



# The Qur'an: The Final Revelation







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The Qur'an is the sacred book of Muslims who believe that its complete text came through revelation. Each word of it was revealed in Arabic by Allah to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the Archangel Gabriel over a span of twenty-three years in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The revelation of the Qur'an began when the Prophet was forty years old. It consists of around 600 pages, with 114 chapters and 6,236 verses. The length of chapters vary with the longest chapter having 286 verses and the shortest having only three.





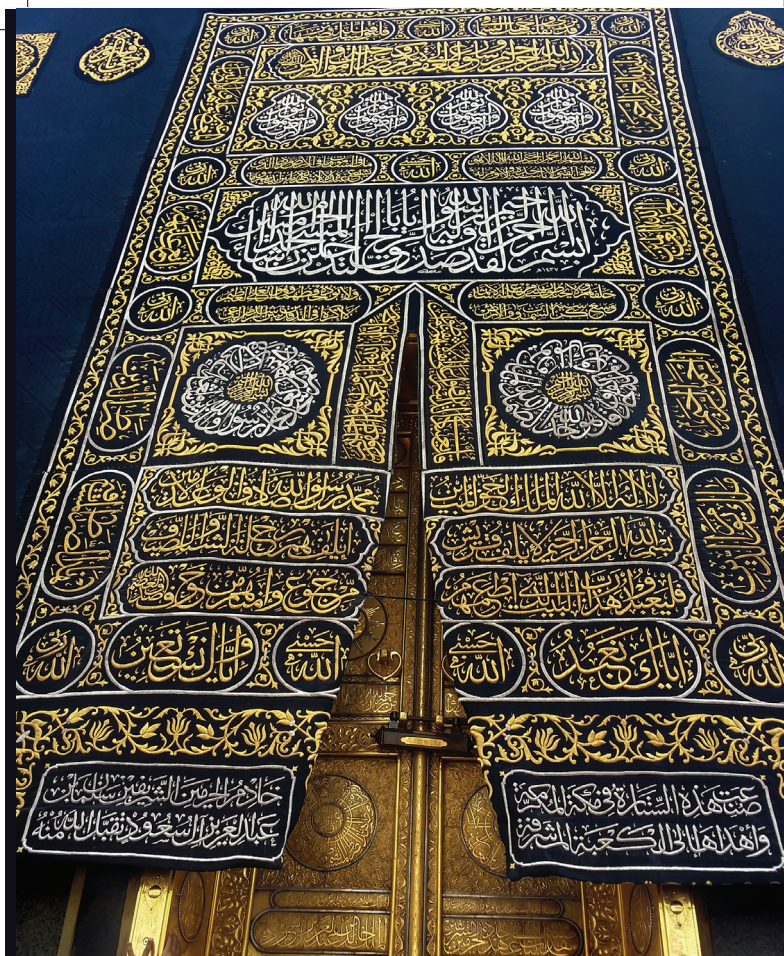
Given that the Prophet Muhammad was an illiterate man, his early followers eagerly memorized and recorded each and every revelation as it was revealed. By the time the Prophet passed away, the Qur'an had been completed and many people had memorized it entirely. Within two years after the death of the Prophet, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, compiled the Qur'an into a manuscript which became the basis for the authorized editions that were distributed to each Muslim province during the rule of Uthman, the third caliph. Remarkably, a few of those early manuscripts have been preserved and can still be viewed in museums





today. Accordingly, the Qur'an's historical authenticity can be verified, in fact it has been preserved with such care that only one authorized version [in Arabic] exists.

The word "Qur'an" literally means recitation. In addition, the first verse of the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad was, *"Read/Recite in the name of your Lord, the Creator...."* While earlier



religious scriptures had been written and passed down by an elite circle of priests and scribes usually long after the death of the religion's founder, such a directive (to read) to Muhammad who, like most people of his time, could neither read nor write, marked the beginning of a new age in human communication, learning, and development. Indeed, Muslims believe in



the original form of all the revealed books which are mentioned in the Qur'an: the Torah of Moses, Psalms of David, and the Gospels of Jesus. The Qur'an also makes mention of the Scrolls of Abraham.

Since Moses' contemporaries were masters in magic, his major miracle was to defeat the best magicians of Egypt in his day. Jesus' contemporaries were recognized as skillful physicians; therefore, his miracle was to cure incurable diseases. The Arabs, which were the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad, were known for their eloquence and magnificent poetry. Accordingly, Prophet Muhammad's major miracle was the Qur'an, the equivalent of which the whole legion of Arab poets and orators could not produce, despite the repeated challenge from the Qur'an itself:

*"Say, if the whole of mankind... were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support."* [Isra, 17/88]



The Qur'an is revered by Muslims as being the final scripture of Allah. Its verses are and have been lovingly recited and memorized while its orders are practiced in life by Muslims of all nationalities ever since its revelation. It is the verses of the Qur'an that Muslims read during their five daily prayers. The faithful ones are inspired, consoled, and often moved to tears by its eloquence and poetic imagery.

For the past fourteen centuries, Muslims from all over the world have written Qur'anic verses in various beautiful calligraphic forms, which were mainly produced and perfected by the Ottoman Turks. In fact, it was in Istanbul that the finest calligraphic scripts were produced. A famous saying, therefore, goes: *"The Qur'an was revealed in Mecca, recited in Egypt, and written in Istanbul."*

In addition to its beauty, the Qur'an contains many verses which accurately describe natural phenomenon in various fields such as astronomy, geology, and embryology. Scientists have found its descriptions to be inexplicably valid for a book dating from the 7th century.





Naturally, the conflict which emerged in Europe during the Middle Ages between faith and reason or religion and science did not arise in Islam. The Qur'an in many of its verses repeatedly encourages people to reflect and use their intelligence. Even though it is not a science textbook, its verses direct humans to reflect on the glory of Allah while highlighting the wonders of nature or lessons from history.





Muslims believe that The Qur'an is a living revelation for the modern age, which allows it to reveal itself afresh with the passing of time. Since the Qur'an is a special message from the Creator to humanity, one who wonders about the purpose of life and meaning of existence will find it to be a guide par excellence. The opening chapter [*al-Fatiha*], which is described as the essence of the Qur'an, reads:

*"In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds - The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Judgment. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path - The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray."*

The Qur'an's main message is to call people to turn to the Source of all being and the Giver of life, and to serve Him with a pure heart, free of idolatry or superstition. It rejects the concept of salvation or special privilege based on ethnicity, race, or color. Spiritual salvation is to be achieved by an attempt to make amends for one's sins and a sincere intention not to repeat one's mistakes in the future. There is no official priesthood in Islam, and the "imam" is simply a knowledgeable prayer leader; in Islam one's sins are only and directly confessed to and forgiven by the Creator.



The Qur'an presents itself as guidance for the whole of mankind. It is not for any particular race, person or period of time. It relates its arguments to basic values of faith and ethics while assessing certain experiences of nations throughout history. It does not



require people to believe blindly, as it is addressed to *“those who are conscious of God, and those who use their reason.”* (Rum, 30/24). It asks humans to think about themselves and the existence; of the earth and mountains; clouds and sky; the sun, moon, and planets in their orbits; and the alternations of night and day. It asks us to reflect upon our own life. It asks us to contemplate on the seeds we sow, the water we drink, the food we eat, and all other innumerable signs of creation. Throughout the Qur'an, there is great emphasis on knowledge and reason as the valid way to faith and God-consciousness. It states: *“Only those of the servants of God who possess knowledge are the ones who truly stand in awe of Him.”* (Fatir, 35/28)

Overall, the Qur'an enjoins good deeds and prohibits evil ones by introducing humans to a straight way of life. It also provides answers to basic existential questions such as the afterlife and the meaning of life on earth. It offers humans a framework for their existence, environment, society, and the whole creation.





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