Controversial and paradoxical theological approaches to the issue of ‘Descent of the Qur’ān’

In Islam, there is a belief that Allah has a ‘throne’ [al-‘Arsh, the highest level of the heavens] in the sky and that Allah sent the Qur’ān directly from that throne or through an angel. According to this belief, the Qur’ān descended from the seventh level of the heavens to the first level and then completed its descent to the earth in pieces over 23 years. Accordingly, the Qur’ān descended from a certain place with determined borders, namely from the throne [al-‘Arsh] of Allah. However, theological books [the literature and sources of ‘ilm al-Kalām] contend that Allah is free from space and time and that a specific space cannot be attributed to Allah. The verses of the Qur’ān even suggest that Allah is not only above in the heavens but everywhere. Therefore, the main question of our article is why Allah wanted to send the Qur’ān specifically from the heavens if Allah is free from space. We show that the descent of the Qur’ān from the heavens to the earth is not realistic but is a symbolic and metaphorical narrative.

Keywords: Qur’ān; descent; space; heaven; throne [al-‘Arsh]; ‘Inzāl; Tanzīl.

The issue of where Allah resides and accordingly how Qur’ān was revealed

Although the groups of Mushabbihī, Karrāmīte, Kallābīyya, Ahl al-Hadith [Salafīsim] and some Ashāris [like Ebū Hasan al-Ashārī and Bākīlānī] claim that Allah dwells in the heavens, given some verses and theological books, it is impossible for the creator of the universe to be somewhere or to be present in only one place. If we predicate our belief on the theological books and the revelations of the Qur’ān, we understand that Allah cannot be in a specific place like humans and is not similar to any human in any aspect. Although humans need a place to dwell, Allah does not need a place because Allah is the creator of space. However, the expression ‘God turned towards the heavens or settled’ in the Qur’ān gives the impression that Allah resides in a specific place. For this reason, theologians such as Abū Mansūrāl-Māturīdī claimed that Allah’s residing in and inclination towards a place is not the same as humans and creatures (Al-Māturīdī 2006:138; Götz 1999:193–214) do, and they argued that these phrases have different meanings. Therefore, they attributed to the heavens [al-‘Arsh] the meanings of reign, property, universe, perfection and supremacy instead of ‘throne’ and interpreted the word istiwā’ as creating, attempting, surrounding, establishing sovereignty and ascending instead of residing, just as they attributed different meanings to other deeds of Allah that are similar to those of humans. For example, the Qur’ān mentions Allah coming and going like a human; however, theologians interpret these verbs as a ‘manifestation’ instead of giving them the meaning of ‘transition’ of human from one place to the other. According to these scholars, the deeds of Allah are different from the deeds of humans as Allah is different in his essence from creation, and therefore they preserve the concept of Allah from all human

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1. Scholars who are eager to Salafism such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr, al-Tabarī, al-Zahabī and Bayhaqī challenged that Allah resides in the heavens as some verses and hadiths declared, understanding holy scriptures as they are and without interpretation. In Contrast, some theologians like al-Māturīdī who interpreted the verses related to Allah’s deeds and attributes with reason and logic to preserve the concept of Allah from all human representations, and challenged that Allah needs to be different to human being or anything, because if he looks like a humans in his deeds and descriptions he cannot be a exalted and sublime God. (Taymiyya 2012:195–200); Abū Muhammad Nur al-Dīn Ahmad b. al-Sābūnī (1969:44); al-dīn al-Rāzī (1986:100–101); al-Zahabī (1999:246); al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-‘Ilm al-Kalām, VIII, 162–165.

2. Al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-Tawhīd, 70–77; Q 5:87: 50/16; 43/84.

3. Al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-Tawhīd, 70–77; Cf. al-Māturīdī (2006:131–140).

4. Al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-Tawhīd, 70–77.

5. Q 10:3; 13:12; 20:5.

6. Götz (1999:136–137); Götz, ‘Māturīdī and His Kitāb Ta’wilāt al-Qur’ān’, 193.

7. al-Rāzī, Aḥkām al-Muteqaddimin ve al-Muteakhkhirin, 155–158; and al-Rāzī (1987:7, 37, 99, 101, 106); al-Rāzī (2004), sūrah Tāhā 5; al-Māturīdī, Kitāb al-Tawhīd, 70–77; Ibn Āshūr, al-Ṭahhīr wa al-Tanvīr, VII, 86; 162–165.

8. Āshūr, al-Ṭahhīr wa al-Tanvīr, 141; Götz, ‘Māturīdī and His Kitāb Ta’wilāt al-Qur’ān’, 194.
representations. Although the deeds of Allah, such as seeing, hearing, talking through revelation, arriving, going, resting, inclining and establishing a trap, are expressed with the verbs of humans, they carry completely different meanings and contents. As such, the human mind cannot comprehend these deeds, although it tries to understand and interpret them by comparing them to humans’ own acts.

Given this understanding, it is not acceptable to believe that Allah resides in a limited place in the heavens; in other words, the belief that Allah rests in the sky cannot be accepted. Indeed, theologians have also found this belief unacceptable, arguing that it attributes limitations to Allah just as it does to humans and objects. Moreover, many verses in the Qur’an state that Allah does not reside in a particular place but is everywhere. For example, ‘Allah is the fourth one in a place where three people talk’; ‘We are closer to him than his jugular vein’; ‘He is the deity both in the heavens and the earth’; ‘We are closer to him than you, but you cannot see this’; ‘Allah is with those who avoid misdeeds’, and ‘Wherever you turn, Allah’s face is there’.

It is clearly understood that Allah does not reside in a place like a human being. Even the word al-’Arsh [heavens] means reign, property, perfection and supremacy instead of the state that Allah does not reside in a particular place but is everywhere. For example, ‘Allah is the fourth one in a place where three people talk’; ‘We are closer to him than his jugular vein’; ‘He is the deity both in the heavens and the earth’; ‘We are closer to him than you, but you cannot see this’; ‘Allah is with those who avoid misdeeds’, and ‘Wherever you turn, Allah’s face is there’.

Interpreting sura al-’Arf 7:54, Yitūs 10:3 Ra’d 13:2, Thāhā 20:5, Fourqān 25:59, Sajūda 32:4, Hadīd 57:4 al-Rāzī explains the issue in wide range and discusses it much more deeply; however, thinking that the explanations mentioned here are much enough, we will not address these verses’ comments one by one (Al-Rāzī 2004: surah al-’Arf 7:54).

Briefly, al-Rāzī implies that al-’Arsh refers to a symbolic and figurative expression. He cites this viewpoint from Qaffāl and al-Zanākeshārī who are outstanding philologist and theologian in the Islamic history (al-Rāzī 2004: surah al-’Arf 7:54, Thāhā 20:5). In fact, most scholars supporting the method of interpretation of Qur’an with personal thoughts and views, called ‘al-‘Arsh as a figurative phenomenon stating Allah’s immense, vast and endless property. Therefore, there is no way to believe that the Qur’an was sent from that throne. In other words, because the word al-’Arsh [heavens]’ does not correspond to a physical place, it is not possible for the Qur’an to descend from there. In addition, as mentioned earlier, as Allah is everywhere, his heavens al-’Arsh cannot have a physical and particular space. If Allah is everywhere, his knowledge, al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz and al-’Arsh, is everywhere with him; therefore, there is no reason to believe that the Qur’an, which was inspired by Allah from al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz, was retrieved from the seventh level of the heavens. The Qur’an was inspired wherever al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz is. As al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz is everywhere with Allah, we can say that the Qur’an was inspired from everywhere and every direction. Expressing this with a short formula, if the Qur’an was inspired from within al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz or Kitāh-Maknūn [the Knowledge of Allah] and if al-Lawhāl-Mahīfūz is in service to and with Allah and Allah is everywhere, then there cannot be a particular place from which the Qur’an can be retrieved. However, we can say that the Qur’an was retrieved from where Allah resides.

Therefore, the statement of Allah, ‘We sent the Qur’an’, expresses the meaning of ‘to inspire’ the Qur’an to humans from wherever Allah is, rather than sending it physically from the heavens in the sky down to the earth (Al-Husayn b. 1933: 3–4; Sinā 1989: 64–70).

Nowhere is it written in the Qur’an, ‘We descended the Qur’an from the sky’, although there are open-ended expressions such as We descended the Qur’an. Only in Hadiths is the Qur’an mentioned as being sent from the seventh level of the heavens to the first level and from there to the earth. The main thesis that the Qur’an defends is that the Qur’an was not sent from the sky but from where Allah resides. As Allah is on the earth, in the sky and everywhere, it cannot be explicitly claimed that the Qur’an was sent from the sky. However, it can be said that it has been revealed from where Allah resides.
However, when we analyse the word ‘inzāl’, we see that it does not always refer to a physical descent from the heavens to the earth. In the Qurʾān, the expressions of ‘inzāl and tanzīl descend’ intend to mean ‘allāma (to teach), anba’a (to inform), awbāh (to reveal) and ‘to inspire’ (into his heart). In this verse, the concept of ‘transmission’ metaphorically means, ‘We rose him from among you’ or ‘We revealed to someone among you’. As in this case, the concept of ‘inzāl metaphorically means awbāh (we have revealed), allāma (we have informed), anba’a (we have declared) and awbāh (we have installed). In other words, both the concepts of ‘inzāl and ‘irsāl are metaphorical because the concept of ‘irsāl does not imply sending or bringing a prophet from a certain place physically and has a metaphorical meaning. Also, the concept of ‘inzāl does not imply sending a book in the physical sense, but in metaphorical sense.

The possibility of the Qurʾān being sent from the sky and heavens

Firstly, we need to understand what is meant by the place we call the sky. In the Qurʾān, the word al-samāʾ is used for the sky. According to the Qurʾān, there are seven levels of heavens, and they were created before the earth. The closest of these heavens is the sky which is surrounded with the stars, the sun and the moon. The Qurʾān uses the expression Samāʾ al-Dunyā for this nearest heaven. Another name for the first heaven is Bayt al-Izza. Islamic sources claim that the whole Qurʾān was first transmitted to the heavens, and then, day by day, to the earth. In other words, God’s word as sent down to prophet Muhammad is sent down in time but not at a time. Muhammad’s enemies ask themselves and indirectly the prophet: ‘Why has the Qurʾān not been sent down upon him all at once?’ [Lawlāuzīla aleyhi al-Qurʾān yunjumlatunawāhidatan]. Later, theologians called this spreading of the times of revelation tanjīm al-suwar and asked again, why the Qurʾān in contradistinction to the other and earlier holy books was not sent down all at once. The Qurʾānic text itself clearly established the notion of ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ revelations. Moreover, tafsir scholars were eager to ask what was the first and the last descending verse or portion. The eternal, divine word of Qurʾānic text is thereby given a temporal dimension.

Another indicator of the impossibility of the Qurʾān descending from the sky is that it was transmitted from within al-Lawḥ-al-Maḥfūẓ. Stefan Wild indicates with regard to al-Lawḥ-al-Maḥfūz that before the divine word is sent down by God’s decree, it has something like a resting place: ‘a glorious Qurʾān in a guarded tablet’ [filawḥinmaḥfūẓ]. The dialectical relationship between the recited Qurʾān (recitation or decloration) and the written Kitāb (al-Lawḥ-al-Maḥfūz or KitābMaḥfūnz or Umm al-Kitāb) carefully analysed by, for example, A. Jeffery, Tilman Nagel (Jeffery 1952; Nagel 1983:143–165) and William A. Graham (1987:79ff), is already present in what might be called the divine pre-history of the Qurʾānic text. God’s word refers to a written pre-text, and this written pre-text records God’s speech, even before it is sent down. A different concept of something like an ‘Urschrift’ can be found in sūrat-Zukhrūf 3: ‘We have made it an Arabic Qurʾān; hopefully you will understand; and behold it is the Essence of the Book [ Umm al-Kitāb] with us sublime indeed, wise [ innā jā anhānuq ‘ānan arabiyyan ilakumta kilīnā unnahāfummi al-kitābliladayn la ‘aliyyunhākīn]. NasḤāmidAbū Zaid has argued that this divine pre-history of the text defies human scholarship (Kernani 1994:25–49; Wild 1993:256–261; Zaid 1990:30). The human mind cannot penetrate what is in every respect beyond human reason. This argument, according to S. Wild, introduces a modern understanding of what scholarship can do and what not and implicitly calls for a modern hermeneutical methodology.

As the sources indicate, the Qurʾān was inside al–Lawḥ-al-Maḥfūz, which is located in the heavens [al–Arsh].

33 Al-Suyūṭī, al-Naqī fī ‘Umm il-Qurʾān, I, 268; al-Zarkashi, al-Burḥān fi ‘Ullah al-Qurʾān, 228; al-Zarqānī (1995), 40; al-Hākim al-Nisābūrī, al-Mustadrak alā sulhāyayn (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Imyṣa), ’al-fāṣīd, 7–8; al-Bayhaqi (2003), ’al-Šiyām (Layla al-Qadr), v, 256 (hadith no: 3386–3387); al-Bayhaqi (1926), ’al-Šiyām / Layla al-Qadr, iv, 306.

34 Q 25:32

35 In later times, Gabriel was also seen as the messenger who brought down the sunna (wara’da unna sīla kāna yanzilu bi al-sunnatam kāma yanzilu bi al-Qurʾān) al-Suyūṭī (1985:128); Wild (1956:xxvi, 146–147).

36 See al-Suyūṭī, al- ’Isrā, i, 116ff. ‘Inzāla nujūman, op.cit., 117; ‘nazala manejaman fi awqātānu mukhtalafatn, op.cit., 118, 11, etc. The other holy books had been sent down jumlatun wāhidatān.

37 Wild, ‘We have sent down to Thee The Book With The Truth …’ 146–147.

38 Q 85:21–22.

39 Wild, ‘We have sent down to Thee The Book With The Truth …’ 147.

40 Al-Kāfiejī (1998:45); Q 50:4; al-Rāzī, Maḥfūz al-Ghayb, xxvii, 617–618.
On the basis of the Qur’ān and Islamic sources, we can explain al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ as the Central Book that records the knowledge of the past and future and includes all events, troubles and calamities before they occur and were created. In other words, it is the supreme book that records every event that occurs on the earth and in the seas, in the past and future and every atom. It is always with Allah. The verses in the Qur’ān express that they were inspired by Allah through the Main Book of al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz. This can be accepted as a sign that the Qur’ān was not descended from the heavens. As verses of the Qur’ān indicate, al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz is a book that is always next to Allah and with him. However, as we mentioned in the above verses, Allah does not have a particular place but is everywhere. If so, al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz is with Allah; hence, the Qur’ān, which is inside al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz, is also everywhere. Therefore, we cannot identify a specific place of descent for the Qur’ān in the heavens or in outer space. As a result, we can say that wherever Allah and Hisal-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz reside, the Qur’ān was revealed from there.

Qur’ānic verses speak of the presence of Allah’s being everywhere rather than residing in a particular place.

Some verses express that Allah is both in the sky and on the earth, some verses say that Allah is closer to human from his jugular vein and some verses state that Allah is everywhere. In spite of all these expressions, there is only one verse in the Qur’ān that speaks of the residing of Allah in a particular place. This verse speaks of the residing of Allah in the heavens [al-ʿArsh]. In this case, we can ask the following questions: Does Allah really sit in the throne just as humans? If so, does this contradict with the verses of ‘Allah is no equivalent of any creature’ or ‘Allah is everywhere?’ Moreover, if Allah really resides in a real throne, he is no different from his creatures’ or ‘Allah is everywhere’? In other words, it is the supreme book that records every event that occurs on the earth and in the seas, in the past and future and every atom. If so, does this contradict with the verses of ‘Allah is no equivalent of any creature’ or ‘Allah is everywhere?’

According to this view, ‘Allah sat in the heavens’ refers to the realm of Allah over the universe, nature or the cosmos. In other words, the heavens [al-ʿArsh] correspond to the possession of Allah that he has the dominion and created from nothing, and his rest in the heavens means his dominion over the heavens. According to another opinion, al-ʿArsh means human being or obligant, and istaʿāwā means to intend towards something and to create it. According to this view, after the creation of the heavens and the earth in 6 days, Allah has turned to human and created them; thus, he completed and brought the process of creation to the highest point. Accordingly, the creation of human being is complementary thing for the earth and heavens’ creation. Because he is the only one who is in the position of obligant in the universe, so if he has not been existed, the rest (the earth, heavens and the whole existing universe) would have been meaningless. Therefore, ultimate intention of the expression ‘Allah resides in the heavens’ is the creation of human kind for the completion of creation after the heavens and the earth.

The use of the concept of ‘Inzāl in real and metaphorical senses

In the Qur’ān, ‘inzāl is used 163 times and tanzil is used 15 times. These verbs are used for both sending down water and divine word in both metaphorical and real senses. Stefan Wild points out that the most frequent use of ‘inzāl and tanzil in the Qur’ān, next to God’s sending down his word, occurs with the words denoting ‘rain’: ‘He sent down out of heaven water’ [waanzahānār al-samā‘ān fā ṭakrayabilhum al-thamarātirizqanlakum]. This is a proof of God’s care for human kind wherewith he brought forth fruits for your provision’. Sometimes, this is also God’s punishment as it was in the following verse: ‘And he sends down out of heaven mountains, wherein is property or universe.

Had Allah had no place? Where was Allah resting before he had created the heavens, sky and even the universe? All these questions point out only one thing: Allah was not in any place neither in the outer space nor on the earth in the past, and he is still not. Alternatively if we would think reversely, Allah can be everywhere; in this case, it does not seem possible to detect an exact place from which the Qur’ān can be retrieved. Finally, we can conclude that al-ʿArsh in the expression of ‘Allah resided in the heavens’ does not correspond to any physical place and indicates completely metaphorical meanings. That is the reason why theologians attributed more than one meaning to the heavens.

Another important question is that where was Allah residing before the heavens had been created and had not existed.
he will with it and turns it aside from whom he will’ [wa yanunazzilitun al-samā’ī min jibrīlin hā min barādin fā yasibubihu man yashā’ū wa yasrisifahā an man yashā’u]. Both the rain and God’s word are a ‘sign’ [‘āya]. And ‘āya means a sign of God’s care for human kind and a verse of the Qurān. ‘And we sent down out of heaven water blessed’ [wa anzilānīn al-samā’ī an-nabūrakān fā ‘anbanīhā fihā nātimwahabba al-basamal]. This shows this double connotation: God sends down his word as he sends down blessed water. This connection between life-giving water and life-giving word is also constantly present in the Qurānic text. The heaven from which rain is sent down is the same as the one from which God’s word is sent down. Al-Samā’ is metaphorically used for ‘rain’ in sūra Nūḥ 71:11. God has acted in history by sending down nanān man and quails [al-’insānān wa’l-qulūb] livelihood and provision; he may be asked to send down a treasure. However, God acts principally in history by sending down his angels, messengers and prophets or even divinely inspired human inventions: ‘Indeed, we sent our messengers with the clear signs, and we sent down with them the book and the balance…’ [Q 57:25]. God also sends down ḥissakināh [al-hissakinān] and his authority (sulṭān). The word sulṭān seems to be the only instance where the object sent down is an abstract noun; in connection with sulṭān, the verb is usually negative: ‘Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority’ [Sūlāqī fī qulūb al-ladhīn kafārā al-rū’ba bimā ‘ashrakhā hillāhīm lam yunazzil bikhī sulṭānān], and so on. Briefly, the verbs inzāl and tanzūl are used, by delivery of rain, livelihood and torment, in the real sense.

But these verbs are also used in metaphorical senses. For example, the Qurān uses them for the delivery of holy scriptures, garment (libās), sakīnna, iron, charity, grazing livestock and quail meat in the metaphorical sense. In this way, the concept of inzāl has been used sometimes in the metaphorical sense and sometimes in the real sense. One of the places where it is used metaphorically is for the delivery or descent of the Qurānic text and other holy scriptures.

There are many words and verbs in the Qurān that are used in a metaphorical sense. For instance, the verb ‘breathing’ that is used in the verse ‘Oath to the newly breathing dawn’ is used outside of its real meaning of the ‘breathing of a human being.’ In this sentence, ‘breathing’ is used to indicate the emergence of the day and the arrival of the sunlight to the earth. As another example, in the verse ‘Ask the city,’ the verb ‘ask’ is directed to a non-living entity instead of a living human, whereas a question is asked only to rational beings. Therefore, there is an allegorical narrative here. ‘The city’ refers to the people inside the city.

There are other examples: ‘rope’ in the verse ‘collectively cling to the rope of Allah’ and ‘garment’ in the verse of ‘they are your garment, and you are their garment’ are both used in a metaphorical sense.

Also, there are symbolic expressions in the Qurān, such as ‘Then, he headed towards the mistily sky; said to it and to the earth, Come willingly or unwillingly’. They both said, ‘We came willingly’. This verse is a statement that shows symbolic expressions in the Qurān. The verse speaks of the dialogue between Allah and the earth and sky. Allah says to them ‘come’, and they come by obeying this order. However, Allah does not speak with a non-living being. The relationship between an inanimate entity and its creator is not a relationship of conversation dialogue but a relationship of ‘creation-created’. Therefore, Allah did not speak to the earth and sky as if speaking with a human; he only spoke symbolically, as if Allah said, ‘I am your God, resign to me’ by creating the earth and sky, and they said, ‘You created us, and we resigned to you’ (al-Zamakhsharī 2009:965).

In other words, this dialogue is not real but entirely symbolic. Similarly, the meaning of the expression, ‘When Allah wills something, he says “be” and it comes into existence’, which is stated in several verses in the Qurān, is totally symbolic. It is impossible for Allah to converse with objects and things and accept them as respondents. In addition, objects have no reason or ability to speak. Therefore, when Allah speaks to them and says “be”, this is a symbolic expression. The verse with ‘entrust’ in Sūrā ‘Aḥzāb 33:72 was perceived symbolically by commentators, particularly Zamakhsharī. In this case, both the residence of Allah in the heavens and the transmission of the Qurānic text imply a symbolic expression. We can express this case with symbolic language; it is as if Allah has created his property and, as the master of all the property, settled in the heavens. In other words, the dominion of Allah over his property is symbolised by his residence in the heavens [al-‘Arsh]. In the same way, if we were to express the descent of the Qurān symbolically, we could say that Allah descended
the Qur’ān by inspiring, teaching and embedding it in the heart of his prophet. In other words, ‘Allah sent/descended the Qur’ān to him’ symbolises the declaration of the Qur’ān by Allah, his teaching of the verses thoroughly to his prophet, their consolidation and embedding and his guidance through inspiration.

In addition, we can consider the cognates in the Qur’ān such as the hand, face, eyes and ‘nafs’ of Allah, having his hands tied and his generosity, his arrival and leaving and his residing in the heavens as metaphorical statements.68 Like these expressions, the descent of the Qur’ān also carries metaphorical meaning. As the arrival of Allah refers to the manifestation of his appearance, the descent of the Qur’ān implies its inspiration or declaration.

According to some scholars such as AbūMansūr Māturīdī,69 al-Rāzī and most of Mu’tazilīs, the deeds of Allah differentiate from the deeds of human beings, and Allah does not resemble humans in any aspect.70 Seeing, hearing, talking, arriving, going, resting and establishing a trap have completely different meanings and contents.71 They also assign to the concept of al-’Arsh different meanings as universe, reign and supremacy in place of ‘throne’. In the same way, the verb istiwa‘ also be commented as establishing sovereignty, creating, attempting and surrounding instead of residing.72

However, it should be noted that even though Māturīdī, Mu’tazilītes and some Asharīs just like al-Rāzī interpret the descriptions or deeds of Allah [al-sfāt al-khaberī] as above and assign to them some other meanings that do not obstruct God’s exaltedness and freeing from space, they behave timidly towards being metaphorically interpreted the issue of ‘inzāl’. For instance, Zamakhshārī’s Kashshāf is probably the commentary which uses the metaphor most comprehensively as an instrument of assigning to the Qur’ānic text a meaning compatible with his own Weltanschauung. But for him, the Qur’ānic derivations of the root ‘nzl’ were not metaphors.73

Additionally, Zamakhshārī treats the metaphorical derivations of ‘nzl’ in his book Asās al-Balāgha frankly. In this rhetorical book that gives for each Arabic word its real meaning [ḥaqīqah] and its metaphorical meaning [majāz], he is careful to list the derivations of ‘nzl’ under the following heading: wa’anzalaallāhu al-ghaythawa anzalaal-kitābawa anzalaahul watanzalat al-mālā’ikatu (Al-Zamakhshāri 1998:II, 264). Quṭbaddīn al-Shīrāzī, however, a commentator of al-Zamakhshārī’s Kashshāf, explains: ‘inzāl is used in the sense of affording lodging to somebody or of moving a thing downwards. Both meanings cannot be attributed to speech. Therefore, ‘inzāl is here used metaphorically’.74 A modern intellectual explains: ‘inzāl is the process of changing a matter existing outside the human mind from something unperceived to something perceived’ (Shaḥrūr 1977:149).

Another piece of evidence that the verb ‘inzāl does not always mean a physical delivery is the following verse: ‘Who can be crueler than someone who says Allah inspired me and I will also descend similar things that Allah did, though he has not been given any revelation’.75 According to this verse, some polytheists want to retrieve a book like the Qur’ān. If the verb ‘inzāl means the descent of a physical thing from the sky, then the polytheists would mean to send a counterpart of the Qur’ān from the sky. Nevertheless, polytheists already know that they cannot obtain anything from the sky; therefore, some of them say, ‘I will also retrieve a book like the Qur’ān’. Additionally, they used to reject the possibility of the Qur’ān being descended from the sky, yet they want to bring a book like the Qur’ān down to the earth. There is only one explanation for this: the verb ‘inzāl is not used to mean a physical descent from above to below in this verse; rather, it means to ‘tell, say, declare, fabricate, write, comprise’.76 Thus, we can say that the polytheists wanted to tell, say, declare, comprise and write a statement like in the Qur’ān.77 On the basis of this meaning of the verb ‘inzāl of the Qur’ān’ implies not only its physical descent but also first its declaration to the prophet, then its explanation verse by verse and finally its record as the scripture. As a result, the verb ‘inzāl does not always refer to a physical descent from above to below (Abdurrazzaq 2012:43–44).

There are several different verbs that have a common meaning with ‘inzāl. These verbs explain better what the verb ‘inzāl means. For example, one of them is the verb ‘allama [he has taught]. This verb is used in many parts of the Qur’ān to mean ‘to declare something, to inspire, to transmit’.78 The verse ‘He taught Adam the names’ speaks of Allah teaching Adam the names.79 If we make a small change in this verse and state it as ‘Allah descended names to Adam’, the meaning of the verse is the same. As another example, the story of David and Goliath says that Allah gave wisdom to David and taught him what he wills.80 We can interpret this statement as, ‘Allah gave wisdom to David and descended whatever he wills’.

Accordingly, if we use the verb ‘inzāl [to descend] instead of the verbs ‘allama [to teach] and ‘a‘īd [to give] which are used in the verses, the meaning does not change. As another example, the Sūra Yāsin 69th verse states, ‘We did not teach

68. Al-Māturīdī (2005:266–267), Q 48:10; 67:1; 55:27; 20:39; 3:28; 5:64; 89:22.
69. Götz, ‘Māturīdī und His Kitāb Ta wīlāt al-Qur ān’, vol. xxx, 193–214.
70. Götz, ‘Māturīdī und His Kitāb Ta wīlāt al-Qur ān’, 140–141; al-Rāzī (1986:105–110).
71. Al-Rāzī, Asds, 105–106.
72. Al-Rāzī, Asds, 141.
73. Wild, ‘We have sent down to Thee The Book With The Truth ...’, 151.
74. Al-Suyūṭī, al-Iṣba, i, 126; wrongly has al-Quṭb al- Rāzī instead of Quṭbaddīn al-Shīrāzī.
75. Q 6:93.
76. Al-Dāmaghānī, Qomūs, 453; al-Rāzī, Maṣṭūth, XIII, 67; al-Andalusī, al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ, i, 584.
77. Al-Dāmaghānī, Qomūs, 453.
78. Q 3:48; 16:103; 12:6, 21, 37; 2:251, 282; 53:5; 18:65.
79. Q 2:31.
80. Q 2:251.
him poetry’. In this verse, even though the dialogue between Allah and the prophet Muhammad is expressed by ‘teaching’, it implies the verb iznāl. Therefore, if we express this verse as ‘We did not descend poetry to him’ with the verb iznāl, the meaning is the same. Accordingly, it is obvious that the verbs anzala [to descend] and allama [to teach] are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. In this case, when Allah says he descended revelations to his prophets, he means that he taught them revelations. For example, the verb ‘inzāl in the verses ‘We have descended the verses explicitly’, ‘He descended the book [Qurʾān] to you’, ‘We descended the Torah that shows the right path’ and ‘We take an oath that We descended illuminating verses’ does not imply that Allah descends and transmits these holy scriptures and verses physically or tangibly but rather that he explains and teaches them.81

The Qurʾān discusses the revelation of the Bible, the Torah and the Qurʾān. In the verses ‘He revealed the book to you’ and ‘We revealed the Torah that shows the right path’, Allah explains that he sent the book directly. However, the Qurʾān, Torah and Bible were not sent in the form of a book; rather, they were collected into a book on the earth (Al-Cawzī 1987:79, 220–232). Even when these verses were revealed, the Qurʾān was not a book yet; it only had pages.82 Therefore, the statement ‘We revealed the book’ in the Qurʾān means ‘We taught or revealed you words, sentences, verses’. In other words, what the word ‘book’ in the Qurʾān implies is not a hardcover book but the message or letter of Allah.83 Sūra an-Naml, 28th verse is proof of this: the word ‘book’ in the verse ‘now take them my book, then leave them’ has been perceived as a letter, revelation and message by almost all translators and commentators.84 Thus, we come to the conclusion that we cannot speak of ‘the revelation of a complete book’.85 Verses such as ‘We have revealed the book’ do not imply hardcover books but rather the lines of a message, verse or revelation. This means that the Qurʾān did not physically descend from above to below as a complete book; rather, it was revealed to the prophet’s heart verse by verse from every direction. Twenty-three years of revelation of the Qurʾān supports this view.86

One of the metaphorical meanings of the verb ‘inzāl as used in the Qurʾān is ‘anba’a or nabba’a, which means to inform or to notify (Al-Isfahānī 2009:788). In the Qurʾān, one of the ways that Allah contacts humans is by informing them about events. In the Qurʾān, the verb anba’a or nabba’a rather than akhaba’ra is used in the meaning of informing. For example, the verb nabba’a is used in Sūrah Tahrim3th verse to express that Allah revealed knowledge to prophet Muhammad. As the Qurʾān tells the story, once his excellency prophet Muhammad told a secret to one of his wives, and when his wife disclosed this secret, Allah informed the prophet Muhammad about this. When his wife asked him who informed him about this situation, he replied, ‘All-knowing Allah informed me’.87 If we use the verb anzala instead of nabba’a and ‘anba’a in this verse, the overall meaning does not change, becoming ‘Who descended this knowledge to you?’ She asked, and the prophet replied, ‘All-knowing Allah has descended’. As indicated, ‘anba’a [to inform or declare or announce] and iznāl [to reveal] have the same meaning in the dialogue of Allah and humans. If the verb iznāl were used in its real meaning, and if a book or verses that include some messages were really descended from the sky, then it would not mean to inform. Because the verb ‘inform’ [anba’a] used frequently in Qurʾān means to reveal and inspire a message invisibly, not to inform something visibly or physically. As a result, the verb ‘inzāl means the information, declaration or announcement of the verses, messages, events and the whole book that was constituted from all of the above. Therefore, the verbs ‘awhā [to reveal], allama [to teach], anba’a [to announce or inform], alqā [to place, to lay], bayyana [to explain] and qāla [to say] have the same meaning as ‘inzāl [to reveal].88

One of the metaphorical meanings of the verb ‘inzāl in the Qurʾān is ‘awhā [to reveal]. In other words, if the verb awhāna [we revealed] is used in the Qurʾān instead of anzalaḥā [we descended], there is no change in the meaning. For example, take the following verses: ‘We revealed a Qurʾān in Arabic’; ‘This Qurʾān was revealed to me’; ‘Read the revelation from the book’; ‘I am subject to what my Lord reveals to me’; and ‘Be subject to the revelation of your Lord’.89 Thus, there will be no change in the meaning if we use ‘inzāl instead of awhā [to reveal] in these verses. For example, consider the first verse above, ‘We revealed a Qurʾān in Arabic’. If we were to express this verse as ‘We descended a Qurʾān in Arabic’, we see that the meaning remains the same and completely fits into the language of revelation, which indicates that the verbs ‘to descend’ and ‘to reveal’ are used synonymously in the Qurʾān.

The verb ‘inzāl [to descend] is synonymous with the verb ‘awhā [to reveal] as well as with the verbs ‘anba’a [to announce or inform], allama [to teach], qāla [to say] and alqā [to place]. We must specify that these verbs are grammatically different in that they have a common point only in terms of their meaning. For example, it is grammatically correct to say, ‘We revealed a Qurʾān in Arabic to you’, although with the verb ‘anba’a’, ‘We announced/informed you a Qurʾān in Arabic’ is not correct. According to the logic of the Qurʾān, anba’a [to announce] and ‘awhā [to reveal] have the same meaning, but their grammatical uses are different.90

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81 Al-Dāmaghānī, Qurʾān, 453; Q 2:99; 5:44; 24:46; al-Rāzī, Muṣfīḥī, 16, 634–655 (Q 2:99).
82 Al-Zarkashī, ʾāl-Burhān, I, 236–239; al-Hākim, al-Mustadrak, ‘Kāḥlāl al-Tāḥīr’, 227.
83 Fazlur Rahman, Major Themes of the Qurʾān, 94; ʿĀshūr (1997:i), 221; ʾĀzīr, ʿĀshūr, Vahiy ve Nüzul, 43–44; Itutsu (2008:11–12).
84 Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qurʾān, ‘al-Naml’, 28.
85 ʾĀzīr, ʿĀshūr, Vahiy ve Nüzul, 36–45.
86 Al-Suyūṭī, al-ʾĪṣāq, I, 268.
87 Al-Tabbarī (2001:XXIII, 91–93); al-Kathīr, ‘al-Naml’, 28.
88 Al-Dāmaghānī, Qurʾān, 454.
89 Q 42:7; 6:19; 7:203; 10:15; 33:2.
90 Abdūlbāqī, Muṣfīḥī, 686, 695, 746; Q 42:7; 6:19.
The language of the revelation verb is fixed, meaning that each word is used with the appropriate verb. For instance, if we consider the word ‘book’, it is used in the Qur’an mostly with the verbs ʿātā [to bring forth] and anzala -ʿinzal [to descend].

Moreover, it is used with ʿājza [to come], ʿallama [to declare, to teach], ʿawḥā [to reveal, to inspire], ʿalqā [to dispose, to give, to place] and ʿawrāsa [to bequeath].

To state it differently, while we continuously encounter fixed expressions in the Qur’an such as ‘We descended the book’, ‘We bequeathed the book’, ‘You are given a book’ (with the verb ʿalqā), ‘Read the revelations from the book’, and so on, we never see the word ‘book’ used with the verbs anbaʿa [to announce], ʿāṭa [to give], ʿawḥa [to grant] or qāla [to say].

For instance, although the verb anbaʿa means to inform or announce, nowhere is it used in the Qur’an with the word ‘book’ or ‘Qur’an’, and it is not stated as ‘We informed the book to you’. Similarly, although the verb ʿāṭa means ‘to give’ just like ʿātā-ʿītyān, the verb ʿāṭa is often used for ‘the revelation of the books to the prophets by Allah’, ʿāṭa is never used in the context of the revelation of books. Briefly, although some verbs are appropriate to be used in conjunction with the words ‘book’ and ‘verse’, others are not.

Here, we will profoundly analyse and address ʿinzal that is one of these appropriate verbs.

The origin of the verb ʿinzal is nazala’ in Arabic. It means to descend, to lower, to reside, to visit and to settle. The most important property of this verb is that it has several metaphorical meanings. For example, in the Hadith, mucālim means ‘to close’, and accordingly, murādubihīnuzūl al-raḥmatiwa al-alṭāfi al-ʾābāyāt, wa al-alṭāfi al-rāḥmatiwa al-murādubihīnuzūl al-raḥmatiwa al-alṭāfi al-ʾābāyāt, which means ‘Allah’s mercy and the compassion and the divine grace and their closeness to His servants ever since His servants every night’.

In addition, examining the derivatives of this verb such as anzala, istanzala, nunala and ʿinzal, we see that each has a metaphorical meaning in addition to its real meaning. For example, as we see in the expressions nazalaḥimakruhu [get in trouble], anzaluhājātii ṣalākarīm [I submitted or told my need to generous Allah], ṣalalahu an ʿimraaṭī [He gave up his wife, although he was allowed or had the right], ʿinzil liʾanḥāḥihī al-ʾābāyāt [leave or give me those verses], istanzalahu anraʾyīhī [he discouraged from him from his opinion and infused another opinion to him], anzala al-muʾāccāma [Man made love with a woman, slept with her], fulān min nuzlātii sīi [someone from a nasty family or lineage], and so on, the verbs and nouns that are derived from the verb nazala have many metaphorical meanings.

It is especially necessary to examine the metaphorical meanings of anzala among these words because it is a verb that is directly related to our subject. Therefore, let us consider the two examples above: anzaluhājātii ṣalākarīm [I submitted or told my need to generous Allah] and anzil liʾanḥāḥihī al-ʿābāyāt [Leave or give me those verses to me]. It seems that the verb anzala is completely detached from its actual meaning ‘to descend’. When Arabs want to inform someone about their needs, they use the first statement and say anzaluhājātii ṣalākarīm. That means, ‘I presented, submitted or told my need to that person’. In this expression, anzala figuratively means ‘to say, submit, present or inform’ rather than ‘to descend’.

When we look at the second example, we can again easily see that anzala has an additional meaning beyond its primary meaning. Arabs also use the second statement in daily life. When an Arabic person wants someone to leave or give something unexpectedly, he says, anzil liʾanḥāḥihī ashyāq: ‘Leave or give those things to me, even though they are yours’. In other words, ‘These things belong to you, you are their owner, but leave or give them to me’. As we see in this use, the verb anzala has the meaning of ‘to leave, give up or give’ instead of ‘to descend’.

As a result, the verb ʿinzal in the verses such as ‘the Qurʾān was descended in Ramadan’, ‘Allah transmitted the book to you as the confirmative of His own previous books’. He also ascended the Qurʾān in Arabic’ have completely a metaphorical meaning. In these verses, the expression anzalha [we descended] means yulqā [to be given, to be left] in the verse ‘you were not expecting that the book would be given to you’; ʿuḥiya [to be revealed] and anbāynā [to reveal] in the verses ‘This Qurʾān is revealed to me’ and ‘We revealed this Qurʾān to you’; ʿallama [to teach] in the verse ‘He taught to draw with a pencil’, and ʿuḥiya [to bring] in the verse ‘We gave you the Qurʾān’.

In addition to the above-mentioned examples, we could add, for example, ‘inquilaḥ [to announce] in the expression ‘We announced the day of Judgment’; ʿawrāsa [to bequeath] in the expression ‘We bequeathed the book’; ʿawḥa [to grant] in the expression ‘We gave you the Qurʾān’; and ʿattā [to give] in the expression ‘We gave the book to you’.
In addition to the revelations of books, the Qurʾān also mentions the revelations of verses, instructions and explanations, for example ‘We descended verses and explanations to you’, ‘We descended explicit verses in this Sūra’ and ‘We promise that we descended to you direct verses’. 103 The expression anzālān [we descended] included in these verses refers to the following meanings: arsalānā [to send] in the verse ‘We sent our messages to Moses’; ātānā [to give] in the verse ‘We gave them our verses’; muriyāhnā [to show] in the verse ‘To show some of our verses to him …’; ‘to say, to tell’ in the verse ‘We said that hit the stone with your crook’; yubaygīnū [to explain] in the verse ‘Therefore, explains Allah His verses’; nabkā ānū [to declare] in the verse ‘I am informed by Allah who knows everything’; and natlū [to read or teach or explain] in the verse ‘These are the verses of Allah, we read them to you as the truth.’ 104 In short, while the descent [ʾinzāl] of the Holy Books implies ‘to leave, place, convey’ [ʿaqāla]; ‘to reveal’ [ʿawhā]; (al-Askari 2007:491–492); ‘to teach’ [ʿalammā]; and ‘to give’ [ʿādā]; the declaration of the verses and explanations [bayyinātā] implies ‘to send’ [arsalān], ‘to give’ [ʿāna], ‘to show’ [ʿārā], ‘to say’ [qiāla], ‘to explain’ [bayyana], ‘to elaborate’ [fassala], ‘to transmit-to declare’ [aqraʿa], ‘to read or explain’ [talā] and so on. 105 As a result, it is clear that the verb ʾinzāl used in the Qurʾān does not indicate the descent of the Qurʾān as a physical object from above down to the earth, although it does imply the transfer, revelation and declaration of it to the prophet by Allah in various ways.

Moreover, there is no such obligation for Allah to descend his revelation from the heavens to the earth. As Allah is everywhere, he can send revelations to humans from every part of the world, or he can teach them and talk to them secretly. In other words, dialogue between Allah and humans does not have to be in a vertical direction. In this case, there is a high possibility of Allah speaking with human kind by coming to the same level of humans. However, he might not appear to humans directly, but might show his part of own spirit that is Gabriel. 106 Therefore, the exchange of revelations and the dialogue between Allah and human occurred on the earth. In other words, the verses emerged as a result of the dialogue between two sides.

However, having believed the physical descent of the Qurʾān, Stefan Wild said that perfectly straightforward words used in the Qurʾān (like ʾinzāl, God’s deeds and descriptions) which did not pose a problem to the primary audience (sahāba) of the Qurʾānic message, for hundreds of years later, caused disagreement and disunity between theologians. They always have recourse to metaphor in the solution of this kind of questions. The question of haqiqa and majāz, truth and metaphor, was one of the factors which decisively shaped Muslim exegesis. 107 Metaphor was one way of reconciling Muslim scholarship and Islamic belief. The Qurʾānic text leaves no doubt about God’s being in Heaven and sending down his message. Many theologians, for reasons of their own, could not accept the spatiality of ʾinzāl and tanzīl. 108 One of the representatives of the hermeneutical approaches to Qurʾān, Mustafa Öztürk also suggested that the descent of the Qurʾān is precisely physical and not metaphorical. For him, when the historical and social context in which the Qurʾān was sent down is taken into account, it is clearly understood that certain theological questions, such as belief in Allah’s freeing from space, metaphorical descent of Qurʾān and other meanings assigned to istiwa and al-ʿarsh, appeared in later centuries. According to him in the tradition of Arab community of that time, because Allah and angels are perceived as heavenly beings, it is indirectly expressed in the Qurʾān that revelations are sent down from heavens. On the other hand, deeds and descriptions of Allah (Sīfāt al-Allāh), such as seeing, hearing, talking through revelation, arriving, going, resting, and so on, have been expounded and interpreted merely with the intent of indicating that ‘God is exalted above all things and could not resemble humans in any respect’. 109 This is called as ‘the method of abstraction of God al-tanzīh in the tradition of Muslim theology’ (Götz 1999:193–214).

But Quṭbaddīn al-Rāzī, Zurkānī and Ibn al-ʿArabī have defended that the descent of the Qurʾān is figurative. According to Quṭbaddīn al-Rāzī, as Allah is free from space and the Qurʾān is together with Allah, 110 it is inappropriate to ascribe to ʾinzāl and tanzīl the meaning of ‘to send down’. Because in the dictionary, 111 the verb ʾinzāl [to send down] refers to the meanings ‘lodging, hosting’ and ‘to move something down’; nevertheless, when this verb is used for speech, talk or oral conversation both meanings turn into the meaningless. That is why, the usage of ʾinzāl for the abstract things such as speech, talk and saying is completely metaphorical (cf. Al-Suyūṭī 2002:I, 138).

For AbūBaqr Ibn al-ʿArabī, the phrase of ‘descent of Qurʾān’ is figurative. But his attributing the phrase to metaphor is slightly different. Frankly, the meaning of ʾinzāl signifies that the angel [Gabriel] grasps and comprehends the revelation in the divine place and sends it down. That is a kind of metaphor transmitting what is tangible and sensible down into the mind. 112 In the recent period, Zurkānī also tends to ascribe the phrase ‘the descent of Qurʾān’ to metaphor. The descent of the Qurʾān cannot be perceived as the descent of water or any object. Because, if it was perceived so, the revelation would have been in physical place as an object. However, the

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103 G 2:99, 24:1, 34.
104 Al-Jawzī (1987:128); Q 11:96; 15:81; 17:1; 20:23; 2:60, 187, 221, 242, 252, 266; 3:101; 5:89; 6:48, 55, 97, 98; 66:3; 7:5.
105 Al-Hīrī (1984:536); al-Dāmaghānī, Qāmūs, 453–454.
106 Al-Dāmaghānī, Qāmūs, 453–454.
107 Al-Dīmāghānī, Qāmūs, 453–454.
108 Q 81:19–21; 16:102; 26:193; 17:85; 19:17.
109 Wild, ‘We have sent down to Thee The Book With The Truth ...’, 151.
110 Öztürk, Kurʾān, Vahiy ve Nüzul, 165–171.
111 The Qurʾān was inspired from within al-Laww al-Maḥfūz/Kitāb Maknūn (the Knowledge of Allah) and al-Laww al-Maḥfūz is everywhere with Allah (Q 56:78; 85:21).
112 Ibn Manṣūr, op.cit., XI, 656–658, al-Asharī, op.cit., XIII, 210; al-Rāghīb al-Ifshāhī, op.cit., 788.
113 Abū Baqr Muhammad b. al-ʿArabī (1998:iv, 426).
revelation of the Qurʾān is not an object and could not reside in a specific place or occupy a certain space as well as not descending physically.

Particularly, when we accept that the Qurʾān is Allah’s primordial and eternal speech (al-Kā'im al-Quṣūm), it is never possible to assign to ʾinzāl the meaning of ‘coming down’. Therefore, it is necessary to employ metaphor and resort to it ( ʿAbdulazīm 1988:i, 41–42). Similarly, commenting on the first verse of sūrah of Nūr, Fakhraddīn al-Rāzī determined the following results: If one is asked that: ‘As far as the verb of ʾinzāl means sending something down from above, could not this verb indicate that Allah locates in a certain space?’ You can answer the question in three ways: (1) Gabriel received revelations from guarded tablets and memorised them, and then transmitted them to the prophet. So it is likely that the phrase ‘the descend of Qurʾān’ is metaphor. (2) Allah sent the revelation down to the first heaven and then gradually down to earth via Gabriel. (3) The verb ʾinzāl might be ascribed to the meaning ‘giving, granting’. This usage and meaning of the verb resemble a slave’s statement ‘I offered my need to my master’ while speaking with his master; in that situation, master’s giving something as a grant and favour to his slave is called ʾinzāl (cf. Al-Rāzī 2004:113).

Finally, it should be noted that the prophet did not receive the revelation from any direction. He received it within himself from his heart. Allah revealed to his heart and placed the revelation there, and the prophet enunciated those revelations in his heart.114 What is meant by the revelation is the inspiration of the verses into the heart of prophets or transmission of the spirit (message) of Allah. This inspiration and message (spirit) is metaphorically expressed as ʾinzāl within the Arabic language. A modern intellectual explains: ‘ʾinzāl is the process of changing a matter existing outside the human mind from something unperceived to something perceived’,115 and he seems to suppose that his terminology is less metaphorical than the language of the Qurʾān.

Conclusion
To conclude, if we accept that the Qurʾān was physically sent to a star in the sky and then to the earth, this would contradict verses in the Qurʾān, the belief of Islam, Arabic language and logic, creating many dilemmas. If the freedom of Allah from the limits of space is the indispen sable characteristic of his divinity, thinking that Allah sent a book only from a certain place in space is a restraining situation. If we consider that Allah is all-seeing, all-hearing and all-able and is an unlimited being in terms of time and space, it becomes obvious that he did not choose any direction to inform humans. There is no importance of the directions for Allah because he is free from space. In view of the fact that earth is in a vacuum in the middle of space where there is no direction, it seems very odd to use the verb descent [ʾinzāl]. In addition to ʾinzāl, any verb that indicates location or direction, such as ‘down’, ‘top’, ‘turn right’, ‘turn left’, is not logical to use for space.

Even if we put the logic part of ʾinzāl aside and consider the verses in the Qurʾān, we find indicators that support the opinion that Allah did not send verses from space. Although Allah who is closer to humans than their jugular vein (Q 50:16) and always with them (Q 16:28) has the opportunity to choose to inspire his knowledge directly into the heart of the prophet, it does not seem logical to think that Allah goes up in the sky and sends revelations from space.

However, the communication between Allah and humans is based on different ways of speech, just as humans’ ways of communication include teaching, informing, declaring and exchange. ʾinzāl is one of these ways of communication and speech. It is often used by the Qurʾān only because it refers to all of them briefly and metaphorically, not because the Qurʾān really implies a physical descent from the sky like an object.

Consequently, the revelation of the Qurʾān (ʾinzāl) does not imply its descent to the prophet from the sky but refers to its inspiration and declaration to him. However, as the first meaning of ʾinzāl is to bring something down from above, this created the perception that the Qurʾān was sent from above down to the earth. In fact, the reason that the Qurʾān uses this word is not to prove that it descended from the sky but rather to show the richness of the language of revelation by using metaphors in Arabic.

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I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

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