

Part 3: Religious Texts

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the last in a series of divine books revealed by Allah to mankind through the prophets. The Holy Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) over a period of 23 years and consists of 114 chapters arranged from longest to shortest. Its length compares to that of the New Testament. The revelations were written down by a group of people appointed by the Prophet (S) and, after his death, first compiled by Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him).

The Qur'an sheds light on many different aspects of life – legal, moral, social, political, economic, philosophical, mystical, and scientific – and also contains stories of previous prophets.

"We have sent down to you the Book as an exposition of everything – a guidance, a mercy, and glad tidings for those who have submitted themselves to Allah as Muslims." (16:89)

Less rigid than poetry but more beautiful than prose, its peculiar music transcends all other forms of writing. It speaks only the truth, and its directives are universal for all places and times. In reality, it is the completion of the earlier revelations, such as the Old and New Testaments, and is the only divine revelation to exist in its original unchanged form:

"Verily, it is We Who have sent down the Qur'an, and surely We will guard it from corruption." (15:9)

From the time of the Prophet (S) until today, not one word of the Qur'an has been edited, altered, added, omitted, lost, distorted, or otherwise changed.

The Qur'an plays an important role in Muslim life. It constantly reminds Muslims of their duties, rights, obligations, and destiny. Muslims are asked to study, memorize, ponder, and reflect on the Qur'an and then to implement its teachings. The chapters of the Qur'an contain the supreme divine wisdom which is meant for all seekers of truth – ordinary people, scholars, specialists, old, young, Muslims, and non-Muslims. It addresses all mankind; specific verses even clarify this fact by beginning with the words, "O

mankind!" The Qur'an satisfies people with its symphony of words, its science, its narrations and intellectual discourse, and fascinates them with its richness and depth.

Science and the Qur'an

Many scientific facts and realities are present in the Qur'an, which is the only religious book not to contradict science. Creation is described on the embryological and cosmological levels:

"And indeed We created man out of an extract of clay. Thereafter, We made him as mixed drops of the male and female fluids and lodged him in a safe lodging (womb of the mother). Then We made the mixed drops into a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Then We made the clot into a little lump of flesh. Then We made out of that little lump of flesh bones. Then We clothed the bones with flesh. And then We brought it forth as another creation. So blessed be Allah, the best of creators." (23: 12-14)

A careful comparison of this verse with the actual details of embryological development will reveal no contradictions. The creation of life, the earth, and the universe is also described in a way that parallels modern scientific theory:

"Do not those who disbelieve know that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they then not believe? And We have placed on the earth firm mountains, lest it should shake with them, and We placed therein broad highways for them to pass through that they may be guided, and We have made the heaven a roof, safe, and well-guarded. Yet they turn away from its signs. And He it is Who has created the night and the day, and the sun and the moon, each in an orbit floating" (21:30-33)

Human beings are asked to ponder the creation of the universe and consider their role therein:

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day there are indeed signs for men of understanding – those who remember Allah always, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and think deeply about the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, "O Lord! You have not created all this without purpose! Glory be to You! Give us salvation from the torment of the fire." (3: 190)

Are you more difficult to create or the heavens above? (79:27)

Many of the chapters are named after cosmological objects such as "The Star"[1](#) and "The Sun",[2](#) the latter of which begins:

By the sun and its brightness, and by the moon as it follows it, and by the day as it shows up in the sun's brightness, and by the night as it conceals it, and by the heavens and Him who built it,

and by the earth and Him who spread it...

Although the people of the Prophet's time knew nothing about the lifetimes or mechanisms of the sun and stars, the Qur'an refers to the fact that stars exist for a fixed period of time:

And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term appointed. That is the decree of the Almighty, the Omniscient. And the moon, We have measured for it mansions to traverse till it returns like the old dried curved date-stalk. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all swim each in an orbit. (36:38)

Even the expansion of the universe is alluded to: "With power did We construct the heavens; verily, We are able to expand the vastness of space thereof." (51:47)

The end of this universe, too, is described:

And remember the day when We will roll up the heavens like a scroll rolled up for books. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it. It is a promise binding upon Us. Truly, We shall do it. (21:104)

When the sun has wound around and lost its light and has been overthrown, and when the stars shall fall, and when the mountains shall be made to pass away... And when the seas shall become a blazing far or shall overflow.... (81:1-3,6)

When the Heaven is cleft asunder, and when the stars have fallen and scattered, and when the seas have burst forth.... (82:1-3)

When the Event befalls – and there can be no denying its befalling – it will bring low some, and others it will exalt. When the earth will be shaken with a terrible shaking, and the mountains will be powdered to dust so that they will become floating dust particles.... (56:1-6)

And they ask you concerning the mountains. Say, "My Lord will blast them and scatter them as particles of dust; then He shall leave it as a smooth, level plain. You will see therein nothing crooked or curved." (20:105-107)

The Qur'an does not contradict science because Allah Who revealed the Qur'an is the same Allah Who made this creation.

[The Qualities of the Qur'an](#)

And know that this Qur'an is an adviser who never deceives, a leader who never misleads, and a narrator who never speaks a lie. No one will sit beside this Qur'an but that when he rises he will achieve one addition or one diminution – addition in his guidance and elimination in his (spiritual) blindness.

You should also know that no one will need any thing after (guidance from) the Qur'an and no one will be free from want before (guidance from) the Qur'an. Therefore, seek cure from it for your ailments and seek its assistance in your distresses. It contains a cure for the biggest diseases, namely, unbelief, hypocrisy, revolt, and misguidance. Pray to Allah through it and turn to Allah with its love. Do not ask the people through it. There is nothing like it through which the people should turn to Allah, the Sublime.³

The Du'a, supplication to God

Supplications and prayers (du'a) focus on the idea that human beings are in constant need of God. Even those who reach the peak of wealth, knowledge, strength, and dignity still are in need of God. The word du'a itself means to call out to God, and du'a is of equal importance to those inflicted by calamities and hardships and to those living in comfort and abundance.

Speaking with Allah through du'a defends against adversity and tribulation and leads to salvation and relief. Islam encourages its followers to offer du'a constantly, either using their own words, directly from the heart, or else repeating some of the beautiful words that have been left behind by the Prophet (S) and his successors (peace be upon them).

Allah has guaranteed His servants that He will answer their prayers:

When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls upon Me. Let them also with a will listen to My call and believe in Me that they walk in the right way. (2: 186)

And your Lord says, "Call on me, I will answer your prayer." (40:60)

Du'a Kumayl

A man named Kumayl ibn Ziyad once asked Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) for a way to approach Allah. In response, Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) gave him this prayer and told him to recite it every day, if he could, or else once a week, or even once a year – and if reciting it once a year was too difficult, then to recite it at least once in his lifetime. Muslims usually recite it once a week together on Thursday night:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

O Allah, I ask You by Your Mercy which embraces all things,

By Your Strength, through which You dominate all things, towards which all things are humble, and before which all things are lowly;

By Your Invincibility, through which You overwhelm all things;

By Your Might, which nothing can resist;

By Your Greatness, which has filled all things;

By Your Power, which towers over all things;

By Your Face, which subsists after annihilation of all things;

By Your Names, which have filled the foundations of all things;

By Your Knowledge, which encompasses all things; and

By the Light of Your Face, through which all things are illumined!

O Light! O All-Holy!

O First of the first and Last of the Last!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which tear apart safeguards!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which bring down adversities!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which alter blessings!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which hold back supplication!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which dash all hopes!

O Allah, forgive me the sins which bring about tribulation!

O Allah, forgive me ever sin I have committed and every mistake I have made!

O Allah, verily I seek nearness to You through remembrance of You, I seek intercession

from You with Yourself, and I ask You through Your Munificence, to bring me nearer

to Your Mercy, to bless me with gratitude to You and to inspire me with Your

remembrance....

[1.](#) An-Najm/Chapter 53.

[2.](#) Ash-Shams/Chapter 91.

[3.](#) Nahj al-Balagha (The Peak of Eloquence), sermon 176.

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