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Lesson Twelve: Let Us Know the Qur'an Better

The means for establishing the messengerhood of the Prophet of Islam are those we have already expounded. The conditions and clear signs which must exist in every bearer of a heavenly message must be shown to exist also in the Prophet of Islam.

Prophethood and messengerhood are closely and inseparably linked to the miracle that proves the relationship of the claimant to prophethood with the supra-natural realm; the miracle is the clearest and most objective evidence that disarms those who would illogically deny prophethood, for it demonstrates that the claim of the Prophet is founded on a reality.

All the Prophets had but a single aim in fulfilling their Divine missions; their teachings are all of a similar type, notwithstanding the peculiarities of the mission of each, and the truths they expounded concerning the supra-natural realm differ only with respect to the degree of detail. It is true that there are differences with regard to acts of worship and social dealings; a common principle is implemented in differing ways that take into consideration the specific characteristics of each age and represent an evolutionary process.

It appears that one of the reasons for the variation in miracles is that in the times of earlier Prophets, people were inclined to believe only on the basis of material observations of visible objects that lacked any spiritual content. The fetters imposed on human thought by the seers and sages of those times caused people's attention to be limited to a particular realm, which, in turn, was the most significant factor in separating them from God and causing their minds to stagnate. The destruction of such a limited mode of thought was therefore of necessity a principal aim of the Prophets.

The Prophets were entrusted by God with the duty of attacking this source of error by confronting the seers and soothsayers with deeds of a type similar to that which they performed, but enjoying a special advantage that placed them beyond the reach of all competition.

By the power of the miracle they negated and destroyed that particular cause of the human beings' separation from God—the concentration of their attention on the dazzling acts performed by the

soothsayers of the age which enslaved their spirits. By demonstrating their own miracles and setting forth the realistic principles of Divine religion, they opened the doors of guidance, growth, and development toward perfection, and linked all dimensions of human life and activity to God. All of this survives from the real nature of the miracle.

The Prophet of Islam began conveying his heavenly message in the midst of a society where people's minds revolved exclusively around eloquent speech and the composition of beautiful and attractive poetry and literary excellence. Precisely this concentration on a field of activity that cannot be counted among the basic and vital concerns of the human being was an important factor in prolonging the stagnation of thought and lack of attention to the source of all existence.

Under these conditions, God equipped His Prophet with a weapon, the Qur'an, that apparently belonged to the same category as the literary works of the age but possessed unique and astonishing characteristics that were beyond the capacity of the human being to reproduce.

The Qur'an's sweetness of speech, the attraction exerted by the verses of God's book, filled the hearts of the Arabs with new feeling and perception. Their deep attention was drawn to this Divine trust that had come to them, this inimitable work. Fully versed as they were in the arts and subtleties of rhetoric, they realized that the extraordinary eloquence of the Qur'an was beyond the power of man to produce. It was impossible for someone to hear the Qur'an and understand its meaning without being profoundly affected by its power to attract. From the beginning of revelation, the Qur'an was, then, the most important factor in bringing the human being to God's religion.

Moreover, if the Prophet of Islam had performed some miracle other than the Qur'an, it would have had no meaning for that people, given their mental structure. The path would have been open for all kinds of doubt and hesitation. But the Arabs of that age who were addressed by the Qur'an could never have any doubts about its extraordinary eloquence, for they were well aware of all the mysteries of rhetoric and had living among them masters of language and literary composition.

At the same time, since the Qur'an is intended to be an eternal miracle, revealed to make science and learning blossom among human beings, it is also a scientific miracle. It has expounded, in the most eloquent fashion, truths of a metaphysical nature together with everything that touches, however slightly, on the happiness or wretchedness of the human being. Although those who are not acquainted with the Arabic language cannot fully appreciate its miraculousness, they can perceive the miraculous nature of the meanings and truths it contains.

The limitation in time of the miracles performed by the earlier Prophets was an indication of the impermanence of their religions and the laws that they brought. By contrast, the miracle attesting to the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam cannot be temporally limited, because his message is universal and represents the culmination of all preceding religions; his prophethood requires an eternal miracle, a brilliant and eloquent proof of its immortality.

A permanent message must display to mankind a permanent and everlasting miracle, one which advances with time, so that just as it offered convincing proof to people of the past, it may do the same to people of the future. A short-lived miracle that is imperceptible to later generations cannot be a source of reference or judgment for the future.

For this reason, the Qur'an is presented as a permanent and everlasting miracle, the final manifestation of God's revelation. The Qur'an itself says:

"The true and well-formulated message of your Lord has now been completed, and none is able to change it." (6: 115)

From the very first day when he presented his religion as a universal school of thought, the influence of which was not to be contained by geographical or ethnic boundaries, the Prophet of Islam displayed this proof of his messengerhood to the whole of mankind, as a living proof that his mission and the revolutionary movement he inaugurated represented the final chapter in the history of prophetic missions and movements.

The Qur'an does not represent an ideological weapon for temporary use in moving from an inferior social system to a superior one at a given stage in history; it represents the permanent ideology of the human being living in the social and intellectual order of Islam.

The miracle accompanying the mission of the beloved Prophet of Islam brings to an end all the previous messages, limited as they were to a certain time. In its unique style, the Qur'an provides the human being with all necessary guidance by means of either recalling the circumstances leading to the revelation of various verses or of recounting of historical narratives or of describing the events that took place during the life of the Prophet, or by means of various similes and comparisons that touch on the different concerns of human life and guide the human being in the direction of higher degrees.

By analyzing the stories and events contained in the Qur'an, which include also a distinctively Qur'anic mode of Judgment, it is possible to deduce certain general principles.

Although the gradual and orderly descent of the Qur'anic revelation was regarded as a defect by superficial and ignorant people, it should, in fact, be recognized as a principal factor in the triumph of the Prophet's message, given the conditions of the age and the events with which he was confronted.

Just as chronic diseases require long-term treatment, a continuous struggle against the factors that constantly prevent the human being from perceiving the truths of existence and stand in the way of his growth and development must be grounded on a firm ideational basis and a comprehensive social organization. Only then will it be able to implement its goals over a period of time and guide human beings to its ultimate purpose their liberation from self-alienation.

Solutions whose efficacy does not transcend events limited in time and space will be unable to solve the

problems of the human being. Islam represents the only system which is able to answer those problems because of the attention it pays to all phenomena.

For Muslims, the miraculousness of the Qur'an is a matter of religious belief; for scholars and researchers, it is a matter of scientific belief.

The Qur'an possesses a remarkable comprehensiveness and richness, with respect to its worldview and scientific content, and its ability to guide the individual and society. There are still many matters contained in the Qur'an that call for investigation and await discovery by further research.

The Extraordinary Richness of the Qur'an

The Qur'an represents the principal source of all researches concerning the Islamic school of thought. Moreover, in every age and every part of the world, it can serve as the basis for a developed and free society which enables all the hidden capacities and potentials of the human being to blossom in all their dimensions; it lays down a path to the ideal society and the government of God.

More than fourteen centuries have passed since the revelation of the Qur'an. Throughout this period, mankind has undergone numerous changes, and passing through repeated stages of development and growth, it has attained a more comprehensive awareness of the mysteries of creation. Nonetheless, the Qur'an has at all times retained its proud and dignified presence on the stage of human history.

When this miracle first came into existence, at a time when the foundations of human thought had not fully developed, it served to prove categorically the messengerhood of the Prophet of Islam. In the present age, as the human being discovers in the treasure house of the Qur'an, more and more remarkable indications, commensurate with his own growth in perception, knowledge and civilization, the Qur'an still stands as a permanent historical miracle and a living universal proof for the veracity of the Seal of the Prophets. The increase in the volume of human knowledge and the opening up of new horizons of thought have given us the chance to benefit more fully from the Qur'an than past generations.

If the Qur'an had been able to establish itself only during a certain segment of time and in a limited spatial environment, it would not have been able thus miraculously to advance together with time. The reason for the eternal vitality and authenticity of the Qur'an is that it has always been a source for spiritual guidance and command in the face of the changing events of time.

History bears witness that the emergence of the Seal of the Prophets and his mode of activity within society marked the beginning of a new stage in human thought and ratiocination and in the development and expansion of the will and independence of the human being.

For in his growth to maturity, the human being now advanced in his investigations from the stage of mere observation to that of thought; an exact and profound examination of phenomena took the place of

simplistic assumption. All this is indicated by the fact that the human beings' acceptance of true faith was no longer on the basis of miracles involving supranatural or extraordinary phenomena, as was the case with the mission of previous Prophets.

Human beings turning to faith on the basis of knowledge and thought – something to which the Qur'an repeatedly invites human beings – represents in itself the miracle wrought by the heavenly message of Islam. Reliance on sensory miracles would not have been compatible with the nature of the final Divine message and its aim of liberating the human being and fostering the growth of his intellect. God, therefore, prepared the human being in the course of many thousands of years to receive the final guidance.

Our investigations of the Qur'an can be of value only when we empty our minds of all pre-existing notions and attitudes, because fanatical convictions concerning the contents of the Qur'an will yield nothing but mental stagnation and immobility. This is a pitfall that every alert and fair-minded researcher must seek to avoid.

It is an undeniable reality that the Qur'an is too elevated a book to be the product of ideas held by a group of scholars. It is even more impossible for it to have been produced by a single individual or to have been borrowed by him from other sources, particularly an individual who was unlettered, had not even studied, and had grown up in the degenerate environment of the Arabian peninsula at that time, an environment which was totally alien to science and philosophy.

When we consider the system and program of action proposed by the Qur'an for the uplift of the human being and compare it with the laws and systems of the past, we realize that it borrowed nothing from them and bore no resemblance to them. It represents an entirely new phenomenon, original and unprecedented in its fundamental nature, and among its lofty aims are the transformation of human societies and their restructuring on the basis of justice, equality, and freedom for the oppressed and deprived masses.

The Qur'an speaks in detail of the history of earlier Prophets and their communities, referring constantly to the events that occurred during their careers. When we encounter the narratives contained in the Qur'an, the events that it relates, we are brought into direct contact with reality, in an unparalleled fashion. Every reference they contain, direct and indirect, acquaints us with the very substance of truth.

It is, then, totally impossible that the narratives of the Qur'an should have been borrowed from the Torah or the Gospels. The Qur'an always presents the stories of the Prophets in a positive framework by changing and modifying them so as to purge them of unworthy excesses and elements contrary to pure monotheism, reason, and sound religious thinking. A copying would have resulted in mere imitation, and would have been entirely negative.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille, the French scholar, expresses himself as follows on this point:

"In the West, Jews, Christians and Atheists are unanimous in stating (without a scrap of evidence, however) that Muhammad wrote the Qur'an or had it written as an imitation of the Bible. It is claimed that stories of religious history in the Qur'an resume Biblical stories.

This attitude is as thoughtless as saying that Jesus Himself duped His contemporaries by drawing inspiration from the Old Testament during His preaching's: the whole of Matthew's Gospel is based on this continuation of the Old Testament... What expert in exegesis would dream of depriving Jesus of his status as God's envoy for this reason?

The existence of such an enormous difference between the Biblical description and the data in the Qur'an concerning the Creation is worth underlining once again on account of the totally gratuitous accusations leveled against Muhammad since the beginnings of Islam to the effect that he copied the Biblical descriptions.

As far as the Creation is concerned, this accusation is totally unfounded. How could a man living fourteen hundred years ago have made corrections to the existing description to such an extent that he eliminated scientifically inaccurate material and, on his own initiative, made statements that science has been able to verify only in the present day? This hypothesis is completely untenable. The description of the Creation given in the Qur'an is quite different from the one in the Bible." [1](#)

Taking these factors into consideration, no truth-loving individual can conceive of an origin other than Divine revelation for the Qur'an which is not only a book, but also a proof of messengerhood and a manifestation of the miraculousness that supported the Prophet.

The Qur'an thus came to be the profound, brilliant and eternal miracle of God's Messenger enabling the teachings and laws of Islam to retain their validity through time. The Divine commands and instructions were made manifest in phrases and sentences that were marked by miraculousness, thus implementing God's will for the preservation of religion when faced with the assaults of rancorous enemies and for the frustration of their conspiracies.

Through the permanence and stability of the mould in which God's Commands are uniquely set, these enemies who would reach out against them in order to change and distort them are permanently prevented from attaining their goal; the eternal teachings and laws of God will last throughout time, immune from change or distortion.

Another aspect of the miraculousness of the Qur'an which has had a great effect is the revolutionary transformation it brought about in human civilization. A matter calling for serious attention in the study of Islam is the fact that it received no assistance from factors external to itself when it began to create the nucleus of a universal society out of a scattered and disunited people that lacked all science and free thought and did not even seek to unify its constituent tribes; and when it began, moreover, to found a uniquely, vast and spiritual civilization.

All the factors for changing the world, for putting forward an international law with the slogan of unity among races, peoples, and social classes, for creating a movement for the liberation of thought and the ennobling of knowledge, were derived from the very text of the Qur'an, from the culture that emerged from the Qur'an and from the Islamic order. Islam never relied on a government or a power situated outside the society it had itself brought into being.

Even the aggressors who attacked the Islamic lands and triumphed over the Muslims, thanks to their military superiority, lost their dominance in the end when they were confronted with the spiritual power of Islam, and they adopted the religion of the people they had conquered. This history of nations does not record any other example of a victorious aggressor adopting the religion of the people it had defeated.

¹. Maurice Bucaille, The Bible, the Qur'an and Science, Indianapolis, 1976, pp. 148-149.

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