

Introduction to the Qur'an

What is Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the divine scripture, the word of God, revealed to Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him), the Prophet of God, in the year 610 A.D. It was revealed gradually over 23 years in the city of Mecca, and later in the sister city of Medina.

Language of the Qur'an

The language of the Qur'an is Arabic, which is the language of the people of that region. The Qur'an has been translated into most of the known languages of the world. Almost a hundred different English translations have been published.

The Divine message is prose, but of a poetic nature. The recitation in a rhythmic manner is powerful and moving to the listener, even one who is not familiar with the language.

Arrangement of the Subject matter in the Qur'an.

The text is arranged into 114 chapters. Long chapters are in the beginning and smaller chapters are towards the end. The subject matter is not organized chapter wise, instead the subjects are scattered all over the book. This makes the Qur'an unique, unlike any other book.

Muhammad Pickthall, one of the translators of the Qur'an says, "The very sound of which makes men move to tears and ecstasy."

A.J. Arberry wrote, "It is neither prose nor poetry, but a unique fusion of both."

The Qur'an and the previous Scriptures.

The Qur'an acknowledges the previous scriptures of God revealed to the prophets of the old; the Psalms of David, the Torah revealed to Prophet Moses, and Bible (The New Testament) revealed to Prophet Jesus.

The Qur'an and other Prophets

The Qur'an acknowledges all the Prophets, named and un-named, those were sent to humankind by God, who are mentioned in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Some of the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an are, (Biblical names given here) Adam, Job, Elisha, David, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Jesus, Amran, Elias, Isaac, Lot, Mary (mother of Jesus), Ishmael, Zachariah, Noah, Solomon, Ezra, Saul, John the Baptist, Jonah, Jacob and Joseph (Peace be upon them all).

The preservation of the Qur'an.

The revelations, as they were brought to Muhammad (P) by Archangel Gabriel, were memorized by his disciples. Thus, the original text was preserved in the memory of his followers meticulously, word for word. Today, tens of thousands of believers have memorized the whole Qur'an, word for word. This unique method of preserving the scripture is unparalleled in modern history. Thus the Qur'an is the only scripture that claims to be the original word of God (in Arabic), un-altered by passage of time or by human interference.

Proofs of the divine origin of the Qur'an.

- The literary excellence, the eloquence and the poetic nature of its verses were unmatched by the greatest scholars of the time.
- The wisdom, guidance, and knowledge contained therein is beyond the scope of the most learned human beings.
- Many of the prophecies in the Qur'an have already been fulfilled.
- The scientific statements in the Qur'an about physics, biology, anatomy, human and animal reproduction, astronomy, etc. have borne out to be true after several hundred years. In fact, they proved to be amazingly accurate.
- Despite the revelations spanning over 23 years, there is no contradiction or inconsistency in the statements. This is not possible in any book written by a human.

Western scholars' views on the Qur'an.

“A work, which calls forth so powerful and seemingly incompatible emotions even in the distant reader - distant as to time and still more so as mental development. A work, which not only conquers the repugnance, which the reader may feel as he begins its perusal, but also changes adverse feeling into astonishment and admiration. Such a work must be a wonderful production of the ‘human mind’ indeed and a problem of the highest interest to every thoughtful observer of the destinies of mankind.” - **Dr. Steingass in T.P. Hughes's Dictionary of Islam, p.526**

“The hypothesis advanced by those who see Muhammad (P) as the author of the Qur'an is untenable. How a man, from being “illiterate” (untutored), could become the most important author, in terms of literary merit in the whole of Arabia? How could he then pronounce truths of a scientific nature that no other human being could possibly have developed at that time, and all this without once making the slightest error in his pronouncement on the subject?” - **Maurice Bucaille in “The Bible, the Qur'an and Science,” p.125**

God's challenge to the skeptics and doubters.

There were many who disbelieved in the Qur'an as a divine word. They accused the Prophet of making false claims. In response, God revealed following verses:

“And if ye are in doubt concerning that we reveal unto our servant (Muhammad (P)) then produce a Chapter of the like thereof...” (Chapter 2, Verse: 23)

“And before this was the book of Moses, as a guide and a mercy. And this Book confirms (it) in Arabic, to admonish the unjust, and as glad tidings for the righteous.” (Chapter46: verse12)

The Qur'an confirms that the earlier prophets, including Moses and Jesus, were true messengers of God. The previous scriptures, the Torah and the Bible, in their original forms were the true messages from God.

The true purpose of the Qur'an is to restore and safeguard the message of God in its totality.

Why was another Scripture needed?

The Qur'an is summation of all the previous Scriptures, as they originally existed. It points out inaccuracies that have crept into the older Scriptures. It contains the law, the code of ethics, guidance, and in conjunction with the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (P), it has guidance for the believer in every aspect of life. Even the minutest details are addressed for day-to-day conduct of religion, business, social interactions, etc.

Who should read the Qur'an?

The Qur'an addresses not just Muslims. It is a book for followers of Judaism and Christianity, and in fact, it is for all humanity. Some of the verses in the Qur'an directly address the entire humanity.

The verses of the Qur'an, which, point to the inclusive nature of the message, are as follows.

“Say: we believe in God and that which is revealed unto us, and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and which the prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.”

(The Qur'an Chapter 2, verse 136)

“Say: O' people of the Book, (Jews and Christians) Come to common terms as between you and us: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves, lords and patrons other than God.”

(The Qur'an: Chapter 3, verse 64)

(The End)

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