

Archaeological Insights into the Angels' Knowledge of Human Corruption on Earth: An Analysis of Qur'an 2:30

Sayed Ali Morakkabi ¹

Ph.D. Student in Qur'an and Hadith Studies, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

Mahdi Zerehsaz ²

Ph.D. Student in Qur'an and Hadith Studies, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

Article History: Received 19 March 2024; Accepted 29 July 2024

ABSTRACT:

Original Paper

Verse 2:30 of the Qur'an recounts a dialogue between God and the angels regarding the creation of humankind and their appointment as a caliph on Earth, during which the angels express concern about the potential for corruption and bloodshed by humans. This verse has historically been subject to various analyses by Muslim exegetes, who have generally expressed differing perspectives regarding the origin of the angels' knowledge about human corruption and bloodshed on Earth. Among these perspectives are the angels' awareness of the Preserved Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*), their predictions based on human nature, and their experience with the corruption of the jinn on Earth. This article employs a descriptive-analytical method to critically examine the various interpretations of Q. 2:30 offered by exegetes. After highlighting the weaknesses of each viewpoint, it proposes a hypothesis supported by archaeological evidence. Accordingly, the existence of violence and killing among early hominids (Neanderthals), referred to in Islamic traditions as *Nasnās*, could be the origin of such a notion among the angels. The article also examines the narratives related to this theory in terms of their *sanad* (chain of transmission) and meaning, demonstrating the reliability of the narrators and the relevance of their statements to the proposed claim.

KEYWORDS: The Qur'an and Archaeology, Angels, Neanderthal, Creation of human, *Nasnās*

1. Corresponding Author. Email Address: sa.morakkabi@mail.um.ac.ir

2. Email Address: zerehsaz.m74@gmail.com

<http://dx.doi.org/10.37264/IJQS.V3I2.2>

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



1. Introduction

The Qur'an's narrative of the creation of Adam, the angels prostrating before him, and Iblīs's arrogance towards the divine command—culminating in his expulsion from Heaven—is detailed in verses 30–39 of Surah al-Baqarah. Verse 30 specifically recounts God's announcement to the angels about appointing a *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on Earth, to which the angels respond with a question:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُدَسِّدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (البقرة/30)

When your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on the earth," they said, "Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it, and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity?" He said, "Indeed I know what you do not know" (Q. 2:30).

The angels' question in this verse implies a prior awareness of the conduct that Adam's descendants would display. This has posed a significant interpretive challenge for Qur'anic exegetes: how could the angels have known, before the creation of humankind, that humans would spread corruption and bloodshed on Earth?

Archaeological evidence from prehistoric sites such as Krapina (Croatia) and Moula-Guercy (France) suggests that Neanderthals engaged in violent conflict, sometimes to the extent of killing and cannibalizing members of their own species (Renfrew & Morley 2009). Given the high degree of biological and behavioral similarity between Neanderthals and modern humans, it is plausible that such violent tendencies could form the basis of the angels' foreknowledge. This view gains further credibility in light of the shortcomings in other traditional interpretations offered by classical commentators.

Accordingly, this study pursues two primary objectives: first, it critically assesses the major exegetical explanations concerning the source of the angels' knowledge in Q. 2:30; second, it advances a new interpretive hypothesis—supported by both narrative and archaeological evidence—linking the documented violence among Neanderthals, often referred to in Islamic traditions as *Nasnās*, to the origins of that angelic knowledge.

2. Literature Review

Among the exegetes of the Qur'an, while Ṭanṭāwī may not have been the

first to highlight the scientific interpretation of the Qur'an, his *al-Jawāhir fī Tafṣīr al-Qur'an* stands as one of the most significant scientific commentaries of the Qur'an. In the introduction to this work, Ṭanṭāwī (2004) observes that the Qur'an contains approximately 750 verses addressing the marvels of the universe. He argues that divine revelation places greater emphasis on manifesting these cosmic signs than on legal injunctions, positing that future generations will continue to uncover and elucidate these wonders. As Ṭanṭāwī foresaw, modern advancements in the natural sciences have now made it more feasible than ever to analyze Qur'anic teachings in light of scientific discoveries. Consequently, numerous books and articles have explored the connections between the Qur'an and the natural sciences. Many scholars argue that a profound comprehension of certain Qur'anic verses can only be attained when exegetes incorporate contemporary scientific insights—allowing interpretations that may have eluded earlier generations to come to light. One of the sciences that can facilitate a better understanding of the verses of the Qur'an is archaeology. As a branch of natural studies, archaeology examines historical artifacts to reconstruct human behavior in antiquity. While the *Encyclopedia Britannica* dates its formal emergence to the 19th century CE (Daniel 2019), some scholars credit Nabonidus, the sixth-century BCE Babylonian king, as the earliest archaeologist (Bahn 2012).

Numerous scholars have drawn upon archaeological research to produce exegetical works analyzing the Qur'an through this lens. A prominent early contribution to this field is Maurice Bucaille's (2003) pioneering work *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, which employs archaeological evidence—particularly the discovery of Pharaoh's mummy—to interpret Q. 10:92. Furthermore, recent scholarship has produced numerous studies exploring the intersection of Qur'anic texts and archaeological research (Yaseen 2011; Khanmoradi & Tavakoli 2022; Ahmad et al. 2022 Akhavanmoghadam & Bahrami 2023). Each of these works employs archaeological methodologies to examine and analyze Qur'anic narratives. However, Muslim commentaries concerning the angels' knowledge in Q. 2:30 predominantly adopt philosophical and narrative approaches, with insufficient consideration of archaeological evidence that could enhance our understanding of the verse.

3. Exegetical Approaches on Qur'an 2:30

Over the centuries, Qur'anic exegetes have proposed various interpretations to explain how the angels, prior to Adam's creation, knew that humankind would engage in corruption and bloodshed. These

approaches range from divine disclosure and analogy with the jinn's history to deductions based on human nature, each carrying distinct theological and logical implications.

3.1. *Divine Disclosure to the Angels*

Some early Shia and Sunni exegetes proposed that the angels' questioning protest following God's declaration about appointing a *khalīfah* on Earth stemmed from God having revealed to them the future conduct of Adam's descendants (Ibn Qutaybah 1991, 46; al-Zamakhsharī 1987, 1:125). Proponents of this position argue that brevity in speech causes ambiguity about the origin of the angels' knowledge, and this understanding of the verse is in fact a kind of *ta'wīl* (allegorical interpretation), because it can only be accepted if one believes in the occurrence of brevity in speech. Accordingly, al-Ṭabarī (1992, 1:162) attributes this interpretative view to those inclined to *ta'wīl*, such as Qatādah and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī.

The reason for offering this interpretation is stated as follows: if God had not informed the angels of the corruption of the children of Adam, the angels would not have had the knowledge to raise this question. Since bloodshed and corruption represent future actions of Adam's progeny, awareness of these matters would constitute knowledge of the unseen. Consequently, questioning such events would imply access to this hidden knowledge. Given that angels, by their nature, do not possess independent knowledge of the unseen, this understanding necessitates that God—the Knower of the unseen—must have revealed this information to them. This argument finds explicit support in the work of al-Ṭūsī (2010, 1:132). To substantiate this interpretive approach and demonstrate the prevalence of ellipsis in the Arabic language, he cites poetic evidence from classical Arabic literature. Other commentators have suggested that the angels may have acquired this knowledge through God's permission to access the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) (al-Ālūsī 1994, 1:224).

3.1.1. *Critical Examination*

As al-Ṭabarī (1992, 1:132) notes, this interpretation is fundamentally recognized as *ta'wīl*. This is because such a meaning is not inferred from the plain understanding of the text, unless an unstated phrase is taken into account in the discourse. It is well established in exegetical principles that *ta'wīl* is only permissible when understanding the text is confronted with either rational or textual constraints. In other words, this understanding of the verse would hold validity if the angels' knowledge could only be explained through their possession of foreknowledge. This is indeed

consistent with the Qur'anic principle that angels possess no independent knowledge of the unseen: “*We have no knowledge except what You have taught us*” (Q. 2:32). In such a case, this understanding would be sound, as it would require God to have granted them this specific knowledge to enable them to raise such a question. However, if another possibility is also presented that is supported by appropriate evidence and indications, that does not require *ta'wīl*, assuming ellipsis or taking something as unstated would not be accepted, and there would be no justification for *ta'wīl*.

3.2. *The Jinn Precedent Theory*

An alternative interpretive possibility drawn from certain narrations suggests that the angels' questioning stemmed from their prior observation of the jinn's corruption on Earth before Adam's creation. According to this narrative, the jinn originally inhabited Earth but engaged in widespread corruption, prompting divine intervention. In response, God dispatched angels to combat them, leading to extensive bloodshed across Earth. Some traditions emphasize Iblīs' role during this conflict, as he commanded the celestial forces and ultimately subdued the jinn—a military success that subsequently became the foundation for his arrogance. Following this period of jinn-led corruption, God announced His intention to appoint a successor (*khalīfah*) on Earth. The angels, drawing direct parallels from their experience with the jinn, logically presumed this new creation would replicate similar patterns of corruption and bloodshed (al-Ṭabarī 1992, 1:158).

3.2.1. *Critical Examination*

While reliable empirical data about jinn remains inaccessible due to their metaphysical nature, their existence cannot be categorically denied, given explicit Qur'anic attestation. The Qur'an not only affirms the existence of jinn as distinct creatures alongside humans but also delineates their ontological composition. As explicitly stated:

He created man out of dry clay, like the potter's, and created the jinn out of a flame of a fire (Q. 55:14–15).

The radical dissimilarity in their primordial substances (clay versus fire) and corporeal structures suggests that physiological characteristics cannot be transposed between these species. Human biology necessitates blood circulation for survival—a feature intrinsically tied to our terrestrial composition. However, for a creature with fundamentally different ontological foundations, such biological attributes cannot be presupposed.

Consequently, reports in some commentaries describing bloodshed of jinn remain untenable. The aforementioned narratives posit that jinn preceded humans as Earth's sole inhabitants until their corruption triggered an angelic-jinn conflict involving terrestrial bloodshed. This raises critical questions: Can blood be attributed to metaphysical beings like jinn and angels? Given their immaterial nature, such accounts appear biologically implausible.

Moreover, the presumed angelic analogy between the jinn's historical corruption and humanity's potential future constitutes a categorical error. The angels, as pure intellects, would not employ such flawed reasoning. It seems that such a comparison is a kind of Iblīs' analogy, which the angels are free from. It was Iblīs who, with a flawed analogy between himself and Adam, caused himself to be distanced from divine mercy. Therefore, comparing jinn and humans and applying the actions of corrupt jinn to a new creature different from them is an irrelevant analogy.

3.3. Angels' Prediction Based on the Nature of Humanity

The existential nature of humanity and the social nature of human life lead to conflicts of interest among individuals. This particular nature of humankind inherently causes some to be self-seeking, resulting in the oppression of their fellow human beings, corruption, and even bloodshed as a natural consequence of the behavior of some individuals within this species. In some later commentaries, it has been mentioned that the angels, reflecting on the essence of human beings—which is a combination of rational and sensual faculties—predicted that this successor inhabiting the earth would engage in corruption and bloodshed in the future. This is because this creature, due to the sensual faculties within it, desires to achieve its individual desires on the one hand, and on the other hand, is unable to meet its needs without social life. Thus, future human civilization appears destined for corruption and bloodshed (Tabataba'i 1996, 1:115; Ibn 'Āshūr 1999, 1:389).

In this interpretation, the angels' question stems from reflection on the human essence, composed of the faculties of anger and lust. The angels observed that such a being must reside in a place that is a realm of competition and conflicting interests. Therefore, this question is not surprising, because the nature of this creature and its place of habitation potentially lead to corruption and bloodshed.

3.3.1. Critical Examination

This precise prediction by the angels about the future of a creature with

a new nature seems unlikely. According to this interpretive approach, the angels received divine revelation about encountering an entirely novel creature that is a composite of spiritual and physical dimensions—unlike either angels or jinn. Until that time, no human life had yet been taken, nor any blood spilled on Earth. This raises serious questions about how the angels could possibly articulate such specific predictions immediately following God's announcement about creating a successor.

Considering the verse in question, the corrupt nature of the new creature is regarded as certain by the angels, to the extent that it compelled them to inquire of God Almighty about the wisdom of creating such a corrupt successor. The verse in question is such that the angels have taken the occurrence of corruption on Earth as a foregone conclusion. Such definitive knowledge seems inconsistent with their complete lack of prior experience observing this new creature's behavior or its existential capacities. Therefore, the problem with this possibility is that the certainty implicit in the angels' question cannot stem from prediction and conjecture about the future of a being whose behavior they had no experience of.

3.4. A Preferred Exegetical Approach

Having critically examined the limitations of existing exegetical approaches regarding the source of the angels' knowledge about human corruption, this study now proposes an alternative interpretation grounded in both textual and archaeological evidence.

3.4.1. Evidence from Islamic Traditions

Several narratives and classical commentaries suggest that the human species was not the first creature to inhabit the Earth. Rather, other species of creatures had lived on Earth for many years before them. A particularly revealing narration in al-ʿAyyāshī's Tafsīr records that someone asked Imam al-Ṣādiq (PBUH) whether the belief of the people that the age of the world is seven thousand years is correct. The Imam denies this and introduces the age of the Earth as much longer than they think, affirming long periods of the Earth's history. In another narrative, the reason for the angels' surprised question about the appointment of a *khalīfah* on Earth is explained by the occurrence of corruption on Earth by creatures before the creation of Adam (al-ʿAyyāshī 1960, 1:29). In this narrative, the observation of corrupt creatures on Earth before the creation of man led to the question among the angels as to how such a being could hold the position of God's vicegerent on Earth.

The aforementioned evidence suggests the plausible existence of intelligent beings inhabiting Earth prior to the creation of Adam. According to Shia narrations, human-like creatures referred to as *Nasnās* coexisted with jinn on Earth. These accounts describe an extended period during which jinn and *Nasnās* populated the Earth until their widespread corruption and violence prompted divine intervention. At this juncture, God commanded the angels to observe the terrestrial chaos caused by these beings. Witnessing their depravity, the angels beseeched God to eradicate this corrupt civilization. It was in this context that God announced His intention to establish a vicegerent on Earth (Ibn Bābawayh 1965, 1:105).

This narration has an authentic *sanad* (chain of transmission) that includes Ibn al-Walīd, al-Ṣaffār, Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā, and Ḥasan ibn Maḥbūb, who are among the prominent figures of Shia tradition. Under the name ʿAmr ibn Abī al-Miqdām, al-Khoei (1992, 14:82) introduces him as one of the *thiqah* (trustworthy), well-known, and prolific narrators. Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Juʿfī is also among the narrators whose trustworthiness has been established. Al-Khoei (1992, 4:344) considers him to be among the most eminent *thiqāt* (trustworthy narrators), citing the testimony of great authorities such as ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm and Shaykh al-Mufīd regarding Jābir's reliability. Furthermore, a narration with a *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) chain of transmission from Imam al-Ṣādiq has been reported by al-Kashshī (1983, 2:436), praising him and attesting to his truthfulness. Therefore, this narration, in terms of *sanad* authentication, is classified among the *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) narrations. It explicitly states that after the life of the jinn and *Nasnās* on Earth, God Almighty willed to create Adam. It also affirms that the divine will was related to the extinction of *Nasnās*, the purification of the Earth from them, and the relocation of the jinn to the air and to remote regions of the Earth. According to this narration, corruption and bloodshed on Earth were the result of the actions of the corrupt jinn and *Nasnās*.

3.4.2. Usage of the Term *Nasnās*

An examination of the usages attributed to the word *Nasnās* in religious texts reveals two primary meanings of the term. The first usage, according to a narration attributed to Imam Ḥusayn, understands *Nasnās* as referring to human beings who lacked correct beliefs and genuine human values (al-Rāzī 1999, 32:340; al-Thaʿālībī 2008, 1:156; al-Kulaynī 1987, 8:245–246; al-Kūfī 1990, p. 64). In the second usage, *Nasnās* refers to creatures that lived on Earth before the creation of Adam, becoming extinct prior to the advent of humankind. Al-Majlisī (1983, 11:106), citing al-Jawharī, defines *Nasnās* as an animal resembling a human. *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, one of the oldest Arabic dictionaries, describes *Nasnās* as creatures similar in appearance to

humans but not descended from the progeny of Adam (al-Farāhīdī 1988, 7:200). This meaning is also reflected in later dictionaries such as *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, 6:232) and has been adopted by some commentators.

According to a report by ʿAlī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (1984, 1:37), after the extinction of the *Nasnās*—beings physically similar to humans—God Almighty intended to create man and place a caliph on Earth. The same narration, with more detail, has been transmitted by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Rāwandī (1989, 35), with an authentic chain of transmission that includes Ibn Maḥbūb, Ibn Abī al-Miqdām, and Jābir al-Juʿfī. This version provides more details about the *Nasnās*. The account begins with a question from Imam ʿAlī regarding the existence of creatures on Earth before Adam. After mentioning angels and jinn as spiritual creatures with the power of flight, the Imam speaks of the creation of a being lower in rank than the jinn, which—unlike the previous two—was not purely spiritual and did not possess the power of flight. The Imam identifies these creatures as *Nasnās*, describing them as spirit-body hybrids that consumed food and water. Though human-like in appearance, they were a distinct species from humans.

Based on the aforementioned points, it can be argued that contemplating human nature and observing the corrupt history of a similar being, called *Nasnās*, together provide a coherent explanation for the angels' question. For this reason, although Tabatabaʿī (2011, 1:119) only mentions the third exegetical approach in interpreting the verse in question, after citing narrations regarding the existence of pre-Adamic creatures on Earth, he clarifies that such narrations do not contradict his proposed interpretation. Moreover, several other Shia commentators, relying on the aforementioned authentic narrations, have briefly mentioned the corruption caused by the jinn and *Nasnās* as the basis for the angels' question (al-Shubbar 1986, 1:87; al-Burūjirdī 1995, 5:66; al-Balāghī 2007, 1:29).

However, this article does not rely solely on narrative evidence. Archaeological findings provide scientific support for the preferred interpretation. It can be argued that *Nasnās*, as a human-like creature, corresponds to what modern archaeologists and paleoanthropologists refer to as Neanderthals, with extensive archaeological evidence attesting to their existence and social behavior on Earth.

4. *Archaeological Evidence Regarding the Origin of the Angels' Knowledge*

Archaeologists confirm the existence of hominids before modern human. These creatures are referred to as *Nasnās* in Islamic traditions and, in academic circles, are known as Neanderthals. Neanderthals are said to have become extinct thousands of years ago and had many similarities to modern humans. Neanderthals inhabited a vast area of Europe and the regions around the Mediterranean Sea. The reason for naming this species "Neanderthal" is the discovery of their remains in 1856 in a cave located in the Neander Valley in Germany. It seems that Neanderthals, despite their robust skeletal structure, exhibited fully bipedal locomotion and walked completely upright, while possessing manual dexterity comparable to modern humans. They were cave dwellers, used fire, made stone tools and wooden spears for hunting animals, and cared for their sick and injured (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc 2006). Neanderthals typically had short lifespans, with the oldest known specimen reaching approximately 40 years of age (Rice & Pigliucci 2007).

Genomic analyses reveal a 99.5% genetic similarity between Neanderthals and modern humans. The average cranial capacity of Neanderthals was 1600 cc compared to the modern human average of approximately 1400 cc. Male Neanderthals measured approximately 162–168 cm in height, while females ranged between 150–155 cm, exhibiting a more robust physique compared to modern humans. In regard to cultural characteristics, archaeologists believe that Neanderthals had group living patterns and funerary practices that suggest a possible belief in an afterlife, as evidenced by their burial of the dead (Gahlawat 2018). It is generally believed that their extinction occurred approximately 30,000–40,000 years ago (Agustí & Rubio-Campillo 2017).

4.1. *Evidence of Violent Behavior among Neanderthals*

Archaeological discoveries from various prehistoric sites provide compelling evidence that Neanderthal life was not only marked by survival activities such as hunting and tool-making but also by episodes of interpersonal violence. Skeletal remains show clear signs of deliberate injury, intergroup conflict, and in some cases cannibalism. These findings suggest that violence and bloodshed were embedded within Neanderthal social dynamics, offering a plausible historical precedent for the angels' foreknowledge of similar behaviors in humankind.

4.1.1. Homicide

A cave in northern Spain contains remains that can be linked to Neanderthals. Among the bones found in this cave is a skull dating back approximately 430,000 years, representing one of the oldest pieces of evidence of murder in human history. Researchers examining this discovered skull identified two fractures on the forehead, suggesting that someone murdered the individual with two blows to the head, making him the first known murder victim (figure 1). Prior to the discovery of this skull, Shanidar 3 was among the oldest known remains of murdered Neanderthals. This Neanderthal, who lived about 50,000 years ago, had a split in his left ribs, indicating that he was likely killed by a spear (Sala et al. 2015).

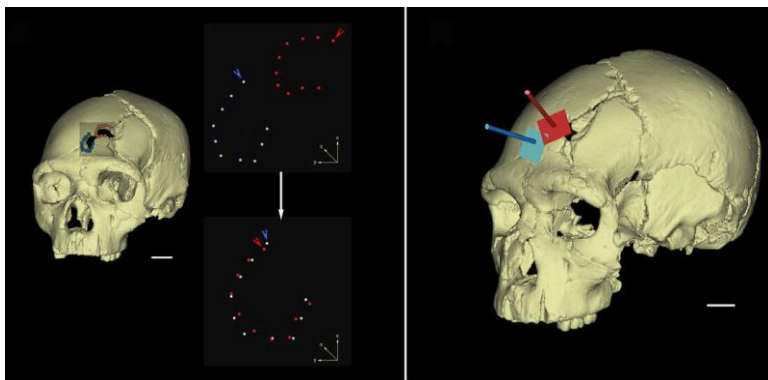


Figure 1. A skull dating back 430,000 years, unearthed in a cave in Spain, shows signs of intentional and fatal blunt force trauma (Sala et al. 2015).

4.1.2 Cannibalism

Krapina, a city in northern Croatia, is where the remains of 20 Neanderthals were discovered (figure 2). On these remains, cuts are visible on the long bones, suggesting that the flesh of these Neanderthals was removed from the bone after death. Furthermore, some of these bones are broken and fragmented, and others show signs of burning, raising the possibility that they were cooked (Renfrew & Morley 2009).

The Moula-Guercy cave in southeastern France was inhabited by Neanderthals around 100,000 years ago. The remains of six Neanderthals (two adults, two adolescents, and two children) have been discovered there, showing evidence of cannibalism (figure 3). Detailed examination of these remains indicates the detachment of cheek muscles from pediatric skulls, severing of tendons, and deliberate fracturing of crania to access brain matter.



Figure 2. Prehistoric site in a collapsed cave by the Krapinica River, revealing Neanderthal remains (Modzzak 2007).

In addition, the thigh muscles were removed, and in at least one case, the person's tongue was cut out. Notably, all the skulls and limb bones were broken, with only the hand and foot bones remaining intact. At the same time, none of the bones show signs of being gnawed by wild animals or burned (Renfrew & Morley 2009). Based on the evidence found, although the existence of cannibalism in Moula-Guercy is considered certain, whether this cannibalism was due to a lack of food resources or motivated by social factors is a question that requires further investigation (Defleur 1999).

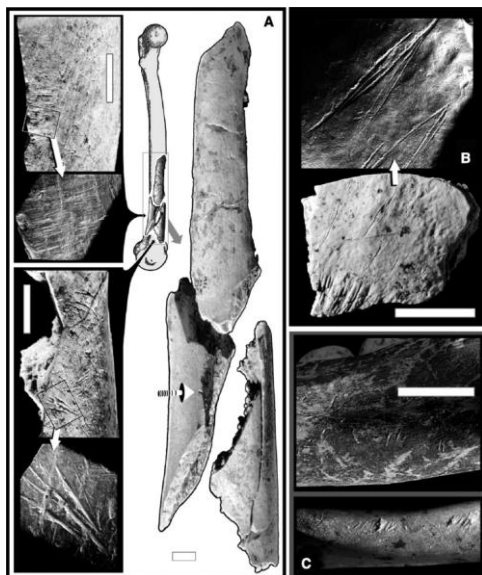


Figure 3. Scratches on the remains discovered from Neanderthals in Moula-Guercy (Defleur 1999).

Cut marks on Neanderthal bones found in Engis (Belgium), Goyet Caves (Belgium) (figure 4), Marillac (France), Combe-Grenal (France), and El Sidrón (Spain) also support the theory that the flesh was removed from the bones (Yustos & Terreros 2015). The presence of incomplete infant remains (especially those found in pits) raises the possibility that these bones belong to parts of Neanderthals' bodies that had previously been defleshed. An example is a skull belonging to an adolescent, referred to as "Engis 2," which shows cut marks from the removal of the scalp (Pettitt 2013).

It should also be noted that although there is evidence of cannibalism among Neanderthals, this behavior cannot be generalized to the entire Neanderthal population (Culotta 1999).

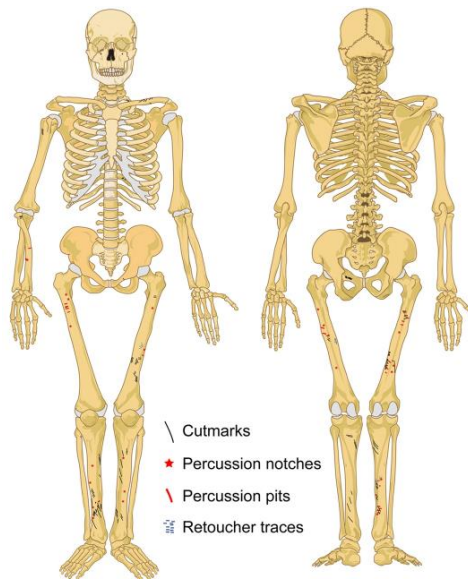


Figure 4. Modifications observed on Neanderthal remains discovered in Goyet Cave III (Belgium) (Rougier et al. 2016).

4.1.3. Motivated Violence: Revenge, Competition, and Resource Disputes

Neanderthals also shared motivations with modern humans for murder and conflict with their own kind. For example, much like the motivation behind the first murder in the lineage of Adam (the murder of Abel by Cain for revenge and to gain power and a better position), researchers believe that such a motivation can also be considered as a cause for the violence among Neanderthals. This implies that the divine angels, by observing and understanding what had occurred among Neanderthals before the creation

of Adam and Eve, were able to foresee corruption and bloodshed among humans. Before Cain, Neanderthals had also engaged in killing one another for revenge and to gain power in disputes over territory and resources. What is observed regarding the El Sidrón massacre can be considered an example of this. According to researchers' observations of the remains of these Neanderthals, the stones from which the weapons were made did not originate from that area, and the closest available source for those stones has been identified several miles away. According to these researchers, the weapons were probably obtained as a result of infiltration into other Neanderthal groups, which led those other groups to attack and massacre the El Sidrón Neanderthals in retaliation (Tattersall 2022).

Therefore, Neanderthals not only killed their own kind for food, but also for other reasons such as competition with their own kind. These were among the motivations behind such violence and bloodshed. Although their behavior was not as complex as that of modern humans, conflict and bloodshed can rightly be considered part of Neanderthal social behavior.

It is important to clarify that these archaeological findings cannot be attributed to modern humans descended from Prophet Adam. This is because, in addition to the anatomical differences between these Neanderthals and modern humans, they existed in distinct temporal periods. According to traditional belief, Prophet Adam and Eve lived around 6000 BCE (Khan 2000), while these archaeological findings date back tens of thousands of years before the time of Adam.

5. Conclusion

The question of how angels possessed foreknowledge of human corruption on Earth in Qur'an 2:30 has long posed an exegetical challenge for Qur'anic commentators. Throughout history, commentators have tried to provide answers to this question by offering various interpretations. Today, archaeological findings show that before the creation of Prophet Adam, Neanderthals, as hominids most similar to modern humans, lived on Earth. Their lives were filled with violence, bloodshed, and corruption. These archaeological findings confirm narratives that mention creatures called *Nasnās* as former inhabitants of the Earth. It seems that the angels, by observing the behavior of Neanderthals, concluded that if humans were to assume the caliphate on Earth, they might resort to corruption and bloodshed like their predecessors. The archaeological record of Neanderthal behavior strengthens this interpretative view and helps commentators provide a documented and evidence-based interpretation of this verse without the need for complex interpretations. This approach not only facilitates a better

understanding of Q. 2:30, but also demonstrates the Qur'an's remarkable consonance with contemporary scientific discoveries.

Acknowledgments

We extend our deepest gratitude to Mr. Mohsen Moinizadeh for his invaluable conceptual contributions and intellectual inspiration that catalyzed this research. His pioneering examination of the Qur'an's nuanced dimensions through the lens of empirical science fundamentally shaped this study's trajectory. Without his rigorous scholarship and persistent encouragement, this work would not have reached its current form.

The authors declare that there are no competing interests. This research did not receive any specific funding from any public, commercial, or nonprofit funding bodies.

References

- Agustí, J., & Rubio-Campillo, X. (2017). Were Neanderthals responsible for their own extinction? *Quaternary International*, 431, 232–237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quaint.2016.02.017>
- Ahmad, M. S., Siddiqi, U., & Rahman, S. U. (2022). Importance of archaeology to seeking the knowledge of Qur'an. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 5(1).
- Al-Ālūsī, M. (1995). *Rūḥ al-ma'ānī fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'aẓīm wa al-sab' al-mathānī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah.
- Al-'Ayyāshī, M. (1961). *Kitāb Al-Tafsīr*. Tehran: Maktabah al-'Ilmīyyah al-Islāmiyyah.
- Al-Balāghī, A. (1967). *Hujjat al-tafāsīr wa balāgh al-iksīr*. Qom: Hikmat.
- Al-Burūjirdī, H. (1996). *Tafsīr al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*. Qom: Anṣārīān.
- Al-Farāhīdī, K. (1989). *Kitāb al-'Ayn*. Qom: Hijrat.
- Al-Kashshī, M. (1984). *Ikhtiyār ma'rifah al-rijāl*. Qom: Āl al-Bayt.
- Al-Khoei, A. (1992). *Mu'jam rijāl al-ḥadīth*. Qom: Mu'assasah al-Khoei al-Islāmiyyah.
- Al-Kūfī, F. (1990). *Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī*. Tehran: Wizārat farhang wa Irshād Islāmī.
- Al-Kulaynī, M. (1987). *Al-Kāfī*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah.
- Al-Majlisī, M. B. (1983). *Biḥār al-Anwār al-Jāmi'ah li-Durar Akhbār al-'Immah al-Aṭhār*. Beirut: Dār al-Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī.
- Al-Majlisī, M. B. (1984). *Mir'āt al-'Uqūl fī sharḥ akhbār Āl al-Rasūl*. Tehran: Dār

al-Kutub al-Islāmīyyah.

Al-Qummī, A. (1984). *Tafsīr al-Qummī*. Qom: Dār al-Kitāb.

Al-Rāwandī, Q. S. (1989). *Qīṣaṣ al-anbīyā'*. Markaz al-Buḥūth al-Islāmīyyah.

Al-Rāzī, F. M. (2000). *Maḡāṭih al-Ghayb*. Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.

Al-Shubbar, A. (1987). *Al-Jawhar al-thamīn fī tafsīr al-kitāb al-mubīn*. Kuwait: Maktabah al-Alfayn.

Al-Ṭabarī, M. (1992). *Jāmi' al-bayān fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

Al-Tha'ālibī, A. (2008). *Al-Iqtibās min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Jordan: ‘Ālam al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth.

Al-Tūsī, M. (2010). *Al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Ihyā' al-Turāth al-‘Arabī.

Al-Zamakhsharī, M. (1987). *Al-Kashshāf ‘an ḥaqā’iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl*. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.

Akhavanmoghadam, Z. and Bahrami Chimeh, M. (2023). A Critical Analysis of the "Miracle" of Iron's Descent (Q. 57:25): A Scientific, Exegetical, and Historical Perspective. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies*, 2(2), 147-165. <https://doi.org/10.37264/JIQS.V2I2December2023.8>

Bahn, P. (2012). The Origins and Development of Archaeology. In *Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrade/9780199657438.003.0001>

Bucaille, M. (2003). *The Bible, The Qur'an and Science: The Holy Scriptures Examined in the Light of Modern Knowledge*. Kazi Publications.

Culotta, E. (1999). Neanderthals were cannibals, bones show. *Science*, 286(5437), 18b–19. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.286.5437.18b>

Daniel, G. E. (2024). Archaeology. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/science/archaeology>

Defleur, A. et al. (1999). Neanderthal cannibalism at Moula-Guercy, Ardèche, France. *Science*, 286(5437), 128–131. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.286.5437.128>

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc. (2006). *Britannica Concise Encyclopedia*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Gahlawat, S. C. (2018). *Anthropology solved papers*. Team ARSU.

Ibn ‘Ashūr, M. Ṭ. (2000). *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī.

Ibn Bābawayh, M. (1965). *‘Ilal al-Sharā’i’*. Najaf: al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīyah.

Ibn Manzūr, M. (1994). *Lisān al-‘Arab*. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr.

- Ibn Qutaybah, A. (1978). *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah.
- Khan, Z. (2020). *God reveals Himself to mankind as a visible God*. Khanverlag.
- Khanmoradi, M. and Tavakoli Mohamadi, N. (2022). Investigating the story of Noah's Flood according to Qur'anic verses and archaeological researches. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Qur'anic Studies*, 1(1), 129-153. <https://doi.org/10.37264/jiqs.v1i1.8>
- Modzzak (2007). *Neanderthal Museum in Krapina*, Croatia. Viewed from: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/user:Modzzak>
- Pettitt, P. (2013). *The palaeolithic origins of human burial*. Routledge.
- Qarai, A. Q. (2004). *Translation of the Holy Qur'an*. London: ICAS.
- Renfrew, C., & Morley, I. (2009). *Becoming human: Innovation in prehistoric material and spiritual culture*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rice, S. A., & Pigliucci, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Encyclopedia of evolution*. Checkmark Books.
- Rougier, H., Crevecoeur, I., Beauval, C., et al. (2016). Neandertal cannibalism and Neandertal bones used as tools in Northern Europe. *Scientific Reports*, 6, 29005. <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep29005>
- Sala, N. et al. (2015). Lethal Interpersonal Violence in the Middle Pleistocene. *PLOS ONE*, 10(5): e0126589. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0126589>
- Tabataba'i, M. H. (1996). *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Qom: Jāmi‘ah Mudarrisīn.
- Ṭanṭāwī al-Jawharī, T. (2004). *Al-Jawāhir fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah.
- Tattersall, I. (2022). *Understanding human evolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Yaseen, G. T. (2011). Qur'an and archeological discoveries: Evidence from the Near East. *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 1(3), 201–212.
- Yustos, M., & de los Terreros, J. Y. S. (2015). Cannibalism in the Neanderthal world: An exhaustive revision. *Journal of Taphonomy*, 13, 33–52.