

Lesson 12: Al-Qur'ān :The Miracle of Islam

1. Prophets & Miracles

The prophets and messengers of God are given miracles to prove the truth of their claim. However, not all prophets were given the same miracle. Prophet Musa was given the staff which could turn into a serpent; Prophet 'Isa was given the ability to cure the blind and the leper, and to bring the dead back to life.

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was given the Qur'ān as a miracle. The difference between all other miracles and the miracle of the Qur'ān is that the other miracles were for those who witnessed them or they ended with the death of the prophets. For us they are news which may be believed or suspected according to the trend of mind of the hearer. But the Qur'ān is in our hands, a book complete in itself; it claims and brings the proof within itself. And its miracles are being unfolded every day. As long as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, the Qur'ān will remain as the final miracle of God.

2. Al-Qur'ān : the Everlasting Miracle

The Qur'ān is a multi-dimensional miracle: it is a miracle of Arabic language and style; it is a miracle of prophecies; it is a miracle of scientific revelations; it is a miracle of the best code of life. Not only a miracle, it is a miracle-performer: it caused the transformation of an extremely ignorant and unlettered people into the guardians of knowledge and learning. This has also been realized by non-Muslim scholars.

Hartwing Hirschfeld writes, "We must not be surprised to find the Qur'ān the fountainhead of science. Every subject connected with heaven or earth, human life, commerce and various trades is occasionally touched upon, and this gave rise to the production of numerous monographs forming commentaries on parts of the Holy Book. In this way, the Qur'ān was responsible for great discussions, and to it was indirectly due the marvelous development of all branches of science in the Muslim world...This again not only affected the Arabs but also induced Jewish philosophers to treat metaphysical and religious

questions after the Arabs' methods. Finally, the way in which Christian scholasticism was fertilised by Arabian theosophy need not be further discussed...In the same manner, the Qur'¹ gave an impetus to medical studies and recommended the contemplation and study of nature in general."¹

Such contributions are quite apart from the religious subjects which were initiated because of the Qur'¹: the development of literature, the codification of grammar and other related subjects which were founded because of the Qur'¹. In fact, all Islamic subjects, all subjects connected with Arabic literature and all subjects related to philosophy and theology came to the Arabs through the Qur'¹.

Below, we shall study some of the miraculous aspects of the Qur'¹.

(A) The Eloquence Of The Qur'¹

The language of the Qur'¹ is of such high standard that nobody could meet its challenge. Arabs of the time of the Prophet were proud of their language since it was a very rich and sophisticated one. Poets and eloquent speakers were almost idols of their tribes. Poems were learned and read on every occasion, and yearly competitions were held for the best pieces of poetry in a place called Suq Ukadh. Thus language and literature was the best art the Arabs had mastered very well.

The Qur'¹ came and its miracle, to the Arabs' surprise, was its language and style. The Qur'¹ was the challenge; God asked them to produce a similar Qur'¹:

“Say: If the whole of mankind and jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'¹, they could not produce the like of it, even if they helped each other.” (17:89)

Then the challenge was reduced to ten chapters (surahs), to show them their weakness:

“Do they say that `He has forged it'? Say: Then you bring ten surahs like it, forged and call (to your aid) whomsoever you can --other than God-- if you speak the truth.” (11:14)

Again the Arabs could not answer the challenge of the Qur'¹. The challenge was then reduced to one surah only. One surah may be only one line. Still the proud eloquent Arabs could not face the challenge:

“Do they say `He forged it'? Say: Then bring one surah like it and call to your aid anyone you can --other than God-- if you speak the truth.” (10:39)

You can see the logical reasoning and rational approach to convince the Arabs of its miraculous quality. A surah may be only one line but the Arabs (and non-Arabs too) could not succeed in their attempts to meet the standing challenge.

The beauty of the Qur'¹, the strength of its conviction, its logic and simplicity, and its depth and wisdom was far above what the Arabs or non-Arabs know or conceive. When the Qur'¹ was read, the idolaters

used to close their ears; some used to make noise, whistling and chanting, so that they may not hear the Qur'^ʿān and be 'bewitched'. The non-believers could not give any reasonable explanation to this irresistible beauty and power of the Qur'^ʿān. However, they had to find some excuse to put people off and to justify their opposition. They invented lies and said, 'The Qur'^ʿān is nothing but poetry or magic.' God refuted their statement: "Therefore proclaim you the praises of your Lord, for by the grace of your Lord you are no soothsayer, nor are you one possessed."

The Arabs waged war after war to silence the Prophet of Islam. But the easiest way would have been to produce a short surah (like al-Kawthar) of equal standard and the claim of the Prophet would have been refuted. No sane person would use a sword when a few words could serve his purpose in a more effective way. But the Arabs preferred war and it proves that they found the Qur'^ʿān unanswerable.

To discover the Qur'^ʿān's eloquence, non-Arab speakers can turn to the sayings of those Arabs who were experts in the language of those days and which are recorded in history, and also to the present day authors who write on this subject. From the days of the Prophet till now, all specialists in the art of Arabic eloquence have confessed to the unparalleled eloquence of the Qur'^ʿān and have been overwhelmed in the face of it. For example, the famous contemporary writer 'Abdul Fatt^ḥ Tabari writes, "Arab history tells us of many famous men, knowledgeable in the best poetry and prose, like Ibn al-Muqaffa, Jahiz, Ibn 'Amid, Farazdaq, Bashshar, Abu Nuwas, Abu Tammam and so forth, but all of them have shown humility when faced with the Qur'^ʿān, and have of necessity confessed that the great Qur'^ʿān is not the word of man, but a Divine revelation."

Dr. Taha Husayn, the famous contemporary Egyptian writer, said, "The Qur'^ʿān transcends the limits of prose and poetry, because it has special qualities which cannot be found in any poem or prose. So the Qur'^ʿān cannot be called poetry or prose, rather it should be said, 'It is the Qur'^ʿān, that is all.'"

(B) Harmonisation of its Themes

The Qur'^ʿān is a book which covers many subjects and events. The discussions of its topics are not separated as is the case with normal books. It discusses many topics in one page at times, but without losing purpose and without going away from the main aim. Considering the range of the topics the Qur'^ʿān comments on, the repetition of some stories, the non-classification of the topics, it is hard to find such a book without contradictions and errors.

By human standard, practically no book --of any subject-- is without errors and mistakes. But here is a book which was not written at one time. It is a collection of piece-meal revelations, covering a span of about twenty three years. Can any scholar believe that any human being, unlettered, will remember every single word which he had uttered during the previous twenty three years? It is impossible and hence the chances of contradictions. But the Qur'^ʿān has no contradiction; and, according to that test, it is the word of God.

Moreover, if someone reaches a stage of mastery over a special subject, he may display brilliance in that subject; but if he undertakes something on a subject of which he is not a master, he will not be able to produce any distinctive work. Although the Qur'^{an} contains many different subjects, it has succeeded in retaining consistent style and unity of expression.

(C) Scientific Revelations

Now, a non-Arab may rightly wonder about the claim of literary miracle. He does not know Arabic, so the miraculous aspect of language might not be appealing to him at all, or even, to some extent, to the illiterate Arabs of our days whose colloquial language is a far deviation from the classical style of the Qur'^{an}.

In modern days, we need a miracle in science, telling us what is in the heavens and within ourselves. The Qur'^{an}, although not a scientific text, reveals many secrets and wonders of the heavens and of ourselves as part of its call to believe in the Creator of the universe.

The Moon & The Sun:

The Qur'^{an} says: ***Do not you see how God created seven heavens in harmony; and made the moon a light therein, and the sun a lamp? (75:16-17)*** The moon is a solid object which reflects light, hence it is a 'light'. But the sun is a source of energy and light, so it is described as a 'lamp'.

The sun is not static but moving in a path exactly computed. The Qur'^{an} declared these facts 1400 years ago: ***And the sun is moving on the course determined for it. That is the decree of the Almighty, the All-Knowing; and the moon, We have determined for it mansions (to traverse) till it becomes like the old (and withered) lower part of a date-stalk; the sun is not allowed to catch up with the moon, nor can the night outstay the day. Each swims along in (its own) orbit. (36:39-41)***

Exploring The Space:

The Qur'^{an} says: ***O Company of jinn and men, if you have the power to penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them); you will not penetrate them except with a power. (55:34)*** This verse comes with undoubted encouragement to explore and travel through outer space.

Here one should pause and think of the society in which the Prophet of Islam lived. The means of transportation were camels, horses and donkeys. The people lived in tents and worshipped idols. They had not even dreamt of a car or an aeroplane or even a machine of any kind. How does the Qur'^{an} put such a high idea to encourage people not only to fly but to travel to other planets and heavens? In materialistic thinking, such a task is impossible because they claim that human thoughts are reflections of his material environment. Then the only solution in this case is to believe that the Qur'^{an} is not a product of the human mind, but is a revelation from God. No human being could definitely put forth such

an idea even if he were the greatest astronomer or scientist.

Pharaoh's Body:

People in our times are proud of their knowledge and the Qur'^{an} baffles them even now. There are so many examples of verses which remained a puzzle for commentators until the discoveries of recent times made their meaning clear. Here is one example:

Speaking about the drowning of Pharaoh, the Qur'^{an} says: ***And We brought the children of Israel across the sea; and Pharaoh and his horse persuade them wrongfully and aggressively; till, when the calamity of drowning overtook him, he said, 'I believe that there is no God but He in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit to Him.' What! Now! While you were disobedient before this and were of those who create disorder (in society). So this day We will save you in body only, so that you may be a sign to those who come after you. (10:91-93)***

These verses clearly say that Pharaoh's body was recovered and it became a sign of warning to later generations. But this thing is not mentioned in the Bible. Still the Qur'^{an} claimed that the body of Pharaoh was recovered; and 1300 years after this revelation, excavations have brought into light that body which was mummified and preserved for future generations, and even after these long centuries his face and body clearly show the effect of drowning.

If the Qur'^{an} was the work of a man, how did he know of this fact which was not known even to the Jews and the Egyptians of that time?

* * *

In the end, it is necessary to remind the Muslims that if they get to know the Qur'^{an}, or get to know it better and put its great, magnificent and precise project into action, greatness will be theirs, and more.

The huge edifice of the greatness of Muslims collapsed when they stopped putting the commands of this heavenly book into practice. So they fell down, they were satisfied only with the name of Islam.

Our departed greatness will return when we leave this crooked way and, starting again, become true Muslims and put the Qur'^{an} at the top of the sights of our hearts and our wisdom, and make it an example for life, as the Prophet said, "When calamities encompass you like the darkness of the night, reach for the Qur'^{an}."

* * *

This lesson has been adapted from S. Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi, *The Qur'^{an} & Hadith* (1971) Dar-es-salaam, Tanzania with few passages added from Dar Rah-e Haq, *The Roots of Religion*.

Question Paper on Lesson 12

Question 1: [16 points]

Fill in the blanks from the pool of words given below by simply placing the number of the correct word in the blank space.

The Qurʾān is a _____ miracle. Its beauty, _____ style, simplistic _____ and _____ appeal is, on one hand, impossible to reproduce; and, on the other hand, it penetrates the heart of a person who _____ seeks knowledge and _____.

The Qurʾān has only one single purpose and that is to _____ mankind to the path of God. In this contest, it discusses various subjects such as chemistry, _____, biology, _____, environmental and social sciences, etc. But with a single consistent objective throughout and that is to _____ human intellect to the level where he can understand the purpose of his _____ and willingly _____ to the will of God.

Thus some of the miraculous aspects of the Qurʾān are its unique style, its _____ and consistency of purpose and _____ of scientific facts that the modern science can only _____ as it progresses with time.

1. creation
2. unity
3. group dynamics
4. logic
5. guide
6. verify
7. multi-dimensional
8. consistent
9. guidance
10. eloquent
11. sincerely
12. submit
13. linguistic
14. elevate

15. astro-physics

16. revelation

Question 2: [20 points]

True or False:

- (a) The Prophets were given miracles to give them power and overcome opposition.
- (b) Prophet `Isa was given a stick which turned into a huge snake.
- (c) Some miracles of other prophets exist even today.
- (d) The Qur`ān was revealed piecemeal over a period of 21 years.
- (e) Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was given the Qur`ān as a miracle.
- (f) The Qur`ān is the creator of Arabic grammar.
- (g) `Abdul Fattḥ Tabari, the famous Arab scholar, wrote “The Qur`ān transcends the limits of prose and poetry.”
- (h) The Qur`ān's main miraculous feature is its strength of conviction and unity of purpose.
- (i) The Qur`ān contains statements that modern science, despite its great advancement, is neither able to verify nor deny.
- (j) The Qur`ān's challenge to mankind to produce just one chapter like its own remains unfulfilled even today.

Question 3: [4 points]

What was the final challenge of the Qur`ān to the Arabs?

Question 4: [10 points]

Describe at least three miraculous aspects of the holy Qur`ān.

For 5 Bonus Points: Give an example of a scientific fact which the Qur`ān stated 14 centuries ago which was later verified by modern science.

1. New Researches into the Composition & Exegesis of the Qur`ān [London, 1902] p. 9

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islam-faith-practice-history-sayyid-muhammad-rizvi/lesson-12-al-qur%C4%81n-miracle-islam#comment-0>