

Unit 2: What is the Origin of Humankind?

Evolution and God's Special Creation

Lesson 1 - The Islamic Narrative of Creation

Time Length: 45-50 min.

INSTRUCTIONAL OUTCOMES:

NGSS Standards for High School

HS-LS4-1: Communicate scientific information that common ancestry and biological evolution are supported by multiple lines of empirical evidence.

HS-LS4-2: Construct an argument supported by empirical evidence that changes to physical or biological components are caused by environmental factors.

HS-LS4-5: Evaluate the evidence supporting claims that changes in environmental conditions may result in changes in traits of a population over successive generations.

Common Core Standards

CCSS English Language Arts Standards for High School -

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Content Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate the Islamic narrative of human creation.
- Describe and explain the theological account of non-humans and humans

Materials:

- **Presentation Slides**
- Triple-Entry Vocabulary Journal (Student Responsibility)
- **Entry and Exit Tickets** - or 3"x5" index cards or online survey tool (Slido or Nearpod etc)
- **Pre-historic Time** (Supplemental Material)
- Unit 2: Lesson1 Assessment Questions – **Instructor's Version** and **Student's Version**

Instruction/Teacher Facilitation:

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- ❖ Two big factors that are discussed in the concept of evolution are one, the age of the earth (a time factor) and, two, the origin of man.
- ❖ Entry tickets **[This activity focuses students' attention and asks students to recall background knowledge relevant to the lesson.]**



- On the entry ticket (Formal **entry ticket**, index card or through an online survey tool), ask the students to respond to the question: **“Based on your prior knowledge, what is your understanding of the origin of man and how does that understanding correlate with the concept of evolution?”**
- If using index cards as the entry ticket, the teacher can collect them or allow students to keep them until the end of class so that the back can be used as the exit ticket. If using an online survey tool, close the survey or stop the acceptance of any more responses (re-open for exit ticket question).

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- ❖ Of the two big factors, let's first look at time:
 - The reason time is a major factor in evolutionary concepts is because, in order for evolution to take place, immensely long periods of geological time are necessary to account for the possibility of small changes/adaptations to occur, resulting slowly into major changes.
 - Within this concept of an extremely long stretch of time, we can start with the age of the earth. Let's look at the Quran and see what is the revelatory evidence for this:
 - Verily your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days [Surah Al-Araaf: Ayah 54] What does “six days” mean in this verse? This leads to the question about the cosmos and how we understand time.

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- How old is the cosmos then? (“cosmos” includes the sky, solar system, and the earth)
 - Option 1: Day (al-yawm) in Arabic means from dawn to dusk. Thus, day in this verse can mean what immediately comes to one's mind: like Saturday, Sunday, Monday; a 24-hour period.
 - Option 2: Day in the Qur'an, at times, refers to 1,000 years, “a single day in your Lord's sight is like a thousand years of what you count” [Surah Al-Hajj: Ayah 47] or more “The angels and the Spirit [i.e. Gabriel] will ascend to Him during a Day, the extent of which is fifty thousand years.” [Surah Al-Ma'arij : Ayah 4] So a “day” can be anywhere from 1,000 years to 50,000 years.
 - Option 3: “Day” in Arabic also refers to time periods (al- awqāt). “Six days” in the verse can refer to six periods of time. [al-Bayḍāwī] - could be similar to the concept of deep time.
- **Biology Connection - prehistoric periods of time: for example, we divide it into eons, eras, periods, or epochs. This can help students understand the concept of “periods of time” or give them a frame of reference. [Refer to Pre-historic Time - Supplemental Material for more details.]**
- ***When or how long ago* exactly the creation of Adam falls into this time spectrum is up for speculation and interpretation.**



- Connect back to the Spectrum of Certainty and explain that this information is all zanni, probabilistic in nature, and not certain.

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- ❖ Of the two big factors, let's now look at the second factor: The Origin of Man
 - Begin by asking students how human beings are addressed in the Quran: What names/words did Allah Almighty use to speak about or call upon human beings?

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- Insaan
- Bashar
- Banu Adam
- An- Naas
- ❖ Let's now analyze each of these to understand the human being better and why we are called as such.
 - Insaan - refers to our *rational soul* operating through its cognitive and active powers.
 - A term that refers to both males and females and can apply to both equally.
 - Lexically, a term that stems from nisyaan, which means "to forget" or "forgetfulness."
 - Bashar - refers to man with his *bodily* aspect, an anatomical being.
 - A human's biological nature, physical life, shape, and construction.
 - Lexically, the term bashar signifies the surface of the skin upon which hair grows [Connect this to how we classify/define mammals in biology: a warm-blooded vertebrate animal of a class that is distinguished by the possession of hair or fur. Again, pointing to the difference between animals and humans, even the way the hair grows is unique in the fact that humans have concentrated hair growth like on their head and certain areas more than the rest of the body, whereas animals have full body hair/fur.]
 - In his biological nature, man is different from animals. [Humans have the ability to have complex thoughts and are motivated by their instincts, intellect, *and* logic. Animals are simply motivated by their instincts. Human beings are bipedal, which means that they walk on two legs (intellectually, spiritually, and physically different).]

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- Banu Adam - Synonymous with An-Naas (3 different uses in the Quran)
 - Refers to mankind, including Adam (upon him be peace) and Hawwa (A), and all male and female progeny.
 - Refers to just the *progeny* of Adam (upon him be peace) and Hawwa (A); this usage includes all of mankind, *except* Adam (upon him be peace) and Hawwa (A).



- Refers to only the *male* progeny of Adam (upon him be peace) -> this is the strict literal usage of the term.

[These 4 terms have been used in the Quran, including An-Naas.]

- Al-Hayawaan un-Naatiq - (logical/rational term) Muslim scholars define a human being as a rational animal.
 - Al-hayawaan - linguistically meaning “living being” - a being that has a body, grows etc. [This can be connected to the definition of “life” from a biological standpoint. In biology, a living being or life must possess 7 properties: 1. Order, 2. Reproduction, 3. Growth and development, 4. Energy processing, 5. Regulation, 6. Response to the environment, 7. Evolutionary adaptation.]
 - An-Naatiq - literally means to articulate, “speaking,” also defined as rational because one can only articulate if one possesses rational ability (aql). Speaking denotes specifically the ability to name something and have names for things.
 - Thus, a human is a living being that speaks; the *only* living being that speaks (which is what distinguishes us from other animals.) As Allah Almighty mentions in Surah Ar-Rahman: Ayah 3-4, that HE “Created human beings” using the word *insaan* here, and “taught them speech.”

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- ❖ Along the same lines, let's look at what Allah Almighty mentions in the Quran about the material/physical creation of humans and the different stages of creation/development.
 - “Who has perfected everything He created. And He originated the creation of humankind *from moist clay*.” [Surah As-Sajdah: Ayah 7]
 - “So ask them ‘O Prophet’, which is harder to create: them or other marvels of Our creation? Indeed, We created them *from a sticky/clinging clay*.” [Surah As-Saaffaat: Ayah 11]
 - “Indeed, We created man of a finished blank of *hardened clay* made of black mud.” [Surah Al-Hijr: Ayah 26]
 - And then back to Surah Ar-Rahman; “He created humankind from ‘sounding’ hard clay like baked pottery.” [Surah Ar-Rahman: Ayah 14]
 - All of these examples talk about the bashari/physical aspect of human beings.

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- ❖ These ayaat describe the general creation and development of human beings. What about the **first** human being? Who is the father of mankind and how was *he* created? The creation of the first human being, Adam (upon him be peace), is notably different.
 - “Then people will come to Adam and say, ‘You are *the father of mankind* (Abul-bashar/ *أَبُو الْبَشَرِ*), ALLAH created you with HIS own hand and breathed into you of HIS spirit...” (Sahih Muslim) - Allah Almighty Himself created Adam (upon him be peace), an honor given only to Adam (upon him be peace). [Background of Hadith: This hadith is about the Day



of Ressurrection when all people would have been gathered and suffering waiting for the Judgment to begin, and so the people will go to each Prophet to try to find someone who can intercede to Allah Almighty. And only Muhammad, Rasullullah ﷺ would be able to do so.]

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- “And [mention] when your Lord said to the angels, 'Truly, I will **create a man** (bashar) **from clay**. So when I have completed him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall prostrate to him.' And the angels prostrated, one and all. Except Iblis (Satan), who was too proud to, and disbelieved. HE said to him, 'O Iblis/Satan, what prevented you from prostrating to **what I have created with My two hands**? Are you arrogant, or too exalted?' He said, 'I am better than he; You created me from fire and created him from clay'" (Surah Saad: Ayaat 71-76). **[Note: this is not to be understood in an anthropomorphic view of Allah Almighty, but to signify that Allah Almighty created Adam personally.]**
- Through revelatory text/evidence, we have established that the origin of man is due to the personal creation of Allah Almighty.

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- ❖ Doctrine Regarding Hawwa (upon her be peace) - Adam (upon him be peace) is the first human being and the first man. Let's look at the first woman.
 - “Then Iblis was exiled from the Garden when he was cursed, and Adam was put to dwell in the Garden. He went around alone with no wife in whom he could find repose. Then he fell asleep and woke up to find a woman sitting beside his head whom God had **created from his rib**.”
 - “So he asked her: ‘Who are you?’ And she said: ‘A woman.’ He said: ‘Why are you **created**?’ She said: ‘So that you could find repose in me.’ Then the angels ask him, to see how much he knew: ‘What is her name, Adam?’ He said: ‘Ḥawwā’ They said: ‘Why is she called Ḥawwā’?’ He said: ‘Because **she was created from something living (ḥaiy)**.’ [ha-wa-ya - to live]
 - “Then God said to him: ‘Adam, dwell you and your wife, in the Garden, and eat thereof whatever you desire.’” (Tafseer at-Tabari)
 - This shows us the particular creation of the first man and woman, clearly giving us an Islamic understanding of the origin of man.

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- ❖ Putting the cosmos and the creation of human beings together, human beings have a very lofty status in the universe.
 - In Surah Al-Israa, Ayah 70: “Indeed, We have dignified/honored the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, granted them good and lawful provisions, and privileged/favored them far above many of Our creatures.”
 - Therefore, humans are the most superior and honorable of all creation. [Even above angels, because it is mentioned that angels were created to obey Allah Almighty, they



have no option, but human beings were given free will to obey or disobey, so their free obedience allows them to earn a rank higher than even angels.]

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❖ *Were there living beings before the creation of humans?*

- In Surah Baqarah, Ayah 30, the conversation between Allah Almighty and the angels is mentioned: ‘Remember’ when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a successive ‘human’ authority on earth.” They asked ‘Allah’, “Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?” Allah responded, “I know what you do not know.”

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- How did they know that this new creation, human beings, will shed blood and spread corruption?
 - Option 1 - God informed the angels that among the Children of Adam are those who will work corruption and shed blood. (Tabari mentions this in his Tafseer)
 - Option 2 - There were previous inhabitants on the Earth, namely jinnkind who worked corruption and shed blood. Then angels were assuming humankind will be like jinn-kind.

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- ❖ Did human beings evolve from prior living beings? Did the human form evolve?
 - Let’s look at the revelatory text:
 - In Surah Al-Infitaar, Ayah 7, Allah Almighty states about HIMSELF that HE is the One: “Who created you, fashioned you, and perfected your design/balanced you.” - referring to the physical form of the human being. This does not indicate that humans were created in an evolutionary manner, starting with a primitive form and then evolving into a more developed, perfect form. Allah Almighty is saying that from the beginning, human beings were designed in a perfect form.
 - In Surah At-Teen, Ayah 4, Allah Almighty also mentions: Indeed, We created humans in the best form (fairest symmetry).” - again, from the beginning created in the best form.

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- Therefore, we can say that humans are created from the outset in the complete physical form and the best symmetrical form (ahsan at-taqweem).
- Humans did **not** evolve over the course of time from another species. Humans are a living being distinct in *essence* from other living beings.
- ❖ This is what we would call **Human Exceptionalism** - that human beings are the exception in the philosophy of evolution, Neo-Darwinian evolution to be specific.

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- Does man belong to the anthropological classification of Homo?
 - In terms of biological classification, we would say that humans do **not** belong to the *anthropological* classification of homo (sapiens).



- IF we say that they are homo sapiens, then we are saying that they are related to homo neanderthalensis, and have a common ancestor, and when you go down they are related to chimpanzees through ancestry/family. This would commit us to a framework with many philosophical assumptions, including a relationship to animals/common ancestors and an evolutionary process, which goes against the Quranic account.
- And the proof for this is revelatory text, the Quranic account of human creation, AND observable biological differences that are present.
- ❖ Exit ticket: Using the formal exit ticket, or the other side of the “entry ticket” index card, or the online survey tool, have the students answer the following questions: **[The concept of the exit ticket is to collect feedback on students’ understanding at the end of class and provide the students with an opportunity to reflect on what they have learned. This can be helpful in prompting the student to begin to synthesize and integrate the information gained during a class period.]**
 - **“Now, based on your recently acquired knowledge, what is your understanding of the origin of man and how does that understanding correlate with the concept of evolution?” and/or “What questions arise or do you still have about the concept of evolution in regards to human beings?”**

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- ❖ Closing: Summarize the truth statements made in this lesson; state the doctoral position in Islam in regard to humans and evolution. (This can be done by the teacher listing the following, or by having the students participate in developing these statements as the teacher writes them down for the class to see.)
 1. Humans are the most superior and honorable of all creation.
 2. The human species is created from dust (turāb) and proliferated from the first human Adam (upon him be peace).
 3. Prophet Adam (upon him be peace) is the father of all humankind.
 4. Prophet Adam was created by Allah in paradise not on earth. (evolution takes place only on earth, not in the heavens.)
 5. There were other living beings before humans were created.
 6. Humans are created from the outset in the complete physical form and fairest symmetrical form (ahsan at-taqweem). Humans did not evolve over the course of time from another species. Humans are a living being distinct in essence, not in terms of degree, from other living beings.
 7. Man does not belong to the anthropological classification of Homo.

Biology Connections:

- This lesson can be connected to the definition of Biology (the study of life) and living things. Usually, this is the first chapter taught in Biology classes. Here, we would be defining living beings, and human beings, particularly with that definition.
- These concepts can also be connected to the definition of mammals, due to the concept of haywaan-un-naatiq, and how they differ from other animals.



- When discussing the last point about human classification, this can be connected to a taxonomy lesson, but showing that human taxonomy under homo sapiens is an *assumption* being made by evolutionary theorists. And the statements from our revelatory text prove this. This can also be connected to the concept of **qat'i and zanni**, and human taxonomy as classified in mainstream biology is zanni, whereas our human exceptionalism is qat'i.