

THE HOLY QURAN

القرآن الكريم

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that the Qur'ān is the verbatim word of God
- Understand the different proofs of the authenticity of the Qur'ān
 - its unmatched eloquence
 - the fact there is only one version of the Qur'ān till today
 - its scientific miracles
 - its numerical miracles
 - its historical miracles
 - its true prophecies
- Understand the importance of understanding the words of the Qur'ān and applying them to ourselves.
- Be introduced to the fact that the Qur'an contains very specific and noble guidelines on social etiquette
- Introduce the students to the style of the Qur'ān - that it is not just a narrative (like the bible) and that even the structure contains messages. Explain that this is another proof of its authenticity.
- Introduce the range of topics discussed in the Quran emphasising that most of the Qur'ān talks about our fundamental beliefs
- Understand that the Qur'ān has clear and ambiguous **ĀYĀT**, and that we need to take guidance from the Ahlul Bayt in understanding the Qur'ān correctly
- Understand that the Qur'an has unconditional and limited verse, thus before we come to a conclusion on a topic we must know what the Qur'ān as a whole says about that topic
- Show the students how much importance the Qur'ān places on the use of the intellect. The Qur'ān asks us to judge everything based on our intellect.
- Explain that the Qur'ān discourages imitation of others and following whims and desires. Everything should go back to the intellect to judge.
- Give example of some propositions that the Qur'an poses and asks us to consider intellectually. Explain how we may stray from these Qur'ān propositions because of our environment or desires

FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM

LEVEL 4

LESSON 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

'As we have previously learnt, the Holy Quran was revealed by Allah (SWT) to the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muḥammad (saw).

THE WORD OF ALMIGHTY GOD

When we hold in our hands the Holy Qur'ān, and read its words, do we really ever stop and think about where these beautiful words came from?

This great Book that we have in our hands today, The Holy Qur'ān, has come from Allah (SWT), the Creator of everything in existence. They are the exact words of God, sent through the Arch Angel Gabriel (as) to our Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

Thereafter, by the command of Allah (SWT) of "Read (O Muhammad)", the Holy Prophet (saw) spoke these words to the people in the Arabic language, exactly as they were delivered to him by Gabriel (as).

These words were memorised and written down, and compiled into a book during the life of the Prophet. The Qur'ān we have before us today is the same as that original Qur'ān that was compiled at the time of the Prophet (saw). Every word, letter, and sentence is exactly the same.



PROVING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE QUR'ĀN

- Authentic, what does that mean?

Authentic simply means: something true and therefore reliable. In this case, when we want prove the Qur'ān is authentic, we mean we want to prove that it really is the unchanged Word of God.

- Proofs for the Authenticity of the Qur'ān:

Here, we will look at the main proofs for the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an. In our next lesson, we will look at some other proofs:

UNMATCHABLE ELOQUENCE

The power and influence of language for the Arabs in the period before Islam is very important for us to understand why God Almighty gave the Holy Prophet (saw) the Quran as his miracle. Poets were highly respected members of society.

When the Holy Prophet (saw) spoke the holy words of the Qur'ān, the beauty and eloquence of those words and their powerful meanings left most poets and the public amazed to the extent that some people claimed that the Holy Qur'ān was some kind of magic.

The Holy Qur'ān challenged the skilled Arab poets to produce even one chapter similar to the chapter of the Qur'ān in eloquence. This challenge was put forward multiple times. Of course, no one was able to meet such a challenge.

THE QUR'ĀN: UNCHANGED THROUGHOUT HISTORY

All Muslims, despite their numerous differences of opinion on all sorts of topics in Islam, all believe in the same book. What's more, wars were fought between various groups within the Muslims, yet all without exception, refer to the same book, that is; the Holy Qur'ān, in the exact same form.

The Qur'ān has remained unchanged and this is why 1400 years after the Prophet (saw) died, we still have only one copy of the Qur'ān, used by Muslims of all sects, nationalities and races. If this were a book written by a

human, it would be easy to change and alter. However, this is a Divine Book, and is protected from any change or alteration by Allah (SWT). This is one of the miracles of the Qur'ān and one of the proofs for its being the Word of God.

THE QUR'ĀN'S NOBLE GUIDELINES ON SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

In the remainder of this lesson, we will be trying to learn some of the values the Holy Qur'an teaches. One of the proofs for the authenticity of the Qur'an is its sublime teachings when it comes to social issues. As we will see, the Qur'an's teachings are timeless and universal.

Some examples of social guidelines in the Holy Qur'ān include:

ISLAM AND RACISM

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa (piety). Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (49:13)

The above āyah from the Holy Qur'ān makes it very clear that human beings are not better than each other because of their skin colour, culture or race. Rather, the best people among mankind are those who are most careful of their duties to their creator, Allah (SWT).

For example, the Holy Prophet (saw) wanted to show the Muslims of the time that there is no such thing as racism in Islam, so he arranged a marriage between an African Muslim who was a former slave, and an Arab woman from the tribe of Quraysh. The woman's family rejected the marriage proposal and felt insulted. This upset the Prophet (saw), and the following was revealed:

“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error.” Holy Quran (33:36)

This is the example and guideline that we should follow in our lives today, especially since we live in a world that has become filled with different cultures and races living together in the same cities and towns.

We should consider everybody as equal, and that the only thing that distinguishes one person over another is their level of piety.

BACKBITING IN ISLAM

Backbiting is a very common sin that is committed everyday by a lot of people. Backbiting, besides its bad effects on the spirit, also has negative effects on the people in societies, because it creates problems and hatred between people. The Qur'ān again, teaches us to stay away from backbiting, by saying:

“... Nor backbite one another; would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abhor it”. (Qur'an 49:12)

The Holy Qur'ān has told us here that if one backbites against another Muslim, it is as if he is eating that person's dead body. The Holy Prophet (saw) once said about backbiting, that:

“No fire is faster in consuming dry wood than backbiting in consuming a devotee's virtues”ⁱⁱ

So what we understand here is that the Holy Qur'ān is teaching us to refrain from backbiting because of its negative spiritual effects. This is another guideline that we as Muslims should follow while living in today's society, so that our society becomes even stronger, a society based on trust among brothers and sisters in Islam.

Review Questions

Q1. The Qur'ān has remained unchanged for 1400 years because:

- It was written down very carefully
- It was compiled very carefully
- It is the Word of God and therefore God has protected it from any change or alteration

Q2. Islam teaches that:

- Arabs are better than non-Arabs
- People are only better than one another based on their piety
- People are only better than one another based on their tribe and ancestry

LESSON 2: FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THE HOLY QUR'AN

In our last lesson, we discussed two proofs for the authenticity of the Holy Qur'ān. In this lesson, we will revise those two proofs and look at some other proofs.

- The Qur'ān has remained unchanged over 1400 years, indicating that it is the Word of God, as no other book has ever remained so. It is protected by God.
- Unmatchable Eloquence: no one has ever been able to produce even one chapter that is similar to the Qur'ān in its style and eloquence. This is part of the reason the Qur'ān has remained unchanged

SCIENTIFIC MIRACLES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'ān contains a lot of information that could only be known through modern scientific tools. It is a miracle then that this Book contained this information 1400 years ago.

EXPANSION OF THE UNIVERSE

“And it is We Who have constructed the heaven with might, and verily, it is We Who are steadily expanding it” (Qur'an, 51:47)



For a very long time, scientists and thinkers thought of the universe as constant in nature, meaning that it is always the same in size, and that it has always been around i.e. had no beginning.

By the beginning of the 1900s, famous scientists such as the Russian physicist Alexander Friedmann, the Belgian cosmologist Georges Lemaitre, the American astronomer Edwin Hubble and the German-born Albert Einstein, all

had seemingly proved, in one way or another, that the universe was constantly (continuously) expanding.

Amazingly, we have a passage in the Qur'an which seemingly refers to this phenomenon. This is incredible, considering that the Qur'ān was revealed at a time when telescopes and such advanced scientific understanding were not even close to being invented or thought of.

THE CREATION OF HUMAN BEINGS FROM WATER

"Allah has created every moving (living) creature from water..." (24:45)

It is commonly believed in modern science that water is the main component of organic (living) matter. Furthermore, it is accepted that 50-90% of living things consist of water. Simply put, without water, we cannot think of life. We regularly hear nowadays on the news, astronauts sending space probes to other planets in space such as Mars, to search for any signs of water. Because they know that if water is present, then life is possible. So it is said that water is the precursor to life, and hence this could be another meaning for the verse from the Qur'ān that we mentioned above (God Knows Best).

The fact that this scientific information, which has only been found out very recently, was in the Qur'ān 1400 years ago, indicates that the Qur'ān is not the word of a man, but the Word of God.



Cells are the building blocks of our bodies and could not possibly exist without the presence of the water which forms the majority of their mass

NUMBER MIRACLES OF THE QUR'ĀN

The words of the Qur'an have some interesting numerical patterns. These interesting patterns form part of the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'an. We can call these

"Numerical" or "Mathematical Miracles". Some examples:

- The statement of "seven heavens" is repeated seven times. "The creation of the heavens" is also repeated seven times.
- The word "day" is repeated 365 times in singular form, while its plural and dual forms "days" together are repeated 30 times. The number of repetitions of the word "month" is 12.
- The number of times the words, "world" and "hereafter" are repeated is also the same: 115
- The words "paradise" and "hell" are each repeated 77 times.

There exist many more such examples that we are aware of, and there is possibly hundreds more which we haven't yet discovered. How could an unschooled man who recited the words of the Qur'ān over 23 years keep track of such delicate calculations? Surely, this is not the word of a human but the Word of God.

PROPHECIES IN THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

There are various predictions made in the Holy Qur'ān about future events that have already taken place. We mention a few here:

- The Victory of the Romans:

"The Romans have been defeated. In the nearer land (Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine), and they, after their defeat, will be victorious. Within three to nine years. The decision of the matter, before and after (these events) is only with Allah..." (30:2-4)

According to historians, these words were revealed around 620 A.H.; almost 7 years after the then idol-worshipping Persian Empire had severely defeated the Christian Roman army in 613-14 A.H. In fact, the Roman Empire (Byzantium) was defeated so badly that it seemed that the empire was on the verge of collapse, let alone the thought of becoming victorious again.

In a nutshell, everyone was expecting the collapse of the Roman Empire. During this time though, the words above were revealed, declaring that the Roman Empire will be victorious again in 3-9 years. The Arab polytheists found this impossible to believe. However, of course, this is exactly what

occurred. The Romans fought the Persians again a few years later and were victorious.

- **The Exploration of Space:**

“O company of jinn and human beings. If you are able to pierce through the confines of the heavens and Earth, pierce through them. You will not pierce through, except with a clear authority.” (Qur’an, 55:33)

Here, the Quran seems to refer to the exploration of space by man, which only began in the late 1950s. The first man into space was a Russian cosmonaut by the name Yuri Gagarin.

The Arabic word *sultan*, translated here as “clear authority” has other meanings as well including force and power. It is suggested that here the meaning is the great power or energy contained within the flying objects that are launched into space.

Review Questions

Q1. The scientific miracles of the Qur’ān prove it is the Word of God because:

- a. No human could have had this knowledge 1400 years ago
- b. They are true
- c. Neither of the above

Q2. Which of the following is true:

- a. The Qur’ān is a book of prophecies
- b. The Qur’ān includes some prophecies, some of which have already come true
- c. The Qur’ān has no prophecies

LESSON 3: UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR’AN

In previous lessons, we learnt about many aspects of the Qur’ān, including its structure, its miracles and the way we should show respect to the Qur’ān. In this lesson, we will continue to increase our knowledge about the Qur’ān and learn some of the sciences of the Qur’ān.

THE QUR’ĀNIC STYLE

Most books, including the Bible and the Old Testament, are set out in a narrative format. The stories within them are told as narratives, from beginning to end. In contrast, the Qur’ān tells stories based on themes. Often, the Qur’ān discusses one story in many different places, each time emphasising a certain point and teaching a certain lesson.

Let us look at the example of the story of Prophet Noah:

- In *Sūrat Hūd*, the majority of the story of Prophet Noah is told. In this Surah, Allah (SWT) tells the story of many of the prophets, and the main lesson being taught in this surah is that throughout history, there is always conflict between two groups. The first group is that of people who follow the truth, while the other group is those who oppose them and victimise them because of their personal interests. We learn many other lessons from this part of the story of Noah, but in this *Sūrah* the main lesson seems to be that the story of truth fighting falsehood is repeated throughout history and that truth always wins out.

“It was said: “O Noah, Come down (from the ship) with peace from Us and blessings on you and on the people who are with you but (there will be other) people to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time), but in the end a painful torment will reach them from Us. This is of the news of the unseen which We reveal unto you, neither you nor your people knew them before this. So be patient. Surely, the (good) end is for the pious” (11:48-49)

- In *Surat Nūh*, the Qur’ān tells a summarised version of the story of Prophet Nuh, and one of the main points of this *sūrah* is that of the different teaching styles that Prophets, including Prophet Noah, tried with their people, and how stubborn and blind people can often be.

“He said: O my Lord! surely I have called my people by night and by day! ... Then surely I called to them aloud: Then surely I spoke to them in public and I spoke to them in secret...” (71:5-9)

As you can see from the above example, the story of one prophet is told in different places, allowing us to learn a different lesson and to focus on a different point in each place. This is something that is very unique to the Qur’ān: it is only the Holy Qur’ān that uses this concept-based way of telling stories, in contrast to other books which have different styles. In fact, this is one of the unique miracles of the Qur’ān and one of the proofs that it is the true Word of God.

THE CONTENT OF THE HOLY QUR’ĀN

If we have grown up in a Muslim family, we often take the Holy Qur’ān for granted. We probably recite verses from the Qur’ān every day and we are familiar with it. However, have we ever asked ourselves what we would answer if someone who had never read the Qur’ān asked us: ‘what does the Qur’ān talk about?’

This is a difficult question to answer, because the Holy Qur’ān covers so many diverse topics. However, the Holy Qur’ān introduces itself as a Book of Guidance, and so the answer we should probably give is that the Holy Qur’ān talks about the reality of the world and how we should live our lives the right way.

What do we mean by ‘the reality of the world?’ We mean that the Qur’ān answers the main questions in life, like: ‘Is there life after death?’, ‘Is there a God?’, ‘What is the purpose of life’. By discussing these topics, the Holy Qur’ān shows us the world as it really is. This is part of what we call ‘theology’, and most of the Qur’ān deals with theology. The *āyāt* revealed to the Prophet while he was in Mecca are called ‘Makki’ (Meccan) and they deal mainly with theology and teaching us about the reality of the world.

Once we know the reality of the world and the answers to all the above questions, we then need to know how to put all that knowledge into practice and to find out how we should live in this world in the best way possible. This is the other major issue the Qur’ān discusses. The *āyāt* revealed to the Prophet after he migrated from Mecca are called ‘Madani’ and they deal mostly with social and jurisprudential rules and laws and teach people how to live life in the best way possible.

UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR’ĀN

Since the Holy Qur’an is a Book of Guidance and teaches us how to live, we have to be able to understand it. Firstly, we should do our very best to learn the Arabic language so that we can understand the direct and literal meanings of the Qur’an as ordinary people do. The words of the Holy Qur’ān often have layers of meaning. Allah (SWT) has made the surface meanings of the words of the Qur’ān very easy to understand:

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We have indeed made the Qur’an easy to understand and remember, then is there any that will remember” (54:17)

However, we should also learn how to ‘study’ the Qur’an and understand the correct meaning from the *āyāt* of the Qur’an. In other words, when we read an *āyah* or its translation, we have to be careful not to misunderstand that *āyah*, and to make sure we have understood it in the right context. So sometimes we are looking for the deeper meanings of the words of the Qur’ān. In this case, there are certain rules to follow before we can come to know the real meaning of the words.

1. Firstly, we refer to the Holy Qur’ān itself to find out:ⁱⁱⁱ
 - a. The context of the words and reason for revelation (*asbab un-nuzūl*)
 - b. The timing of revelation (*makki* or *madani*)
 - c. The usages of the particular words within the Qur’ān (e.g. what does *wali* mean in the Qur’ān)
 - d. Other parts of the Qur’ān that deal with the same topic. In this way, we can get an idea of what the Qur’ān says about this topic as a whole, and not make mistakes because we have looked at only one part.
2. Secondly, we refer to the dependable narrations of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Ahlul Bayt (as). The Qur’ān itself refers to them when it says:

“He it is Who raised among the inhabitants of Mecca an Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom.”
(62:2)

All this means that for one to be able to understand the true deeper meanings of the Holy Qur'ān they need to be an expert in many sciences including the Arabic language, Arabic eloquence and the Sciences of Narrations.

The main point to take from all this is although there are many straightforward and obvious meanings which we can learn from the Qur'ān ourselves, there are also parts of the Qur'ān which are more difficult to understand and for which we need to refer to scholars who are experts in the above sciences.

There are a few more points we need to remember about the *āyāt* of the Qur'an. We will discuss these in our next lesson.

Q1. When we want to analyse the meaning of the words of the Qur'ān to understand their deeper meaning, our first reference should be:

- a. The rest of the Qur'ān itself
- b. The words of the Ahlul Bayt
- c. The books of philosophy

Q2. When we refer to the Qur'ān to understand an *āyah* better, we mean:

- a. Understanding the context of the *āyah*
- b. Studying other parts of the Qur'ān that deal with the same topic
- c. Both of the above

Q3. The style of the Qur'ān is based on:

- a. Narratives like the Bible and most other books
- b. Concepts and lessons to be learnt from stories and examples
- c. Neither of the above

Q4. The Qur'ān is mainly a book of:

- a. Social and jurisprudential laws
- b. Guidance about the realities of the world
- c. Science and mathematics

LESSON 4: FURTHER DISCUSSION ON UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

In our last lesson, we discussed a few of the basic principles of understanding or studying the Qur'ān. The main two principles were the following:

- Firstly, we refer to the Holy Qur'ān itself, including other parts of the Qur'ān dealing with the same topic
- Secondly, we refer to the dependable narrations of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the Ahlul Bayt (as).

However, as we mentioned last week, there are a few more important principles to remember.

CLEAR AND AMBIGUOUS *ĀYĀT*

The Qur'ān has clear *āyāt* and ambiguous ones.

- Ambiguous means something that may have more than one meaning. For example, the *āyah*: 'God's hand is above their hands' or 'He (God) settled on the throne' might confuse some people into thinking that God has physical hands just like us and that he sits on thrones physically like human kings do. Of course, this would indicate that God has limitations, which is an obvious falsity, and this cannot be what the Qur'ān means. So how do we find out what the Qur'ān really means? We do this by referring to the clear *āyāt* of the Qur'ān. One of these *āyāt* says: 'there is nothing like Him (God)' while another *āyah* says: 'and there is no equal to him'. These *āyāt* clearly show that God cannot be physical, because there is nothing like Him or equal to Him. Now that we know this, we return to the *āyāt* about the hands and the chair and realise that those *āyāt* were using words that we humans can understand (like 'chair' and 'throne') to help us understand the reality of God's power. God's power is too great to be described by words, but in order to make us limited human beings understand, the Qur'ān uses ordinary words and ordinary concepts to help us understand the point.

UNCONDITIONAL AND LIMITED *ĀYĀT*

The Qur'ān has unconditional and limited *āyāt*. Unconditional *āyāt* set out rules and laws that apply in every situation. For example: 'repel (evil) with what is good' is an unconditional *āyah* that applies in every situation.

It is the default rule that a Muslim should follow. An example of an unconditional *āyah* is the following:

“Say: My Lord has enjoined justice...” (7:29)

In this *āyah*, Allah (SWT) orders us to be just, without any other details or conditions being given.

Now in the following *āyāt*, there is another order to be just, but this time with more conditions and details. This is an example of a limited *ayah*.

“Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you out of your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice. Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are the unjust.” (60:8-9)

STUDYING THE QUR’ĀN AS A WHOLE

When we are trying to learn from the Qur’ān, we have to make sure that we do not just take one *āyah* and base our belief on that. We have to make sure we look at the entire Qur’ān to see what the unconditional and limited *āyāt* say, as well as what the clear and ambiguous *āyāt* say, so that we can get the whole picture.

The last point to remember is that every *āyah* of the Qur’ān was revealed in a certain context and situation. Before we draw any conclusions from an *ayah*, we have to make sure we know the context in which the *āyah* was revealed.

Now that we have learnt some of the principles for understanding the Qur’ān, let us go ahead and learn another lesson from the Qur’ān.

THE QUR’ĀN GUIDES THE INTELLECT

The Holy Qur’an repeatedly encourages us to use our intellect when it comes to our beliefs about the world we live in and the decisions that we make in our life. Let us look at some examples.

In this *āyah*, Allah (SWT) says that He brings about miracles and shows His signs so that people may use their intellect and understand:

“Thus Allah brings the dead to life, and He shows you His signs so that you may understand” (2:73)

In the following *ayah*, Allah (SWT) puts forward a logical argument and then at the end asks us to judge using our intellect. He compares this world, which is nothing but idle play which will soon disappear with the other world, which is eternal and real, and then asks us to judge using our intellect.

“And this world’s life is naught but a play and an idle sport and certainly the abode of the hereafter is better for those who guard (against evil); do you not then understand?” (6:32)

In the following *āyāt*, another logical argument is presented to idol-worshippers, asking them to consider why they would worship something that cannot harm or benefit them, when it is God who has control over everything. Again, there is a logical argument and we are asked to reach a conclusion:

“He said: What! do you then serve besides Allah what brings you not any benefit at all, nor does it harm you? Fie on you and all that ye worship instead of Allah! Have you then no sense?” (21:66-67)

These *āyāt* are quoted from Prophet Ibrāhīm (as). He was a prophet who used intellectual reasoning with all sorts of people in order to guide them towards the true path of worshipping One Lord. The above words are how he tried to convince people who worshipped statues. The following *āyah* shows us how he tried to convince people who worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars:

“So when the night over-shadowed him, he saw a star; said he: Is this my Lord? But when it set, he said: I do not love things that set. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said: Is this my Lord? But when it set, he said: If my Lord had not guided me I should certainly be of the erring people. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my Lord? This is bigger. But when it set, he said: O my people! surely I disassociate myself from what you worship besides Allah. Surely I have turned myself, being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, and I am not of the polytheists.”

Here, we see that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) uses an indirect way of presenting another logical argument. He pretends to consider the moon, sun and stars as gods, but then tells people that he cannot worship such things because they disappear. This means that they are under the control of something else which makes them come and go, and he did not want to worship something that was so powerless. He then clearly states that he will worship the

Being who created the entire universe (including the sun, moon and stars) because He is the true Powerful Lord. It is a very simple logical argument which everyone at his time would have understood. It makes much more sense to worship the Creator of all these things than to worship them, when they are weak and powerless just like humans.

OBSTACLES TO USING THE INTELLECT

Despite the very clear and logical arguments that Prophet Ibrāhīm (as) presented to his people, they did not believe in him and his teachings. This was the same for many other prophets. This is because people often ignore the conclusions that their intellect has reached for the following reasons:

- **Personal desires and interests:** the Qur'ān gives the example of Jewish rabbis who would understand the Old Testament and know it was true but would change the words so they could keep their power and wealth.

“Do you then hope that they would believe in you, and a party from among them indeed used to hear the Word of Allah, then altered it after they had understood it, and they know (this)” (2:75)

- **Imitating people of the past:** many good and correct ideas are rejected simply because they go against what the society had believed in the past. We all know about Galileo and how he was persecuted because he claimed that the centre of the solar system was the sun and not the earth, and Socrates, the Greek philosopher who was forced to drink poison because he asked people too many questions about the purpose of life and their ethics and morals. Similarly, the Prophets were persecuted throughout history because they tried to change the false ideas of society and to teach the truth about the Unity of God.

“And when it is said to them: Follow that which Allah has revealed, they say: We follow that which our fathers believed. What! Even though their fathers had no sense at all and had no guidance?” (2:170)

- **Fear of tyrants:** often people rejected the truth because it was too difficult to try to bring about change, as it would cause them to be persecuted or

killed by the evil tyrants of their time. A famous example from the Qur'ān is the example of Pharaoh.

This is why the Qur'ān places so much emphasis on using the intellect. We have to make sure that when we make decisions in our life and about our beliefs, we are using our intellect only, and not allowing fear, imitation or desires to influence our decisions.

We have to learn to think independently and make decisions based on what makes sense, not based on what our friends think, or what our society thinks, or what suits us best. If we do not learn to do this, we will end up making big mistakes in our life. We should always remember the following narration from Imam al-Kāḍimī (as) when it comes to making decisions based on the evidence we have and thinking independently:

“If you had a walnut clasped in your hand and the entire world told you it was a nugget of gold, it would remain a walnut, and if you had a nugget of gold clasped in your hand, it would remain a gold nugget even if the entire world told you it was only a walnut”.

Review Questions

Q1. The Qur'ān encourages us to use what to make decisions?

- a. What our society follows and believes in
- b. What our desires want and what will make us rich and comfortable
- c. What our intellect sees as the truth

Q2. An ambiguous āyah should be understood:

- a. By looking at the clear āyāt of the Holy Qur'ān dealing with the same topic
- b. By guessing
- c. By our personal opinion

Q3. When we want to know what the Qur'ān says about a particular topic, we should:

- a. Study the first āyah dealing with that topic only
- b. Study any āyah dealing with that topic that we come across
- c. Study all the āyāt in the Qur'ān that deal with that topic

ⁱ Main reference for this lesson was: Sheikh Mansour Leghaei, eHAWZA Course: Sciences of the Qur'an

ⁱⁱ [Al-Mahajjat Al-Bayda, vol 5, pg 264].

ⁱⁱⁱ The best example of this kind of interpretation is Al-Mizan by Ayatollah Tabataba'ee