big Bang),<sup>15</sup> this single entity expanded at a furious speed and its volume increased for about  $10^{75}$  times, similar to the expansion of an object with size of 0.000000001 m (about half of the molecule of DNA) to the size of about 62 trillion miles.<sup>16</sup> Then this rapid and strong expansion gradually decreased while its density and temperature was falling rapidly as the volume increased. This cooling off was sufficient to allow the formation of sub-atomic particles (electrons, protons and neutrons), and later on, atoms. Later on, giant molecular clouds of those primordial elements; mostly hydrogen with some helium and lithium, coalesced through gravity and formed stars and planets. Stars formed clusters and galaxies – that were organized into different forms – spiral, elliptical and irregular.<sup>17</sup> Galaxies formed galaxy clusters, super clusters and even large structures, voids, filaments and sheets that stretched across the sky.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Kragh & Lambert, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> See Kragh, 2008, and Kragh & Lambert, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> See Kragh, 2008; Kragh & Lambert, 2007; Filipenko, 2007:419; Peebles & Ratra, 2003.

<sup>14</sup> See Understanding the Universe. An Introduction to Astronomy, by Alex Filipenko (2007), p. 360.

<sup>15</sup> According to Seeds & Backman, 2008:311, this phrase was jokingly coined by Fred Hoyle; an early critique of the Big Bang Theory, and the label gives a misimpression. Do not think of an edge or a center when you think of the big bang. It is a very common misconception that the Big Bang was an explosion and that the galaxies are flying away from the location of that explosion. Instead, you should keep firmly in mind the correct picture that the big bang did not occur at a single place but filled the entire volume of the universe. A more accurate term than *Big Bang* might be *Big Stretch*.

<sup>16</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expansion\\_of\\_the\\_universe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expansion_of_the_universe). Accessed on January 21, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> The galaxies appear to be arranged in a network of strings, or filaments, surrounding large, relatively unpopulated regions of space known as voids.

<sup>18</sup> See Astronomy Today, by Chaisson & McMillan, 2011, p. 662.

John D. Fix has provided the following statements concerning the formation of galaxies:

*“Galaxies are thought to have formed from the collapses of clouds of gas that were about ten (10) times bigger than the galaxies we see today. These gas clouds were set rotating by gravitational tugs from other gas clouds.”<sup>19</sup>*

It would appear to us that the above statements about the formation of galaxies given by Fix are alluded to<sup>20</sup> in the following Qur’anic verses:

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ

*Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, “Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion.” They said, “We have come willingly*

(Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:11)

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا ۗ وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

*And He completed them as seven heavens within two days and inspired [i.e., made known] in each heaven its command. And We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps [i.e., stars, for beauty] and as protection. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing*

(Surah Fusilat, 41:12)

According to the Tafsir Al-Qur’an Al-‘Adhwim of Al-Imam Ibn Kathir, the first verse implies that, all the creation and here the earth in particular, must respond to the command of Allah (S.W.T) and be subjected to His Will. The whole creation is in total submission as the verse has indicated that they both replied, *“we will respond to You willingly”*. It is to be borne in mind that when Allah (S.W.T) says He is doing something by Himself [by stating Himself that He is calling, sending or placing something], it implies that, He is making it manifest to us that He has decreed the operation of physical or biological laws in that particular thing, technically referred to as *Sunnatullah*. Quite evidently,

<sup>19</sup> See Astronomy: The Journey to the Cosmic Frontier, by John D. Fix, 2008, p. 560.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Noble Qur’an English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary published by the King Fahd Glorious Qur’an Printing Complex, the word signs (in Arabic, *ayats*) means proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, revelations etc.



therefore, the divine command to those primordial clouds is meant to make plain to us that it is none but He alone who set in motion the physical laws for the formation and arrangement of the galaxies.

After about 9.8 billion years, the expansion speed of the galaxies began to gradually expand more quickly, and that process is still on-going.<sup>21</sup> The current rate of expansion of the universe is estimated to be 72 kilometres per second per megaparsec.<sup>22 23</sup> In the year 1929, an American Astronomer Edwin Powell Hubble used a Hooker telescope which had the aperture's diameter of 100 centimetre<sup>24</sup>, and managed to see that galaxies are systematically moving away from us with a speed that was proportional to their distance from us. The more distant the galaxy, the faster it was receding from us.

In the year 1933, the Caltech astronomer Fritz Zwicky pointed out that, a large part of the mass of the galaxies – about 90% – which makes the stars to remain gravitationally bound (orbiting their centres) is in the form of a missing (unobservable) mass that he called “dark matter”. He called it so because it cannot be detected directly; instead, it can only be detected through its effects. Though at the beginning his findings were ignored, but later on (1970), two American Astronomers, Vera Rubin and W. Kent Ford confirmed the presence of the dark matter.<sup>25</sup>

From the above descriptions, it is also clear that what propels the expansion of the universe; specifically, the galaxies, is energy which in the current state of our knowledge is not well-known in detail to astronomers; instead, like dark matter,

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<sup>21</sup>Available online at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expansion\\_of\\_the\\_universe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expansion_of_the_universe). Accessed on January 21, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> This speed is equivalent to about 3.3 million light years. This means that, for every 3.3 million light years further away from the earth you are, the matter where you are, is moving away from earth 72 kilometres a second faster.

<sup>23</sup> Overbye, Dennis (20 February 2017). Cosmos controversy. The universe is expanding, but how fast. *The New York Times*. ISSN 0362-4331. Accessed on January 21, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> It was the greatest [powerful] telescope of its time. His observation that galaxies were generally receding from us; with a speed that was proportional to their distance from us, provided the first clue that the Big Bang Theory might be true. Additional evidence is the abundance of light elements such as H, He, Li etc; that should have been fused from protons and neutrons in the first few minutes after the Big Bang, and the remnant heat leftover in the form of Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation (CMB) from the Big Bang.

<sup>25</sup> See Schneider, 2015:13; Pasachoff & Filipenko, 2007:380.

its presence is known through its effects, namely, the on-going expansion of the universe. Likewise, this unknown form of energy has been called dark energy. As described in the previous paragraph, *Allah* (S.W.T) has alluded to us this energy by saying that, He is the one who constructed the lowest heaven with strength (i.e., gravity etc.) and He is the one who is continuously expanding it [here is where we see the presence of dark energy]. This process will continue until the end of the universe (*Yaum al-Qiyāmah*) as can be gathered from the verse below:

وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ

*And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander*

(Surah Adh-Dhaariyat, 51:47)<sup>26</sup>

Muhammad Asad in his commentary has noted that, the phrase *wainnā lamūsi'ūn* (and indeed, We are [its] expander) used in the above verse, clearly foreshadows the modern notion of the expanding universe. Though finite in extent, is continuously expanding in space; until *yaum al-qiyāmah*. Quite significantly, however, the same *sūrah* which expounded the very beginning of the seven heavens and Earth in verse number 30, in verse number 104, we find the exposition of the reverse of this continuing expansion back to its original form [of *ratq* or smoke] stated earlier. It reads:

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ۗ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ ۗ وَعَدَّا عَلَيْنَا ۗ  
 إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

*The Day when We will fold the heaven like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records. As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. [That is] a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, We will do it*

(Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104)

These two verses (Surah Al-Anbiyā, 21:30 & 104) are the ones on which this review is based when read together with Surah Al-Dhāriyat, 51:47. This study has so far reviewed and analysed what has been revealed in the Surah Al-

<sup>26</sup> In this verse, two things have been described in terms of power and ability: creation of galaxies; which according to Al-Imam Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Adhwim and many other commentators, is by strength (*quwwa*) (i.e., gravitational force and centrifugal force) that hold them together in their paths, and their on-going expansion which is due to a certain form of energy not known in detail to humans. This form of energy is what is called dark energy.

Anbiyā', 21:30 which spells out the very beginning of the seven heavens and Earth; and Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47 which explicates about the on-going expansion of the universe; and finally Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104 which unravels the reverse of this ongoing expansion back to its original form, as it began. Actually, and according to the Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:53 and Surah Al-Naml, 27:93, this reverse requires us to make a correlational study of the three verses, namely, 21:30; 51:47; and 21:104 together with some other related verses; and their respective signs in the light of our current state of knowledge in Astronomy.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a result of a cross-sectional study conducted from June to September, 2021. It has used the Thematic Approach [*Uslub Tafsir Al-Maudhu'i*]<sup>27</sup> and Synoptic Approach [*Uslub Tafsir Ijmalī*]<sup>28</sup> (adopted from Alawi & Jakarta, 2018) in studying and analysing three Qur'anic verses; namely 21:30 & 21:104 and 51:47, along with some related verses in the light of modern astronomy. Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Aẓim of Al-Imam Ibn Kathir; which is regarded as the second after Tafsir Al-Tabari of Al-Imam Ibn Jarīr At-Ṭabāri and Al-Jāmi'ul Ahkām al-Qur'an of Al-Imam Al-Qurṭubi, was used to get the primary interpretation of the verses of the glorious Qur'an. This is because it links authentic ahadith and opinion of *ṣaḥāba* [companions] in its commentary on the verses of the glorious Qur'an. Ṣaḥīh International Translation was used to give the meaning of verses of the glorious Qur'an in English language. Astronomical data was collected from astronomy books and online databases. Only books or articles published from 2000 onwards were included. These data were then comparatively analysed to show how the exposition of the Qur'an in these verses has traversed the subject of modern astronomy from the origin to expansion and ultimate collapse of the universe.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### *Ratq* vs primeval atom

There are slight differences between what has been revealed in the Qur'an, 21:30 and the discoveries of the modern Astronomy. The Qur'an sets forth that

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<sup>27</sup> Is the systematic writing of the interpretations applied by commentators by not adopting the order of verses in the glorious *Qur'an*, but by collecting all the verses that address the same theme and then drawing logical conclusions.

<sup>28</sup> In this methodology, the commentators interpret the verse in conformity with the grouped verses, then describe the meaning of the whole verse and draw conclusions.

the universe originated from a single entity which was *ratqan*; an Arabic name which according to *Al-Mawrid Dictionary* means to be mended (a thing repaired by sewing or darning), which was parted and then its ingredients formed seven heavens; including the lowest heaven, and Earth. While the priest George Lemaitre; and other astronomers, suggest that the universe originated from a super-compact primordial entity in the form of an atomic nucleus, which was furiously expanded to give elements such as hydrogen, helium, lithium etc., that later on; through stellar processes and energetic events in galactic nuclei, formed heavier elements that are needed, both for life itself and for solid planets on which life can evolve.<sup>29</sup> Despite these slight differences, still what astronomers have discovered are the signs from Allah (S.W.T) as He promised through Surah Al-Fuṣṣilat, 41:53 and Surah An-Naml, 27:93. Kragh, 2008 has commented that, it is not known precisely what motivated Lemaitre to suggest this very first version of a physical Big Bang Model.<sup>30</sup>

### Formation of galaxies

The way Fix, D. E, 2008 and other astronomers explained the formation of the galaxies, relates to the suggestions given by Rene Descartes about the formation of our solar system; in favour of nebular contraction theory. According to him, as presented by Chaisson & McMillan,<sup>31</sup> due to some external influence, such as a collision with another interstellar cloud or perhaps the explosion of a nearby star, large clouds of interstellar dust and gas (called a nebula) started to contract under the influence of its own gravity. As it contracted, it became denser and hotter, eventually forming a star; the sun, at its center. While the sun was forming in the cloud's hot core, the planets and their moons formed in the cloud's cooler outer regions. This means that, planets are the by-products of the process of star formation. This might be true especially when we examine the arrangement of Surah Fuṣṣilat, 41:9-12 and Surah An-Nāzi'at, 79:27-30 stated earlier.

As described earlier, these descriptions contradict the views of Ibn Abbas (R.A) who said that, our planet Earth was the first to be created, without being spread, before the seven heavens, but it was the last to be completed (to be spread, to place in it the mountains, to bless it, and to measure therein its

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<sup>29</sup> See Kragh, 2008; Kragh & Lambert, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> According to Kragh, we can get the insight of what motivated him to give this suggestion, by looking at an article he wrote a few months earlier, at a time when he still explored the meaning and consequences of the model based on his paper of 1927.

<sup>31</sup> See Astronomy Today, by Chaisson & McMillan, 2011, p. 147.

sustenance for its dwellers) after the completion of the creation of the seven heavens. Despite these slight differences, still what astronomers have discovered are the signs from Allah (S.W.T) as He promised through Surah Al-Fuṣṣilat, 41:53 and Surah An-Naml, 27:93.

Another slight difference is that, Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104 has revealed that, on that day, the lowest heaven; which astronomers call universe together with the Earth, *will be folded like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records*. According to the interpretation given by Al-Imam Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Aẓīm, *folded like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records* means that, the lowest heavens will be rolled up (folded) like the way the scroll is rolled up. When talking about the fate of the universe, astronomers do not use any physical examples of showing how it will be, rather, as it will be explained later on, they say, the dim galaxies will pause for a moment and then begin to fall [contract] toward each other with increasing speed, which is the opposite of the Big Bang. Likewise, despite this slight variation, all of these are the signs from Allah (S.W.T) as He promised through Surah Al-Fuṣṣilat, 41:53 and Surah An-Naml, 27:93.

#### **The link between Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30 and Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47**

On the other hand, despite of the above slight differences, still there is a very strong correlation between what has been revealed in the Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30, Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47 and Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104, and the discoveries of the modern Astronomy. What has been stated in the Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30 is the very beginning of the seven heavens and Earth from single entity (ratq); through parting them asunder as said by Al-Imam Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Aẓīm and Muhammad Asad in his The Message of the Qur'an. What has been described in the Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47 is the ongoing expansion of the universe as said by Muhammad Asad. When these two verses are linked there emerges a forceful image of that entity parting (expanding) furiously and its ingredients continuing parting from each other; while evolving to form different celestial bodies such as nebulae, stars, planets, moons, asteroids, comets etc.

#### **The link between Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104 and previous verses**

What has been revealed in the Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104 is the ultimate fate of the universe. When this verse is linked to what has been made manifest in the previous verses, what can be discerned is the image of the expanding celestial bodies [stated above]; that were formed from the ingredients of that single

entity that were parting from each other, coming back to their original form. See figure 1 below:

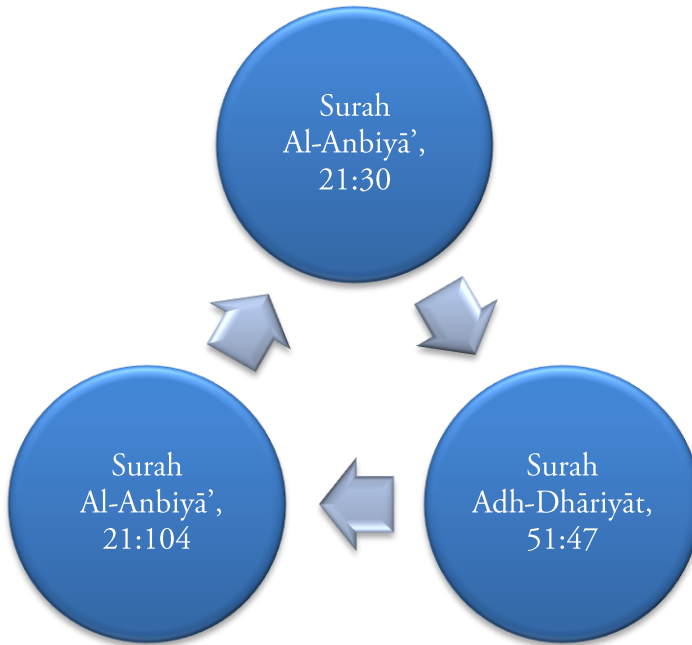


Figure 1: The relationship between Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30, Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47 and Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104.

**Relationship between these three verses (Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30, Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47 & Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104) and the signs in the universe**

The link that we have seen between Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:30 and Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47, and the link we have seen between Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:104 and these two verses (Surah Al-Anbiyā', 21:10 and Surah Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:47), is precisely what we are reading today in various literatures of Astronomy. Astronomers have reported two choices that predict the possible fate of the universe.<sup>32</sup>

Firstly, that if dark matter and energy will decrease, the density of matter and energy of the universe will also decrease and become smaller than the density of

<sup>32</sup> See Chaisson & McMillan, 2011, Pasachoff & Filipenko, 2007, Fix, 2008, Filipenko, 2007, Pasachoff, 2002 and Watson, 2007.

the matter and energy of the universe required to stop the on-going expansion of the universe. As a result, the gravity will manage to sustain holding the galaxies in their paths. And the universe will continue to expand, until all celestial bodies and matters in the universe will become very far apart from each other. Eventually, they will decay and the radiation will redden and dim forever (Big Rip; death by ice). It would seem that this view has little to recommend it from the Qur'anic perspective.

Secondly, that if dark matter and dark energy will increase, the density of matter and energy of the universe will also increase and become greater than the density and energy of the universe required to stop the on-going expansion of the universe (critical density). That means, when the present expansion of the universe reaches its maximum size, the gravity will become weak and fail to sustain holding the galaxies in their paths. As a result, the universe will collapse by contraction of the galaxies (Big Crunch; death by fire).

Obviously, the discovery of dark matter in relation to the ultimate fate of the universe is alluded to in this verse:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ ۗ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ ۗ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ

*But those who disbelieve say, "The Hour will not come to us." Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come to you. [God is] the Knower of the unseen." Not absent from Him is an atom's weight within the heavens or within the earth or [what is] smaller than that or greater, except that it is in a clear register*

(Surah Saba', 34:3)

And the said contraction [second choice] is a clear sign which is communicated to us through the following verses:

وَأَنْشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ

*And the rain will be rent asunder, for what day it (the heaven) will be frail and torn up*

(Surah Al-Hāqqah, 69:16)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ

*When the heaven shall be split asunder*

(Surah Al-Inshiqāq, 84:1)

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ

*And listen to and obey its Lord, and it must do so*

(Surah Al-Inshiqāq 84:2)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انفَطَّرَتْ

*When the heaven shall be cleft asunder*

(Surah Al-Infītār, 82:1)

Quite notably, even the phrases (rent asunder, split asunder and cleft asunder) that have been used in the above verses depict very clearly that, it is this sign [of contraction] which is being expounded in these verses. John D. Fix has also reported that, the dim galaxies will pause for a moment and then begin to fall toward each other with increasing speed. He has added that, if there is anyone in the universe; by that time, to carry out observations, He will see the opposite of a Big Bang establish itself. All the galaxies will be rushing; with increasing speed, toward an appointment with each other. This will be the death by fire.<sup>33</sup> Similar descriptions have been provided by Chaisson and MacMillan and some other astronomers.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, these are clear signs of what has been revealed in the above verses and in the following verses:

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

*When the sun shall be wound round and its light is lost and is overthrown*

(Surah At-Takwir, 81:1)

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ

*And when the stars shall fall*

(Surah At-Takwir, 81:2)

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انتَثَرَتْ

<sup>33</sup> See Astronomy: The Journey to the Cosmic Frontier, by John D. Fix, 2008, p. 639.

<sup>34</sup> See Astronomy Today, by Chaisson & MacMillan, 2011, p. 668-669.



*And when the stars shall be fallen and scattered*

(Surah Al-Infitaar, 82:2)

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ

*And when the seas become as blazing fire or overflow*

(Surah At-Takwir, 81:6)

As the galaxies continue to overlap or merge, the density and temperature of the universe will intensify to the extent that astronomers are not able to predict what will follow. One intriguing possibility is that, at its maximum stage of compression the universe will rebound and begin another cycle of expansion and contraction, perhaps with different amounts of matter or even different physical laws. Again, an allusion to that effect can be discerned in the following verse:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ ۖ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

*[It will be] on the Day the earth will be replaced by another earth, and the heavens [as well], and they [i.e., all creatures] will come out before God, the Once, the Prevailing*

(Surah Ibrāhim, 14:48)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The relationship between what has been revealed in the Qur'an 21:30; 51:47; and 21:104 is that the first verse describes the origin, the second the expansion and the last signs off by describing the ultimate fate of the universe. Generally, these three verses traverse the whole field of Astronomy such as origin, evolution and ultimate fate of the entire Universe, that are studied today in different schools and universities all over the World. These signs point to the presence, greatness and glory of Allah (S.W.T). Allah Knows Best.

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