

Navigating the ‘scientific miracles of the Quran’ narrative	
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Scientific miracles narrative	Known as al-i‘jāz al-‘ilmī, this approach has become increasingly popular in mainstream Islamic discourse
Dr Maurice Bucaille	Argued in <i>The Bible, the Qur'an and Science</i> that while the Bible was riddled with scientific errors, the Quran was perfectly compatible with modern science
Scientific miracles in the Quran	The fact is that most of these claims demand a considerable amount of mental and linguistic gymnastics, distortions of the original Arabic text, and leaps of imagination
Spherical shape of Earth in the Quran	<p>“And after that, He spread the Earth”</p> <p>وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ نَهَّا</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bucailleists argue that the Arabic word for “spread”, dāhāhā, is derived from the lexical root dāhā and its cognate udhiya, the latter of which refers to the egg of an ostrich <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hence, they say, the verse implies that the Earth is shaped like an ostrich egg</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Issues	<p>Neither dāhā nor udhiya refer to an ostrich egg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lane’s Lexicon defines udhiya as “the place of the laying of eggs of the ostrich”</li> <li>- Lisān al-‘Arab elaborates on the word, “the place where the ostrich lays its eggs in the sand”</li> </ul> <p>The Earth’s shape is considerably different from that of an ostrich egg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An ostrich egg is elongated instead of squashed. The Earth is largely the opposite: bulging at the equator and flattened at the poles</li> </ul> <p>None of the classical exegetes interpreted the verse as having made any suggestion regarding the Earth’s shape</p> <p>The ostrich egg affair has been turned against Muslims to demonstrate that the Quran’s alleged scientific miracles are in fact scientific errors</p>
Common knowledge	Much of the scientific knowledge contained in these verses was already available at the time of revelation of the Quran: the Big Bang claim, the moon’s light being reflected from the sun, iron being sent down from outer space; these facts were common knowledge in other civilisations
Compatibility with	Rejecting certain claims about alleged scientific miracles doesn’t

science	mean rejecting the Quran's compatibility with science
Harm of the scientific miracles narrative	This has led to ex-Muslims and critics of Islam debunking these claims and casting doubt on the validity of Islamic apologetics as a whole
Al-tafsīr al-‘ilmī (scientific exegesis)	<p>This is not a form of exegesis that is inherently unfounded—since, part of the beauty of the Quran lies in the multiplicity of its meanings but it does require exercising great precaution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tafsīr ‘ilmī does not necessarily make arguments pertaining to <i>i‘jāz ‘ilmī</i></li> <li>- It is one thing to interpret Quranic verses in a scientific context as one of its many possible readings; it is quite another to use such a reading as a definitive basis for arguments of miraculousness</li> </ul>
Differentiating between scientific fact and theory	<p>It is important to make a distinction between established scientific phenomena and speculative theories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The claim that the multiverse theory can be derived from certain Quranic verses would make a shaky argument for the Quran's miraculousness, because it could be negated by new empirical data in the future</li> </ul>
Opposite extreme	<p>Some dismiss seeking any kind of scientific interpretation in the Quran by invoking the probabilistic nature of science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Probability does not imply unreliability: it is unlikely that established scientific facts—such as the spherical shape of the earth—will ever be invalidated by new data</li> </ul>
Criteria for scientific miraculousness	<p>The verse must make an unambiguous allusion to a scientific phenomenon; it must be established that this scientific information was unavailable and impossible to discover at the time; the scientific phenomenon must be one established by empirical data and accepted as fact by the scientific community</p>