



Tell me about the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ān is the last Book from Allāh, as revealed to His final Messenger Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. It our Guide and our Light. Allāh says,

الم ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ ۚ فِيهِ ۙ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

Alif, Laam, Meem. This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh¹ – Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in what has been revealed to you, (O Muhammad), and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain (in faith). Those are upon (right) guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are successful.

Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:1-5



How did the Qur'ān get its name?

It is a name from Allāh سبحانه وتعالى Himself, mentioned a number of times in the Book itself.



What does that name actually mean?

It means 'recitation' or 'reading.' The root lies in the verb, 'qara'a (to read). It is a word from *fus-hah* (Classical Arabic).



Is 'fus-hah' the language of the Qur'ān?

Yes. Beautiful and majestic, Classical Arabic. Allāh tells us,

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'ān that you might understand.

Sūrah az Zukhruf, 43:3



Is the Qur'ān known by any other names?

Yes, names and descriptions which themselves help us understand exactly how important a book it is. The Qur'ān is:

- *Kitāb-min-Allāh*, the Book from Allāh, The Mighty, the Wise, [39:1];
- *Al Furqān*, the Criterion, we use to judge between right and wrong, [25:1];
- *AmrAllāh*, Command of Allāh, which we follow and obey, [65:5];

¹ i.e., *taqwa*, indicating piety, fear, consciousness of Allāh, being careful to avoid His displeasure.

- *Al Hudā*, the Guide, for those ever conscious of Allāh, [2:2];
- *Al Maw'idhah*, the Instruction for those ever conscious of Allāh, [3:138];
- *Al Bayān*, the Clear Statement for all people, [3:138];
- *Al Kitāb al Hakīm*, the Wise Book, [31:2];
- *Al Qur'ān al Karīm*, the Noble Qur'ān, [56:77];
- *Al Haq*, the Truth, [34:6];
- *Rahmah lil Muminīn*, a Mercy from Allāh for the believers, [10:57];
- *An Nūr*, the Light, bringing us out of the darkness of ignorance, [42:52];
- *Ash Shifa*, the Cure, a remedy for spiritual disease, [17:82];
- *Al Kitāb al Mubīn*, the Clear Book, [43:2];
- *Al Balagh*, the Clear Notification for all people, [14:52];
- *Hablullāh*, Rope of Allāh, [3:103];
- *Dhikrun Mubārak*, a Blessed Message, [21:50];
- *Kitābun 'Azīz*, a Mighty Book, protected by Allāh, [41:41];
- *Bushra lil Muslimīn*, Good News for the Muslims, [16:2].



How is the Qur'ān structured? Does it have chapters like other books?

The Qur'ān has 114 chapters, known as *sūrah*s. These *sūrah*s are of varying lengths and are themselves divided into of verses, or *āyāt*.² For ease of reading it is also divided into 30 sections, of equal size, called *juz*.



Who wrote the Qur'ān?

The Qur'ān is the Speech of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى.



Did Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم author any parts of the Qur'ān?

No. He صلى الله عليه وسلم was known as *al nabi al ummi*, the illiterate prophet. He could not read or write, let alone pen such a vast work. Any Muslim who refutes or doubts that the Qur'ān is the Word of Allāh or ascribes even part authorship to any other person, including Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, has fallen outside the fold of Islām. Allāh tells us,

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

Or do they say, "He invented it"? Rather, it is the Truth from your Lord, (O Muhammad), that you may warn a people to whom no warner has come before you (so) perhaps they will be guided.

Sūrah al Sajdah, 32:3



So, the Qur'ān is a miracle?

Yes. The word in Arabic is *mu'jiza*. There are many references in the Qur'ān that stand as testament to its miraculous nature. For example:

- The sheer magnificence of its high quality *Fus-sah* language, something that astonished the Makkans;
- Its diversity of themes, ranging from, for example, manners, etiquette and family life through to precise discussion of heavyweight jurisprudential and legislative matters;
- Its discussion of ancient and, at that time, future events, none of which the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could have known about, of his own accord;

² Singular, *āyah*. Although the word *āyah* is commonly translated as 'verse,' it actually means a 'sign.' Each verse of the Qur'ān stands as a 'sign' towards belief in the Oneness of Allāh and Al Islām.

- its description of incredible scientific phenomena, many only discovered and understood centuries later. The phases of an embryo, the geological role of mountains, occurrences deep in the oceans or as you ascend to the skies. These are just a few examples of astounding facts in the Qur'ān that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم simply could not have known about.
-and much, much more.³

Various prophets were given various miracles. The Prophet Muhammad's صلى الله عليه وسلم major miracle was the Qur'ān, a divinely revealed book, sent down to him by *wahī*.

What is *wahī*?

When it came to religion, The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never spoke of his own accord. His words were always words and concepts inspired to him by Allāh. Such inspiration is known as *wahī*. Allāh reminds us,

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

*“Nor does he [i.e., Muhammad] speak from [his own] inclination.
It is not but a revelation, revealed.”*

Sūrah an Najm, 53:3,4

The general words of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم were based upon *wahī bātin* (internal inspiration). He would express those concepts to his *sahābah* رضي الله عنهم. They today form the, so-called, *ahadīth*, sayings and traditions of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The Qur'ān was revealed not by *wahī bātin* but by *wahī dhāhir* (manifest inspiration). Here the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would receive not 'general concepts,' but rather 'precise words', words that would form the Qur'ān.

Whilst receiving *wahī dhāhir*, would Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم hear Allāh's own voice?

No. The words of the Qur'ān were delivered to him by the angel Jibrīl عليه السلام

وَإِنَّهُ لَنَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ

And indeed, it (i.e., the Qur'ān) is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit (i.e., Gabriel) has brought it down upon your heart, (O Muhammad) – that you may be of the warners.

Sūrah ash Shu'arā, 26:192-194

When was his first occasion of *wahī dhāhir*?

Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم received the first revelation of the Qur'ān at the age of forty, from Jibrīl in a cave in Makkah. The cave is called Hīra and is to be found on Jabal Nūr, the Mountain of Light.

And the last?

Twenty-three years later, just before he died at the age of sixty-three. During that period Jibrīl would come to him at various intervals and with Qur'ānic portions of varying lengths⁴.

³ The concept of *i'jāz* (which has the same root as *mu'jiza*) is a vast area and relates to the inimitability of the Qur'ān.

⁴ Whilst there is debate about these ages, the figures quoted are according to some of the most authentic sources. Insha' Allāh, we will discuss the magnificent event at Hīra Cave in more detail in Book 3 of this series, which will examine the Life of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.

 **Was revelation always in the Hīra cave?**

Wahī dhāhir happened anywhere, in the mosque, at home, even riding on a camel. Often, people around The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم could tell that he was receiving revelation and was listening to the words of Jibrīl.

 **Was the Qur'ān revealed in its entirety, or did it remain incomplete?**

The Holy Qur'ān was revealed in full in those twenty-three years.

 **So, revelation continued even after the Muslims emigrated to Madīnah?**


Yes. It did. In fact, there are distinct differences between the so-called 'Makki' verses revealed in Makkah and 'Madani' ones, revealed Madīnah.

 **Why should there be differences? It's only a question of geography?**


Well, it is important to bear in mind the circumstances of the Muslims at the time these *sūrahs* were being revealed. The Makki *sūrahs* were revealed at a time when the new Muslims were being vilified, still living as a minority in Makkah. The words of the Qur'ān were fresh and inspiring, but were being received amidst an air of persecution and antagonism from the disbelievers of Makkah. By contrast, the Madani *sūrahs* were revealed at a time when Islām was in the ascendancy, a time when Muslims now had they own developing Islāmīc realm.



Makkah al Mukarramah - Holy City of Makkah

 **SubhānAllāh!**⁵ That certainly is a very wise approach.

Yes, it is. Makki sūrahs emphasised *tawhīd* and the basic beliefs. They guided all towards a new moral code. They highlighted the folly of idolatry, appealing to the *mushrikīn* with intense, rhythmical language. They related stories of the fate of past generations that practiced idolatry. The Makki sūrahs tended to address the wider audience, for example, usually beginning, “O People,” or “O Mankind.”

 **And the Madani sūrahs? What did they emphasise?**

By contrast, the Madani sūrahs contained a lot of legislation as well as rules governing social, political and economic life. They discussed issues relating to Islāmic governance, showing the new Muslim government how to conduct itself in war and in peace with neighbouring nations. The Madani sūrahs tended to specifically address the Muslims, providing them with guidance and instruction and often beginning ‘Oh, you who believe.’




Madinah-tal Munawwarah - The illuminated city of Madinah

 **Sūrahs being revealed to match the circumstances of the community! That’s amazing!**

Well, it gets more amazing than that. Did you know that numerous *āyāt* of the Qur’ān descended by reason of precise and particular events in early Islām? They had *asbāb-an-nuzūl* (reasons for descent) and came down either:

1. Because of an event or occurrence in the lifetime of The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, or
2. In response to a question posed by sceptical *kuffār* or inquisitive Muslims.

 **Alhamdulillah! Again, that’s amazing! When we read the Qur’ān today, how do we know if any particular *āyah* came for any particular reason?**

⁵ *SubhānAllāh* – Glory be to Allāh; *Alhamdulillah* - All Praise is due to Allāh; *Insha’Allāh* – If Allāh Will.

The primary method for deciding whether verses have *asbāb-an-nuzūl* is by reference to the ahadīth and the statements of the *sahābah*. We refer to the narrations of those individuals who witnessed first-hand the arrival of various verses as well as the circumstances for them arriving. Basically, two conditions must apply:

1. The verse must relate to a specific occurrence in the lifetime of The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and
2. That occurrence should have occurred shortly before the particular revelation.

According to the *ālim*, Al Wāhidi, "It is not permitted to speak about *asbāb-an-nuzūl* except by transmitting reports from those who witnessed the revelation of the Qur'ān."⁶



Can you give me some real examples of *āyāt* descending for a 'reason'?

Jābir ibn Abdullāh رضي الله عنه narrates, "Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم came to visit me while I was sick and unconscious. He performed ablution and sprinkled the remaining water on me and I became conscious and said, "O Allāh's Messenger! To whom will my inheritance go as I have neither ascendants nor descendants? Then the Divine verses regarding *farā'id* (inheritance) were revealed."⁷

Bukhāri

Jundub Ibn Abdullāh رضي الله عنه narrates that Jibrīl did not come to the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (for some time) and so one of the Quraish women said, "His Satan has deserted him. So came the Divine Revelation: "By the forenoon and by the night When it is still! Your Lord (O Muhammad) has neither Forsaken you nor hated you."⁸"

Bukhāri



Why was the Qur'ān not revealed all in one go?

Allāh Knows Best, but it is clear that there is Wisdom in His method of gradual revelation, which, in Arabic is known as *tanjīm*. Commentators of the Qur'ān have indicated possible reasons for this approach. These include:

- To impart vast quantities of information, slowly and steadily. The numerous stories, injunctions, laws and other information would have been too much for the people to acquire in one go;
- To gradually strengthen the faith of the new Muslims. They would thereby feel less fearful and calmer about the way of life being revealed to them;
- To strengthen faith with miraculous answers to questions, as they arose;
- To deal with arguments and challenges of *kuffār* as they as they arose;
- To help gradually change the entrenched beliefs and practices of the *kuffār*
- To ease reading, memorisation, understanding and implementation of the words.⁹

Allāh tells us,

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۗ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ۚ وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا

⁶ However, it should be noted, that there is a debate amongst the scholars as to whether testimony from the Successors or students of the Successors can be accepted also to establish *asbāb-an-nuzūl*.

⁷ The verse in question is an-Nisā', 4:11.

⁸ The verses in question are adh-Dhuhā, 93:1-3

⁹ For further interesting information about such concepts as *i'jāz*, *makki/madani sūrah*s, *asbāb-an-nuzūl* and *tanjīm*, refer to An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān by Abu Ammar Yasir Qadhi, Al Hidayah Publishing.

And those who disbelieve say, “Why was the Qur’ān not revealed to him all at once?” Thus (it is) that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have spaced it distinctly. And they do not come to you with an argument, except that We bring you the Truth and the best explanation.

Sūrah al Furqān, 25:32,34



Has the Qur’ān suffered the same fate of the earlier books? Has it been changed?

No. *Alhamdulillah*, the road of altering the Divine Word is one that Muslims did not go down. Not one dash or dot of the Qur’ān has changed in the 1400 years since its revelation. Any Muslim with *taqwa* would never dare do such a thing. Even if anyone, Muslim or otherwise, were to try to alter the Qur’ān, they would surely fail, because the Qur’ān is a book openly declared as **protected by Allāh**,

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

Indeed, it is We who sent down the message (i.e. The Qur’ān), and indeed, We will be its guardian.

Sūrah al Hijr, 15:9



I have seen translations of the Qur’ān in so many languages? Can’t that cause the Qur’an to change?

It is true that the Qur’ān has been universally translated and, *Insha’Allāh*, those translations will help millions to understand Allāh’s Book as they must.¹⁰ However, be careful. We cannot call those translations, ‘The Qur’ān.’ They are only one person’s understanding of the Arabic text of the Qur’ān. Only the Arabic text can be described as the ‘Qur’ān.’ All the others are merely ‘translations’ or ‘interpretations.’ I reemphasise again, the Arabic Qur’ān has remained intact and exactly the same over the centuries, and it is the Arabic Qur’ān alone that acts as our reference point for all discussions on religion.



The Bible has many ‘versions.’ Are there ‘versions’ of the Qur’ān?

No, there aren’t. You will not find the twenty-fifth revision of the seventeenth edition of the Qur’ān! You will not find the ‘King Khalid Version’ or the ‘Grand Moroccan Version’ of the Qur’ān.

Unlike the previous books, the Qur’ān did not become a collection of writings by multiple, human authors generated over thousands of years. It is not a book to be ‘modified’ and then patronised by presidents or monarchs, nations or corporations. The Noble Qur’ān is a revelation from Allāh Himself, and as such, its text is unique, consistent and unalterable. He tells us,

وَاتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا

And recite, (O Muhammad), what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no changer of His words, and never will you find in other than Him a refuge.

Sūrah al Kahf, 18:27

¹⁰ Allāh says, Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:121, “Those to whom We have sent the book study it as it should be studied”

The Books of Allāh [part b]

Questions

1. What does the word 'Qur'ān' mean?
2. Where does the name come from?
3. In what language is the Qur'ān? Be specific.
4. Give seven other names in English and Arabic by which the Qur'ān is also known.
5. What is a 'sūrah'? How many sūrahs does the Qur'ān have?
6. Why would it have been impossible for Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to have written any part of the Qur'ān?
7. Explain the difference between *wahī dhāhir* and *wahī bātin*?
8. Where did the first revelation of the Qur'ān take place? How old was the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم at the time?
9. What is *tanjīm*?
10. How many days, months or years did it take for it to come down to earth?
11. What is *asbāb-an-nuzūl*?
12. We know the Qur'ān has not been changed in all the time since its revelation. Why not? What does Allāh tell us about this?

Islam around the world



Asiya meets her neighbours, Melbourne, Australia
