



Question:

Is there evidence in the Holy Quran and traditions regarding the Earth being spherical?

Answer:

Of the indications present in Quran regarding these mysteries is that the Earth is spherical.

And this can be surmised from the following verses:

1. And We made the people who were deemed weak to inherit the eastern lands and the western ones which We had blessed; and the good word of your Lord was fulfilled in the children of Israel because they bore up (sufferings) patiently... [1]

2. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, and Lord of the easts. [2]

3. But nay! I swear by the Lord of the Easts and the Wests that We are certainly able to bring instead (others) better than them, and We shall not be overcome. [3]

Its explanation is this that, as indicated in the last discussion, this verse argues about Easts and Wests, and number of points of rising and setting of the sun, for which the earth should necessarily be spherical, because it is a universally admitted fact that if the earth had been flat there would have been only one East and one West. And only because the earth is round and inclined that every point of the earth can have a particular East and a separate West.

And the sun rising on a certain point from different points of the earth, just as sometimes it is necessary that it set on other part of the earth; therefore the Easts and Wests being many is clear proof of the earth being spherical.

Traditions regarding the earth being spherical

From the traditions that have come to us through the sinless Imams (‘a) we can understand that the earth is spherical. One of such tradition from Imam Sadiq (‘a) is given below:

Imam Sadiq (‘a) said:

In a journey, a man became a fellow traveler. He was habituated that he should pray the Evening Prayer in the darkness of the night, and pray the Morning Prayer in the complete darkness of the night (end of night). But I was opposite to him. I used to pray the Evening Prayer when the sun set and perform the Morning Prayer at dawn break. He requested me to also pray in his manner and explained his act in this way: The sun before rising on our land rises on other places. And when it disappears from our land then too it shines on other places.

I told him: It is our practice that when the Sun disappears from our horizon, the Evening Prayer is prayed, and it is not necessary that we should wait for it to set in other places. And when the dawn breaks, we should pray the Morning Prayer, though the Sun may not have come out in other places. Because it is incumbent upon the people of all the places that they should offer their Prayers according to dawn and sunset of their horizons. [4]

Imam (a) has described this fact in one more tradition:

It is upon you that you should have the foundation of your deeds on your logical East and West.

And all this is said on the basis of the earth being spherical. Reference:

[1] Surah Aaraf 7:137

[2] Surah Saffaat 37:7

[3] Surah Maarij 70:40-41

[4] Wasailush Shia, Vol. I, p. 237

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