

Lesson 4: A Myth Called Distortion of the Qur'an

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Introduction

The Qur'an is the last divine revelation to man and the most complete of all. It is the only divine Book that since its revelation has never been distorted or perverted. The Qur'an that is available to us today is exactly the same as the one revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) fourteen hundred years ago. This is one of the basic facts in Islam.

Nonetheless, the Wahhabis and their blind followers have been accusing the Shi'a of having the belief that the Qur'an has been distorted. They claim that the Qur'an of the Shi'a is different from the present Qur'an.

The Shi'a scholars, on the other hand, have always denied this accusation. They have compiled many literatures proving the un-distortion of the Qur'an. In spite of that the Wahhabis reluctantly claim: "The Shi'a by the practice of Taqiyya (protection) pretend to believe in the same Qur'an, but in their hearts they don't believe in the same Qur'an!"

The science of the 'un-distortion of the Qur'an' aims at responding to two groups of people; 1) The non-Muslims who claim that the Qur'an may be distorted. 2) Some Muslim groups such as Wahhabis and their blind followers who accuse the Shi'a for believing in a different Qur'an.

In this lesson we deal with the proofs for the impossibility of the distortion of the Qur'an as a response to the first group and in the next lesson the claim of the Wahhabis will be analysed. ***"Verily, therein is indeed a reminder for him who has a heart or gives ear while he is heedful."* (50:37)**

Types of Distortion

The distortion of the Qur'an may be either verbally or conceptually. The distortion of the concept of the Qur'an may be also the distortion of the meaning of a term or distortion of the application of an Ayah. The first is like distorting the meaning of 'Wali' which means 'tho one who has the authority over someone else' to another meaning such as 'friend'. Distorting the application of the Ayah is such as the unsuccessful attempts of Mo'wiyah who employed Samora ibn Jondab to forge a Hadith that the ***Ayah "And of mankind there is he who would sell himself, seeking the Pleasure of Allah." (2:207)*** is revealed concerning Ibn Moljam who had murdered Imam Ali (a.s)!

The verbal distortion of the Qur'an may be either by adding some words, an Ayah or surah to the Qur'an, or omitting some of the Qur'an or changing a word or an Ayah to another.

Conceptual distortion of the application

1. Distortion by adding
2. Verbal by omitting
3. by changing

Undoubtedly the concept and the meanings of the Qur'an have been distorted. Many people have interpreted the Qur'an according to their whim and desire. Nonetheless, as this type of distortion does not change the actual text of the Qur'an it cannot mislead all people and hence does not affect the guidance nature of the Qur'an.

As for the verbal distortion of the Qur'an all Muslims are unanimous that no words are added to the Qur'an. Thus, the verbal distortion of the Qur'an by adding did not even occur. The Ayaat of the Qur'an are like shining stars in a dark night. If the Qur'an is mixed with any other Arabic text, the utmost eloquence of the Qur'an will stand out as it is well above any other human literature that its Ayaat will be easily distinguished.

The argument is about whether any Word, Ayah or Surah of the Qur'an is omitted or changed?

Absolute majority of the Muslim scholars whether Shi'a or Sunni denote the distortion of the omitting of the Qur'an as well. Although there are some narrations both from the Shi'a and the Sunni books that suggest that parts of the original Qur'an is omitted!

The analysis of those narrations is the theme of the next lesson. Here we shall mention the most important reasons for the un-distortion of the Qur'an.

The Proofs of the un-distortion of the Qur'an

1. God has promised to safeguard it

The Almighty Allah has promised that as He has sent down the Qur'an so is He protecting it. With three emphasis the Almighty states: ***"Verily, it is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur'an) and surely We will guard it (from corruption)."*** (15:9)

Similarly, in Surah Fussilat He states: ***"And verily, it (the Qur'an) is an honourable well-fortified respected Book. Falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind it. (it is) sent down by the All-Wise, Worthy of all praise (Allah)."*** (41:41-42)

The expression of 'falsehood cannot come to it from before it or behind it' means it is protected against any corruption in all aspects. This would surely include the protection of the Qur'an from being omitted.

Q. Is the proof of un-distortion of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself not a vicious circle? For if it is then the above Ayaat are distorted!

A. The above argument is not a vicious circle. The reason being apart from the fact that there is a consensus that nothing is added to the Qur'an, the Qur'an in various occasions has called the jinn and the mankind to the challenge of producing something like unto the Qur'an even as short as the smallest Surah of the Qur'an (Surah 108). Man's failure in that challenge proves that nothing is added to the Qur'an. Thus, the above Ayaat are surely part of the Qur'an.

2. Authentic Narrations

The Prophet of Islam (S) and the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) in many authentic narrations have referred Muslims to the Qur'an in the matters of confusion.

Hadith of Thaqalayn narrated by numerous Sunni and Shi'a narrators is the first example of Prophetic strong recommendation to the Qur'an.

The Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s) have instructed their followers to examine the authenticity of a narration by examining if it contradicts the Qur'an or not. It is quoted from Imam Sadiq (a.s): "Any Hadith that is in accordance with the Book of Allah then take it and what is contrary to the Book of Allah then reject it." It is also narrated from imam Sadiq (a.s): "Any Hadith that is not in accordance with the Book of Allah is absurd."

Had the Qur'an been distorted they would have not referred their followers to the Qur'an as the standard of the truth.

3. Rational proof

Islam is the last religion and the Qur'an is the final divine guidance for mankind. Had this Book be similar to the previous Scriptures been distorted, the divine purpose of man's guidance would have not been fulfilled. Thus, the Qur'an must be protected against any distortion.

4. The history of Qur'an and its extra protection

In the previous lesson we learnt that according to majority of the Shi'a scholars the Qur'an was collected and compiled prior to the demise of the Prophet (S) under divine confinement.

Moreover, the following are some examples of the extra care of the Muslims for the protection of the Qur'an:

4/1: From the advent of Islam to this date many Muslims knew the Qur'an by heart. Today hundreds of thousands of Muslims across the globe know the Qur'an by heart. (Protection of the Qur'an in their hearts).

4/2: After the demise of the Prophet (S) Muslims were so responsive for the protection of the Qur'an that during the reign of the third Caliph they did not even allow different accents of the Qur'an to occur.

4/3: The style of the hand writing of the Qur'an sometimes is different from the standard Arabic writing. Yet, its unique style has been always preserved. For instance, twice in the Qur'an the ' Noon of Light Emphasis' is written with 'Alef': 1) **"*Lanasfa'an BeNnasiya*" (96: 15)**, 2) **"*Wa Leyakoonan Mena-Sagherin*" (12:32)**.

Also, the non-Arabic nouns in the Qur'an– different to the standard Arabic style– are written without any Alef. Thus, Ibrahim, Esmā'il, Eshaq, Haroun, are all written in the Qur'an without the middle Alef.

The difference between the Qur'anic styles of writing with the standard Arabic is counted up to 7000 differences.

Most of the scholars of the sciences of the Qur'an agree that the writing style of the Qur'an is also by divine confinement. Thus, changing of it with the excuse of converting it to the modern Arabic – as it happens on the Bible– is not permissible.

The Qur'an in Surah 18 Ayah 77 in the story of Moses and Khidr mentions that "they came to the people of a town, they asked for food, but they refused (Arabic=ABOU) to entertain them." That town was 'Antioch' (Antakya) in today's Turkey. With the spread of Islam people of that town who have converted to Islam endeavoured to change the term 'ABOU' in the Ayah under consideration to 'ATOU' (meaning they gave) but obviously to no avail.

4/4: The grammar of the Qur'an sometimes does not comply with the normal Arabic grammar.

Nevertheless, Muslims never changed any Words of the Qur'an for the excuse of 'grammatical correction'. Instead, they invented or expanded the grammatical rules in accordance with the Qur'an.

For instance, the Arabic term 'al-Saabe'oun' in Ayah 69 of the Surah 5 is mentioned with 'Waw' whereas the same term in a similar Ayah (2:62) is mentioned with 'Ya'. In the standard Arabic it is supposed to be 'al-Saabe'en' to be the noun for 'Enna' as it is in Ayah 62 of Surah 2. Muslim scholars have however come up with some grammatical justification.

5. Miracles of the Qur'an

There are different aspects to the miracles of the Qur'an that we shall deal with them in the future. Surely, the first aspect of the miracle of the Qur'an is its eloquence.

The miraculous eloquence of the Qur'an is in such way that adding to or omitting any word from it would disturb its eloquence.

The Qur'an is like a symphony that changing a single note would disturb the harmony of the entire composition. The Ayaat of the Qur'an have their own measure changing an Ayah, adding or omitting it would destroy its measure.

The Qur'an is the written Book of Creation. In the nature everything is perfect in its due place as they are created with measure (55:7). If Earth was further from the sun the carbon dioxide would begin to accumulate in the atmosphere. If it were closer, on the other hand, CO2 levels would fall. The same 'measure' is found in the Qur'an as well.

6. Unique methods of the Qur'an for its protection

6/1: The structure of the Qur'an is different from any other book. The division of the Ayaat and the Surahs, the variation of the subjects are all unique. Very often the Qur'an opens a subject to deal with, yet before finishing it goes to another subject and then again comes back to the previous subject. For instance, Ayah 121 of Surah 3 opens the topic of the Battle of Uhud. The story continues to the Ayah 128. Then from Ayah 129 to 138 the topic of usury is discussed and then again from Ayah 139 goes back to the story of the Battle of Uhud! The same phenomenon is sometimes observed even within an Ayah such as Ayah 33 Surah 33.

6/2: The Surahs that are revealed to the Prophet (S) In Mecca especially during the first few years after the advent of Islam are usually short and much rhymed. This would make the memorisation of the Qur'an for the early Muslims who for the first time experience the Words of God much easier.

6/3: the gradual revelation of the Qur'an as discussed in the 2nd lesson coupled in many instances with the occasions under which the Ayaat were revealed would make it easier for the Muslims to memorise and remember the Ayaat of the Qur'an.

6/4: General rules: another unique style of the Qur'an– contrary to the Bible is that the Qur'an does not normally deal with the details of a story. For instance, the Qur'an in many instances has praised or reproached certain people for their deeds. Yet, it hardly ever specifies their names except in a few instances such as concerning Abu-Lahab and his wife (Surah 111) who enmity to Islam was well known, or in the story of Zaid and Zaynab (Surah 33) for the purpose of protecting the fame of the Messenger of God.

For example, Ayah 33 of Surah 33 and Ayah 61 of Surah 3 are about the Prophet (S), Imam Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain (peace be on them). Also Ayah 55 of Surah 5 is revealed praising the generous donation of Imam Ali (a.s) and introducing him as the leader (Wali). On the other hand, Surah 63 is revealed with reference to the chief of the hypocrites of Medina; i.e. Abdullah ibn Obay. Yet, none of these names are mentioned in the Qur'an. We only know about them from the numerous Hadith narrated by the Shi'a and the Sunni narrators from the Prophet (S).

Surely, should those names were explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, their foes (when people were praised) or friends (when people were reproached) would have deleted the names.

Abu-Basir in an authentic Hadith asked Imam Sadiq (a.s) concerning 'those of you who are in authority' in Surah 4: ***"O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those of you who are in authority."***(4:59) The Imam replied: "It is meant for Imam Ali, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (peace be on them)." Abu-Basir said: People ask as why the name of Ali and Ahulu-Bayt of the Prophet (S) is not mentioned in the Qur'an?

The Imam replied: "Tell them: Daily Prayers was prescribed to the Prophet (S), yet Allah did not mention the numbers of its Units, for He left it to His Messenger to explain it. Similarly, Allah prescribed Zakat, yet He did not mention to pay one silver for 40 Methqal of silver. He prescribed Hajj yet did not mention that the Tawaaf is seven times therefore He left the explanation of all of these to His Messenger."

7. Quoting the Qur'an

Another way to find out the Qur'an is not distorted is the fact that in numerous Hadith that are narrated for us today, the Imams (a.s) quote an Ayah of the Qur'an or interpret an Ayah. There has never been an authentic Hadith that an Ayah is quoted in it which does not exist in the present Qur'an or is different from the present Qur'an.

8. Numerous Narrations

Another proof for the un-distortion of the Qur'an is the fact that the contents of the Qur'an as it is have been narrated by numerous people from generation to generation.

9. One Qur'an, many schools!

Finally the last but not the least way to prove the un-distortion of the Qur'an is that despite many sectarianism that has occurred in Islam, all Muslims irrespective of the sect they belong to adhere to exactly the same Qur'an. Whereas the Old Testament of Christians is not the same as that of the Jewish people, neither the Bible of different Christian sects are the same.

Assignment

Is the proof of un-distortion of the Quran by the Quran itself not a vicious circle? For it is could be that the above Ayaat are distorted!

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