

The Qur'an

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the true word of Allah and that it was revealed directly from Him via Angel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The Qur'an is the final message and confirms all messages that came before it.

The Qur'an is not a long book, considering the fact that it is God's guide to mankind. It consists of 114 chapters, ranging in length from over 200 verses, to some chapters with just 3 verses. It is divided into 30 parts, and was revealed over a course of 23 years to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The Prophet Muhammad himself could not read or write, which made it impossible for him to have written the words himself. Upon receiving revelation, he would relate it to his companions who would then write it down and recite it back to him to ensure it was recorded correctly.

'And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.' [2:23]

The Qur'an is a book for all mankind, providing guidance for humans on how to live according to Allah's will. Unlike the Bible and the Torah, Muslims believe that the Qur'an remains unchanged since the time of its revelation. Qur'anic manuscripts have been found dating back to the 7th

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century, which contain the exact same words as modern copies.

The Qur'an is not a 'book' in the traditional sense, it does not follow a narrative from start to finish. Instead stories can be found in various parts of the Qur'an along with morals, rulings, descriptions of the After Life, verses of encouragement, information about God and even scientific facts.

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, a language of incredible depth and beauty. Scholars spend many years attempting to understand various sections of the Qur'an as it is such a rich and complex text. Many translations exist in many languages to allow those who do not speak Arabic to gain some understanding of the sacred text. However, it would be more accurate to refer to these translations as 'interpretations' since other languages can only convey a sense of the meaning, and cannot often grasp the entire meaning the verses convey. When reading the Qur'an in English therefore, it is recommended to bear in mind that this is one person's interpretation, and it is useful to read more than one translation in order to gain a greater sense of the true meaning. For this reason Muslims all over the world strive to learn Arabic in order to be able to fully understand the words of Almighty God.

The Revelation of the Qur'an

As we have mentioned, the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Allah through Angel Gabriel, known as Jibra'il in Arabic.

The first revelation took place when Muhammad was 40 years old. On a night in the last days of the month of Ramadhan, Muhammad was sat in a cave on Mount Hira, where he used to go to be alone and to meditate, away from the idol worshipping that took place in the city of Makkah below.

On one night, now known as the Night of Power, or Laylatul Qadr, the Angel Jibrail appeared to the Prophet and commanded him to 'Read!' The Prophet, being illiterate, replied that he could not read. At this point the Angel embraced him and squeezed him so hard that Muhammad thought he would die. Upon releasing him, again the Angel commanded Muhammad to read, to

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which Muhammad again replied that he could not. Again the angel squeezed him. This sequence was repeated a final time until Muhammad asked 'What shall I read?'

It was then that the Angel Jibrail revealed to the Prophet the first revelation of the Qur'an, the following five verses which are now part of Surah Al-Alaq, chapter 96:

'Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists),
Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood).
Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous,
Who has taught by the pen,
Has taught man that which he knew not.'

Other Holy Books

Muslims also believe that Allah revealed several Holy Books to prophets before the Qur'an as instructions and guidance for the people of those times. These holy books include:

The Zabur The Psalms Revealed to David
The Suhuf The Scrolls Revealed to Abraham
The Tawrat The Torah Revealed to Moses
The Injeel The Gospel Revealed to Jesus

These books are mentioned several times in the Qur'an itself and share many of their stories and rulings.

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'He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Torah and the Gospel.' [3:3]

Although Muslims hold these books in high regard and believe they were originally revealed by Allah, over the course of history these books have either been lost or changed over the years and thus their original messages have become distorted. The Qur'an was sent to reaffirm the true messages of these previous books and shall not itself ever be changed. The Qur'an is thus a book for all mankind, rather than simply the people living at the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

'Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian.' [15:9]