

THE HOLY QURAN

القرآن الكريم

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Be reminded of the fact that the Qur'ān is a gift from Allah (SWT)
- Be introduced to the fact that there has never been any distortion in the Qur'ān, and that this is one of the proofs of its authenticity
- Understand the fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic
- Understand that each verse or āyah is a sign from Allah (SWT)
- Be able to find āyāt in the Qur'ān when given the sūrah and āyah number
- Be introduced to three examples of social etiquette from the Holy Qur'ān
- Be reminded of the etiquette of reading and handling the Qur'ān

Discuss the importance of the intellect in Islam and how the Qur'ān encourages us to consider and judge everything based on our intellect,

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 3

LESSON 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

In this lesson, we will talk about the Holy Qur'ān and learn some of the most important things about this miraculous book.

WHAT IS THE QUR'ĀN?

The Holy Qur'ān is a book which contains the actual, exact words of God. Allah (SWT) revealed these words to His Prophet Muḥammad (saw) through the angel Gabriel. Allah (SWT) would send Gabriel to deliver the words of the Qur'ān to the Prophet gradually. This happened over the last 23 years of the Prophet's life. The Qur'ān is a book that was sent by Allah (SWT) to guide us through our life. It tells us:

- The best way to live in this world (that we live in now)
- How to gain Allah's pleasure and avoid His displeasure
- About the Hereafter and other things we cannot see or hear such as angels



THE FIRST REVELATION



Prophet Muḥammad (saw) was a Muslim and a believer in Allah throughout his life. He would often go to the cave of Ḥira to think and to worship Allah (SWT). He used his time away from people to think about things more clearly and try to understand why people did what they did in the busy city of Mecca.

When the Prophet reached forty years of age, he received the first revelation. While he was in the cave of Ḥira, Allah (SWT) sent Gabriel with the first words of the Holy Qur'ān:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ

“Read in the name of your Lord Who created” (96:1)

Gabriel asked the Prophet (saw) to recite these words, and once the Prophet did this, Gabriel said: *“You are the Messenger of Allah and I am Gabriel”*. As the Prophet left the cave of Ḥira after this incident, he felt a great sense of responsibility because he had been given such a great task to perform. When he arrived home, he discussed what had happened with his great wife, Khadijah (as). He was worried by the great task that he had been given by Allah (SWT) as he was not sure how the pagans would react. Khadijah tried to help by saying: *“You are kind to your relatives, you treat your guests well, and you are not afraid of going through hardship for the sake of Truth. Allah will help you.”* The Prophet (saw) then felt very exhausted. He went to bed and asked his wife to cover him. While he was wrapped and covered in bed, he received the next revelation, asking him to begin spreading the message of Islam.ⁱⁱ

HOW CAN WE PROVE THE QUR'ĀN IS THE WORD OF GOD?

You might be asking yourself, how can I prove to myself or to non-Muslims that the Qur'ān really is the word of God? Here are some of the main proofs you can use:

- When the Qur'ān was being revealed, people accused the Prophet of making it up himself. So Allah (SWT) told the Prophet to challenge them by asking if any of them could make something similar to the Qur'ān. If they could, then it was possible that the Qur'ān is the word of a human like the Prophet. But if they couldn't, then it must be the Word of God. Of course, no one could write anything similar to the Qur'ān at that time, and till now no one has been able to do such a thing.
- Today, there is only one version of the Qur'ān existing. Any Qur'ān you pick up anywhere in the world has exactly the same words and letters in the same order. No other book in history has been kept the same for 1400 years. Look at the Bible for example, there are hundreds of versions of the Bible now, and it changes every twenty or so years. The fact that the Qur'ān has never been changed over such a long time proves that it is the Word of God. If it was not the Word of God, it would have been amenable to distortion. Furthermore, this proves that the Qur'an has a special protection from God.
- The Qur'ān has many scientific miracles. For example, the Qur'ān says that the universe is getting bigger 1400 years ago, but scientists only found this out 80 years ago. If it really was made up by a human being 1400 years ago, how could he have known that the universe was getting bigger?

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN

Now that we know that the Qur'ān is the Word of God, let us see what it teaches us and try to apply it in our life. In this lesson, we are going to look at one of the ways that the Qur'ān teaches us to be better people and try our best to follow this advice.

GOODNESS TO PARENTS

In many different parts of the Qur'ān, Allah (SWT) orders us to be good to our parents. Here is one example:

فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٌ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

“(Be good to your parents)...and do not even say ‘uf’ to them and do not be rude to them, and speak to them respectfully”
(17:23)

In this āyah of the Qur'ān, you can see that:

- We are not even allowed to show the slightest rudeness to our parents by saying something so small as ‘uf’. So Imagine if a person yells at their parents, or says something hurtful to them.
- We must always speak to our parents respectfully, no matter what the situation is.

One day, a man came to Imam Sajjād (as) and said that for the last few days, he had taken his mother to Hajj. He had carried her on his back the whole time as he went around the Ka'bah and walked from one mountain to the other. He had fed her, clothed her and looked after all her needs. He then said to the Imam, *“Have I done my duty towards her?”* The Imam (as) said, *“You have not even made up for one of the pains she felt when she was giving birth to you.”* Imagine then how much we have to do to repay our parents for all they have done for us.

In another story, a man heard the Imam (as) saying:

“If a good child looks at his or her parents with love, they will get the reward of an accepted Hajj.” The man was very surprised by this and said, “What if I look at them with love a hundred times during the day”. The Imam (as) replied, “You will get that reward each time you look at them with love.” ⁱⁱⁱ

Review Questions

Q1. Which of the following is true:

- There is and has only ever been one version of the Qur'ān
- There have been different versions of the Qur'ān as some parts have been removed
- There are a few different versions of the Qur'ān

Q2. The Qur'ān is:

- The exact word of God
- The Prophet's words
- The words of another human being

Q3. The Prophet (saw) received his first revelation through angel Gabriel at the age of:

- 20
- 40
- 63

LESSON 2: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE QUR'ĀN

In this lesson, we will learn more about the Qur'ān and what it teaches us.

THE QUR'ĀN WAS REVEALED IN ARABIC

The Holy Qur'ān was revealed to Prophet Muḥammad in Arabic. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Arabic is a very eloquent language, and the Arabs were known for their brilliance in eloquence. The Qur'ān was revealed in this language because Allah, the Exalted, wanted one of the major miracles of the Qur'ān to be its eloquence and so He revealed it in a language known for its eloquence
- The people among whom Prophet Muḥammad (saw) lived were Arabs

There are two important points to remember here:

- The fact that we know the original language of the Holy Qur'ān and have access to very early copies of the Qur'ān means that we know exactly what Allah (SWT) revealed to His prophet. Other religions do not have this knowledge, because some of them do not even know the original language in which their holy book was written.
- The fact that the Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic does not mean it is a book only for Arabs. It is a book for all people, no matter what language they speak. However, it had to come in some language, and we already discussed the possible reason why Arabic was the choice.

THE QUR'ĀN CONSISTS OF ĀYĀT (SIGNS)

Each segment of the words of the Qur'ān is called an 'āyah'. The literal meaning of 'āyah' is 'sign'. The plural of 'āyah' is 'āyāt' (signs). This name has been given to the segments of the Qur'ān by Allah (SWT) Himself. This shows us that every single expression of the Qur'ān is a sign or miracle from Allah, the Exalted. There are two possible meanings for this:

- Each expression, because it cannot be matched by people, is a sign that these are the words of God and a sign of His Power
- Each āyah gives us a sign or proof about Allah (SWT), the message of the Prophet, the Hereafter or other important things

HOW TO FIND A SŪRAH AND ĀYAH IN THE QUR'ĀN:

Let us do some exercises to get more familiar with the Qur'ān.

As we know from before the Qur'ān has 114 Chapters or 'sūrah'. The number of āyāt in Qur'ān is 6205. Sometimes, when someone wants us to know where an āyah is in the Qur'ān they give us the sūrah number and the āyah number. For example, let us try to find the āyah about being good to our parents that we talked about last week. Remember, the sūrah number was 17, and the āyah number was 23, so usually it would be written like this:

17:23

Now, try to find the following āyāt in your copy of the Holy Qur'ān:

- 78:3
- 10:30
- 2:225
- 3:55
- 4:90

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN (CONTINUED)

Like we discussed in our last lesson, the Qur'ān teaches us lessons on how to live our life. The first lesson we learnt was about being good to our parents. Let's see what other lessons the Qur'ān has for us.

HAVING GOOD MANNERS WITH PEOPLE

Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Qur'ān:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا
الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“Good and evil are not the same. Respond to evil with good, then the one who between you and him there was enmity, will be as if he were a close friend.” (41:34)

In this āyah, Allah (SWT) teaches us that it is very important to treat people with good manners, even if they don't do the same towards us. We should treat all people like this, but we should also have particular respect for fellow Muslims.

If we follow the teachings of the Qur'ān and treat people better than they treat us, even people who do not like us and have a problem with us will become our best friends. The Prophet and the Imams (as) have taught us some ways of showing good manners towards people:

- Smiling to people when we meet them - this will help us enter paradise
- Meeting people with a happy cheerful face - the Prophet says this will make people love us and bring us closer to Allah (SWT)
- Having a good temper and being easy to get along with - this will help us gain Allah's mercy.

The Prophet (saw) himself was famous for these things. He would always be cheerful and smile at people, and people loved being around him because of this. His companions loved to spend time with him and talk to him. The Prophet (saw) would always try to give people a chance to speak to him. He would head to the mosque early, so that if anyone wanted to stop and talk to him or ask him something they would have a chance and he

would not be in a rush. If he saw children on the way, he would smile at them and play with them.

It's very important for us to also follow the commands of the Qur'ān and try to make others feel good by smiling at them, meeting them with a cheerful face and not getting angry at them.

Review Questions

Q1. The expressions of the Qur'ān are called *ĀYĀT* or signs because:

- No one could reproduce something like even one *āyah* of the Qur'ān and therefore each one is a sign that this is a Book from God
- Each *āyah* gives us special knowledge from God about this world or the next
- Both of the above

Q2. The Qur'ān was revealed in Arabic. This means:

- It is a book for Arabic people only
- It is a book for all people, it is only in Arabic because this was the language of the Prophet's people
- It is a book only for those who can learn Arabic

Q3. What does the Qur'ān teach about how we should treat people who treat us badly:

- Treat them back the same way
- Treat them back even worse so they won't do it again
- Repay them with goodness

LESSON 3: THE ETIQUETTE OF INTERACTING WITH THE QUR'ĀN

In this lesson, we will learn the most important rules for reading and handling the Holy Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān is the Word of God, we need to show a lot of respect towards it when we are handling it or reading it.

THE ETIQUETTE OF HANDLING THE QUR'ĀN

- The words of the Holy Qur'ān should only be touched after performing *wuḍū'*. This is an obligatory rule.

The following are recommended etiquettes:

Always begin the recitation by seeking refuge with Allah from Satan, by saying the following words:

اعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم

"I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan"

- Then recite

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"In the name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful"

- Even if you know the *āyāt* by heart, it is better to recite while looking at the words on the page and reading them, as this increases the rewards many times.

- The Holy Qur'ān should be recited without rushing, and in a clear manner.

- When the Qur'ān is being recited, listen attentively and do not eat or talk.

- Do not leave the Holy Qur'ān open and unattended or in a place where it may be disrespected. Recite from it regularly and do not leave it unread on the shelf.

- Worn-out pages of the Holy Qur'ān or paper with verses of the Holy Qur'ān must not be thrown in the bin. They should be maintained in such a way that they remain respected.

PUTTING THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN INTO PRACTICE

Even though we have learnt some important rules about the Qur'ān so far today, the most important one that we have to remember is that the Qur'ān is not just there for us to read. It was sent to us so that we can put it into practice after reading it. So whenever we read an *āyah*, we should ask what it means for our life. If we really think about each *āyah*, we will see that each one can make such a significant change to our life.

THE STORY OF FUḌAYL IBN 'AYĀN

This is a story of a man who really put the words of the Qur'ān into practice. His entire lifestyle changed because of only one āyah in the Qur'ān. FuḌayl was a gangster. He led a gang of thieves who would threaten people, hurt them and rob them. FuḌayl himself was very arrogant. He would simply walk up to people and tell them that he would be coming to their house that night to rob them or hurt them. One day, he said this to one family, and the family were terrified because of this. FuḌayl got ready to rob them and waited outside their house till night came. When it was dark, he began to jump over the fence. However, at that moment, FuḌayl heard the neighbour reciting this āyah from the Qur'ān:

“Hasn't the time come for those who believe, that their hearts should become humble by the remembrance of Allah and the Truth He has revealed?”^{iv}

When FuḌayl heard this āyah, it suddenly overwhelmed him and he realized how arrogant he had been. Right at that very moment, he decided to change his entire lifestyle. He jumped back over the fence and left the house without robbing it or hurting anyone. He never robbed or hurt anyone again, and in fact he became one of the most pious people in the history of Islam.

We should try to ponder the words of the Qur'ān and not simply let them pass us by. We should try to apply them to our own lives as much as possible.

Review Questions

Q1. The most important thing to remember when reciting the Qur'ān is:

- We should apply it to our own lives
- We should recite it slowly
- We should remember the rules of recitation

Q2. We need to perform Wuḍū' before:

- Reciting the Qur'ān
- Touching the script of the Qur'ān
- Holding the Qur'ān

Q3. We should recite the Qur'ān:

- Every once in a while
- Only at funerals
- Regularly or every day

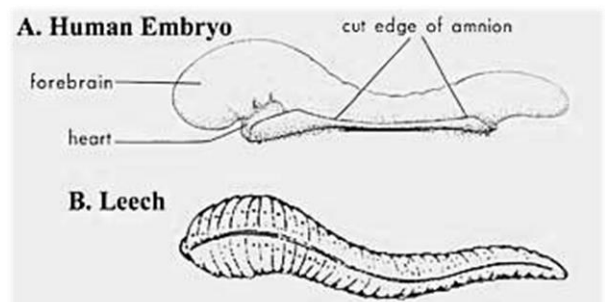
LESSON 4: THE MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN

In our previous lessons, we said that the main proof that the Holy Qur'ān is the word of God is that no one has ever been able to produce anything like it, and that it has never been changed. In addition to this, there are also other proofs for the fact that the Qur'ān is the Word of God. Some of these proofs are scientific and numerical miracles. In this lesson, we will discuss these.

SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN:

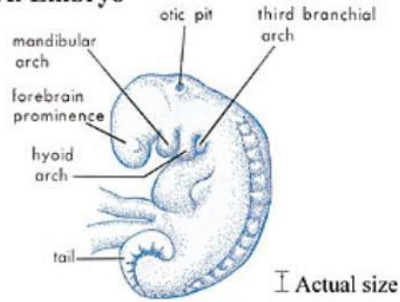
One of the main scientific miracles of the Qur'ān is the way it describes a small baby growing inside its mother's womb. Even though at the time when the Prophet (saw) lived, people had no idea about how the baby grew inside its mother's womb, the Qur'ān gives a very detailed description of this.

- The Qur'ān says the baby grows under 'three layers of darkness'. Scientists have confirmed that there are three layers covering the baby if we were to look from the outside: the mother's abdominal muscles, the wall of the womb, and the membrane covering the baby
- The Qur'ān says that the baby then looks like a leech. Scientists have confirmed that a week after the baby is in the womb it actually does look like a leech.
- The next stage the Qur'ān describes is that the baby



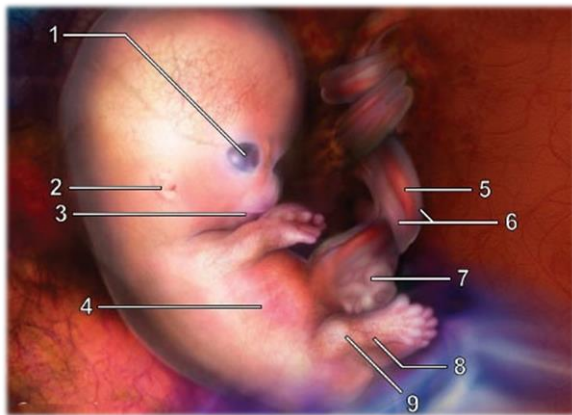
looks like a chewed lump and this has also been confirmed by scientists.

A. Embryo

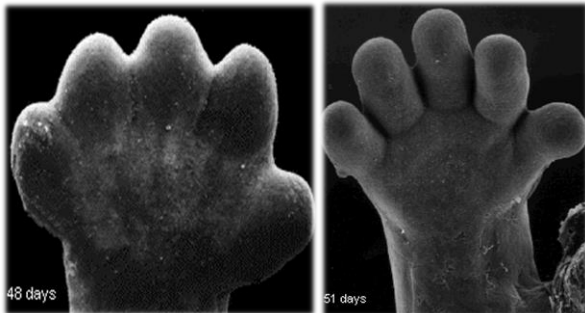


- Then the Qur'ān says that the baby's bones are covered

by flesh and this is also true. A skeleton formed of young bone [made mainly of cartilage at 6-8 weeks] forms before recognizable muscle begins to wrap itself around this skeleton in a process called myogenesis.



Note how by just 7 weeks the young skeleton is beginning to form knee and ankle joints! [8, 9]



The hand by day 48 [7 weeks] with a distinct shape formed by the embryos early skeleton

Just 3 days later it begins to look much more recognisable!

- Finally, the Qur'ān says that the baby develops the ability to hear, see and feel, and scientists have confirmed that a baby gets those senses in that exact order.



“And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small mixed-drop (nutfa) in a firm resting-place, Then We made the seed a clot (or leech-like clot), then We made the clot a (chewed) lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.” (24:12-14)

NUMERICAL MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN

The number of times that certain words are used in the Qur'ān is also miraculous. If the Qur'ān was the word of a human being, and he said it to people over 23 years, how could he possibly have kept count of all the words he had used over the last 23 years? Therefore, these miracles prove that this could not have been the word of a human being, but the Word of God.

The numerical miracles Of Qur'ān are also many, but let us look at some examples:

1. The word 'hour' is mentioned 24 times, the word 'month' 12 times and the word 'day' 365 times.
2. The word 'man' is mentioned 24 times, as is the word 'woman'.
3. 'Life' is mentioned 145 times, as is 'Death'.
4. Land and sea are mentioned in the Qur'ān. 'Land' is mentioned 13 times and 'sea' 32 times. Now if we add these up we see the total is 45, and then if we see the percentage of each we get the following:

$$32/45 \times 100\% = 71.11111111\%$$

$$13/45 \times 100\% = 28.88888888\%$$

We know today that the percentage of this Earth that is made up of water is about 71% and that which is made up of land is 29%. How could anyone have known this 1400 years ago and then kept such good count of the words they were using?

THE MESSAGE OF THE QUR'ĀN (CONTINUED)

Today, we will try to learn another one of the teachings of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān tells us to use our intellect, or minds. In other words, it tells us to think about things properly and make judgements based on sound reasoning, not based on what we feel like, what other people are doing or what we are expected to do by our friends or society.

One of the best examples of the Qur'ān asking people to use their intellect, is the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). Prophet Ibrāhīm's people used to worship statues which they had made themselves. Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) thought this did not make sense, so he said to them:

“Do you worship that which you have made yourselves...when it is Allah who made you and these things that you make?”
(37:95-96)

Even though his argument was logical and made sense, they did not listen to him. He (as) tried another approach. He smashed the idols that the people of his town used to worship, and left only the biggest idol standing with an axe on its shoulder. When the people asked him what had happened, he told the people that the big idol had smashed them. They suddenly said: *“You know these statues do not talk!”* So Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) said:

“So you worship these things instead of Allah, when these things can't benefit you or harm you...don't you think?”
(21:63-67)

Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) tried as much as he could to get his people to think. However, they had seen their fathers and their grandfathers doing the same thing and so they did not want to change, even though they knew they were wrong. They would say to him, *“We found our fathers worshipping them”*.

Also, their desires overcame their intellect. They were used to this way of life. They made money from these statues and they set up their society around these statues. If they agreed with Ibrāhīm (as) all that would change, so they decided to ignore their minds and follow their desires.

We have the same challenge they did. We see our friends doing certain things, and they pressure us to do the same as they do without thinking. They encourage us to dress

in a certain way, to cut our hair in a certain way or to do dangerous or hurtful things just because they do them. When we are in a situation like this, we have to stop and *think*. We have to think about the advantages and disadvantages of what we are about to do and what could happen to us or other people.

Also, we have to always put our mind before our desire. No matter how much we feel like buying that very expensive shoe, or teasing that boy at school, or being the class clown, we have to use our mind and see whether that desire is more important or what our mind is telling us is more important.

Following our desires can lead us to have many problems in our life. Imagine always following the desire to watch television and playing on the computer, and ignoring our mind which tells us to study? We would end up always failing at school. Imagine always following the desire to hit someone when they make us angry and ignoring our mind which tells us to solve the problem a different way? We would probably end up expelled from school and in trouble with the police one day. We have to learn to make our mind stronger than our desires, so that we can be successful in life and stay out of trouble. In any situation in life, we have to remember to weigh up the advantages and the disadvantages of the two things we are choosing between by using our intellect, and then we must choose the one that is right, not the one that our desire is urging us to choose.

Review Questions

Q1. The scientific miracles of the Qur'ān:

- Are the main miracles
- Are not the main miracles but help us prove the Qur'ān is the Word of God
- The Qur'ān has no scientific miracles

Q2. The number miracles of the Qur'ān:

- Are the main miracles
- Are not the main miracles but help us prove the Qur'ān is the Word of God
- The Qur'ān has no number miracles

Q3. The Qur'ān teaches us to:

- Use our intellect to think about things
- Not follow our desires, and control our desires with our intellect
- Both of the above

ⁱ References:

-Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, eHAWZA Course: Sciences of the Qur'an

ⁱⁱThe Message, Ayatollah Subhani, chapter 11

ⁱⁱⁱ Mishkatul Anwar, chapter on goodness to parents

^{iv}The Holy Qur'an Surat al-Hadid, ayah no. 16