

The Quran

Without doubt, when we come to accept the existence of God the next most important question to arise in the minds of many people is - what is our place in His grand plan? Is there a message that He wants to convey to us? Does He care about us or the world He created for us? What is the point of life and the tragedies and misfortunes we see and experience?

The good news though, is that Allah has indeed revealed a message to all of humanity to answer these questions, and other questions besides them; and that message is the Quran. Indeed, Allah stated in the Quran what may be translated to mean:

We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the messengers after him: We sent inspiration to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Harun and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms. Of some apostles, We have already told the story, of others We have not - and to Moses God spoke direct - apostles who gave good news as well as warning, that mankind after (the coming) of the apostles should have no plea against God: for God is exalted in power and ways [4:163-5]

But what is the Quran?

The Quran is the most widely and most frequently read book in the world both today, and over the last millennium. Its slow, rhythmic recitation, with simultaneous reflection upon its profound meanings, is considered an act of worship in Islam. It is a book that has from its very inception changed the hearts and minds of many who have heard its magnificent verses as it forces you to think, forces you to choose. It is a book that is so miraculous, so venerated, that thousands of men, women, and children learn the entire book by heart - word by word, vowel by vowel. Additionally, the Quran holds the distinction of being the most authenticated book in the world.

Yet, the Quran has also been the most attacked book in history. Since its initial revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, many have sought to prevent others from hearing it or reading it. Some governments have even attempted to ban it from circulation in more recent times. Why though has it invoked such a response, such vehement opposition?

Although a complete or in-depth study of the Quran is well beyond the scope of this introductory work, adequate answers to these questions will be provided to give the reader a good understanding from where they can then pursue further study.

The word Quran, or more properly, al-Quran, is an Arabic word which means “the Recitation”. It is Allah’s message and His prescribed code of life to all of humanity from the time of Muhammad till the end of the world. Its most distinguishing feature is its purity; every word of it is the word of Allah, the Exalted.

Although many people think that it was written by Muhammad, this couldn't be further from the truth. The Quran is not a book written by Muhammad or any other human being. No, it is a collection of divine revelations – the spoken word of Allah exactly as it was revealed to Muhammad by the Archangel Gabriel. Indeed, Allah has described His Messenger Muhammad in the following verses as being neither able to read or write,

And you (O Muhammad) were never known to have read any scripture before it (before the revelation of the Quran), nor did you ever write any with your right hand; if that had been the case, then those who follow falsehood might have doubted [29:48]

And

Those who follow the Messenger, the illiterate Prophet ... [8:157]

As such this was one of the first miracles of the Quran, and indeed a miracle given to the Prophet, that although he was known to be unable to read or write that he brought forth verses from a Book whose eloquence and majesty were immediately acknowledged. Had he been a poet or a scribe prior to the revelation, then people could wonder if he wrote it himself.

The Prophet Muhammad's role, similar to that of the other prophets of Allah before him, was to be the "means" through which the words were passed on to mankind, and also as a role model to explain their meanings and demonstrate their applications – all through the divine inspiration.

As such, the Quran is known to be the miracle given to Muhammad; a miracle that was not only meant for the people of his era, but for all the generations to come. Indeed, it is well known to the Jews and Christians that whenever Allah sent a Messenger to the world in the past, He would aid that Messenger with various miracles to further validate that the message they carried was indeed from Allah, the Master of the Universe. For example, during the time of Moses, the people of Pharaoh were steeped in magic and felt they had reached the pinnacle of this dark art. As such the miracles of Moses – changing his wooden staff into a real snake, turning the river Nile to blood and parting the Red Sea (amongst other signs) – were meant to humble the people and to remind them that the power, control and might of Allah are true and not just sleight of hand tricks or optical illusions.

Similarly, Jesus was sent at a time when the Children of Israel and the Romans felt that they had uncovered all there was to know of medicine. Yet, when confronted with conditions like leprosy and blindness their "knowledge" was truly powerless in comparison with the power and ability of Allah who not only provided Jesus the ability to heal the leper and give sight to the blind, but to even raise the dead! And again, all of these miracles were only by Allah's permission. And so it became clear to those with perceptive minds and humble hearts that indeed, Allah is the All-Powerful and the All-

Mighty and that anything and everything else only has power and ability by His permission and not of itself.

So with this understanding, the coming of Muhammad confronted people with a similar situation. By the beginning of the seventh century of the Common Era (CE), the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula had believed themselves to have reached the peak of eloquence in their linguistic ability, exemplified mainly in their poetry. Indeed, a study of Arabic poetry from this time yields a treasure of magnificent poetry demonstrating a profound understanding and skillful manipulation of Arabic grammar and linguistic meanings. And then the Quran was revealed.

Countless men and women, even children, upon hearing its powerful and grand verses became Muslims immediately. They realized that these were not the words of any human. It was different. Stronger, more magnificent, more profound, and it made an enormous impact on their minds as well as their hearts. It spoke to their very souls, appealing to them, challenging them, and transforming them. But the miracle didn't stop there.

As Islam spread from the Arabian Peninsula into non-Arab territories a different miracle soon impressed itself upon these new towns and societies. The effect of those words upon those who accepted Islam was unique. It produced a loyalty and level of adherence that people had not observed in other religions or ideologies. It also offered proofs and challenges that were absent in other books alleging to be from the One God. It reasoned with their hearts, answering their questions as opposed to simply demanding "blind faith". For example, after a long passage about the true nature of Jesus (specifically that he is among the noble and honored Messengers of Allah and that he is not in any way part of the essence of Allah) Allah states what can be translated to mean:

This is indeed the truth from your Lord, so be not of those who doubt. And whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of sure knowledge, then say to them: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves, then let us sincerely pray, and invoke the curse of Allah upon those who lie! [3:60-61]

This very challenge was indeed put forth to a delegation of Christians from northern Yemen by the Prophet Muhammad himself, as commanded by Allah, and they declined after a long night wrought with consideration. Once again, this is a challenge – a proof of sorts – as to who is in doubt concerning their belief, because if someone does truly believe that Jesus is either God or the begotten son of God then surely they would accept this challenge and call the curse of God down upon themselves and their family or people if they are wrong. Such challenges are indeed unique in books of religion, and a number of other challenges and ultimatums can also be found in the Quran. But the miracle didn't stop there.

The faith of Islam continued to grow century after century, until it eventually reached the age of modern science, namely the 20th century. It was in this era that a new miracle of

the Quran began to shine forth when scientific discoveries began to confirm many of the scientific verses of the Quran.

Although the Quran has most recently distinguished itself in the arena of scientific knowledge, it must be still remembered that it is not a book of science – it is a book of guidance. So the unique way in which Allah, through His revealed verses in the Quran, uses scientific facts and concepts to call the reader to the worship of the One and Only God is quite interesting. For example, in illustrating the guarantee of the resurrection of humanity on the Day of Judgment, Allah states what can be translated to mean:

O people! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then surely We created you from dust, then from a small seed, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, that We may make it clear to you;

And We cause what We please to stay in the wombs till an appointed time, then We bring you forth as babies, that you may then attain maturity and full strength; and some of you are called to die, and some are sent back to the feeblest old age, so that they know nothing after having known much;

And you see the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred to life, it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth in pairs.

This is so, because Allah is the Reality and it is He Who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things. And verily the Hour will come: there can be no doubt about it, or about the fact that Allah will indeed raise up all who are in the graves. [22:5-7]

So in these verses, Allah uses the current scientific understanding of embryology (formation of the human from embryo to fetus in the womb of the mother) in detailed and descriptive terms that were only discovered in the late twentieth century with the advent of electron and high amplification microscopy. Allah relates these stages to us, not for us to build scientific knowledge, but to instead confirm for us that the promise of the Day of Judgment is indeed a reality.

The only One who could say this with surety is none other than the Master of the Day of Judgment, Allah. He is also the only One who could detail to us the stages of human development over one thousand years before we could even imagine these stages ourselves with modern scientific instrumentation because He is the Creator and the One who causes things to go from stage to stage in development. Allah does indicate to us the spiritual value of these scientifically laden verses when He says what can be translated to mean:

We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and within their own selves, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the Truth. Is it not enough that your Lord is a witness over all things? [41:53]

Hence, it is clear how this Book repeatedly appeals to you to think, reason, and understand why we believe what we believe. Furthermore, it forbids you to believe blindly without reflection and reasoning.

In fact, the word for faith in the Arabic language is e-maan and comes from the root amana, which means safety, security and trust – those very things that can only be established in a heart after something has proven itself worthy. For example, if you met a stranger on the street and he asks you to get into his car, would you trust him? Of course not, because he hasn't proven himself. But if your best friend saw you and asked you if you wanted a ride, that would be a totally different story because you know that person and you trust them.

Thus, Allah provides these and other examples in the Quran so that you can get a glimpse into His infinite knowledge and power, thereby giving you a good and solid reason to trust Him and to trust His Message to you. And when you realize how all these things are true, then the other things, like: Heaven, Hell, the Day of Judgement, etc. must also be true. Now, let us take a look at some more examples of the amazing science found in the Quran, and see how Allah uses these verses to call people to His worship.

The Dynamic Expansion of the Universe

Up until the early twentieth century, the field of astronomy held the belief that the universe was something static, or fixed in place. Scientists theorized that when the universe came into existence that it didn't significantly change its dimensions afterwards. This theory though was effectively proven false in the early 1900's.

In 1925, Edwin Hubble (after whom the Hubble Space telescope is named) provided the first observational evidence for the expansion of the universe. This means that since its coming to existence, the universe's boundaries have been expanding. Stephen Hawking (one of the top astrophysicists of today and author of the book, *A Brief History of Time*) states: 'The universe is not static, as had previously been thought, it is expanding'.

So, what did Allah say in the Quran, almost 1300 years before this discovery and almost 1400 years before the Hubble telescope?

And the heavens, We constructed them with power and skill - and indeed We are expanding it. [51:47]

Mountains Are Like Stakes in the Earth

Geology is the study of the Earth and its properties, formation and behavior as seen through earthquakes, geysers, and tectonic plate movement, amongst other things. Among the more recent discoveries of modern geology, there is a phenomenon called ***folding***, which appears to be responsible for the formation of mountain ranges.

The earth's crust, on which we live, can be described as a hard but thin shell. The layers under the crust on the other hand, are extremely hot, liquefied (lava-like) and much deeper than the crust. It has also been shown that the stability of the mountains is associated with this idea of **folding**, for it is these folds that provide foundations upon which to erect the mountains.

Geologists further state that the depth of the Earth is about 3,750 miles from surface to the core, and that the crust on which we live is very thin, only between 1 to 30 miles. Since, the crust is so thin, it has a great tendency to shake and thus result in earthquakes. Hence, mountains act like stakes, or tent pegs (like those used to set up a tent when camping), that stabilize the earth's crust and minimize its shakes and tremors. The Quran contains exactly such a description in the following verses, as Allah reminds humanity of His great favors to them and how they should be thankful to Him and worship Him alone as opposed to the worship of the false gods they invent:

Have We not made the earth as a wide expanse, and the mountains as stakes?
[78:6-7]

and

And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm, Lest it should shake with them. [21:31]

Once again, the Qur'anic descriptions are in complete agreement with modern geological data and observation with the exception that the Quran contained these statements over a millennium before today's geologists were even able to theorize what they currently describe. Will you then still disbelieve in this powerful and miraculous message?

Qur'anic Description of Darkness and Internal Waves in the Oceans

Levels of Darkness in the Oceans

One of the truly fascinating verses in the Quran is the next one which we will examine as it describes the layers of darkness in the oceans, comparing them to different levels of disbelief in Allah and Islam.

Or the disbelievers' condition which is like the darkness in a deep sea. It is covered by waves, above which are waves, above which are clouds. Darkness, one above another such that if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! Indeed, for those to whom Allah gives not light, there is no light whatsoever!
[24:40]

The darkness in deep seas and oceans is now known to come in layers. Between the water's surface and a depth of about 200 meters (600 feet) gradual separation of the light

spectrum occurs, one color at a time until near darkness is attained. To explain further, at a certain depth, the red wavelength is completely blocked (absorbed) and "red darkness" is achieved – meaning that below that depth, the color red can no longer be appreciated. At another depth, the green wavelength is completely blocked and "green darkness" is experienced, and the same phenomenon happens to all the other seven color wavelengths in the visible light spectrum.

Furthermore, after 200 meters (600 ft) there is almost no light because almost all the color wavelengths, with the exception of blue, have been fully blocked at this point. Complete and absolute darkness though occurs only after exceeding a depth of 1000 meters (over half a mile down!). It has been established previously that human beings are not able to dive more than forty meters without the aid of submarines or special equipment due to the enormous incremental increases in pressure that work to compress the lungs and the available air supply.

Yet, the development of special diving gear and submarines in the last century has finally allowed oceanologists and other scientists to be able to dive to depths never before experienced by man. And only then, were they able to describe this light absorption and gradual darkness phenomenon after having experienced it firsthand! Therefore, the Quranic description of "*layer upon layer of darkness*" is once again perfectly in tune with the above mentioned observable facts of gradual light separation to the point where almost no light exists (the 200m depth), where as Allah mentioned, "*if a man stretches forward his hand, he can hardly see it*"; and then on to absolute darkness where Allah mentions, "*Indeed, for those to whom Allah gives not light, there is no light whatsoever!*".

Internal Waves in the Oceans

Another recently discovered phenomenon in the study of oceans is that of internal ocean or deep sea waves. In the middle portion of the above mentioned verse from the Quran, the deep waters of seas and oceans possess waves, and above these waves are other waves. It appears that the second set of waves mentioned are the surface waves that are commonly observed by the human eye, because the verse mentions that above the second waves there are clouds. So what then are the first waves?

Interestingly, recent studies of oceans have shown the presence of internal waves which "occur on density interfaces between layers of different densities". In English, this means that these internal waves can be found between different temperature and salt concentration zones of the ocean. Most of us who have gone swimming in the ocean before have discovered certain areas where the water feels nice and warm, but surprisingly going just a little deeper the water suddenly becomes much colder. This is one of the interfaces mentioned above which has its own set of scientifically observed waves. Internal waves cannot be seen by the human eye, but they can be detected by studying temperature or salt concentration changes at different depths of water.

Of course, the above mentioned scientific principles are no doubt intriguing, but as was mentioned before, this Message to humanity isn't meant to be a science lesson. It is

meant to be a means of guiding the souls of mankind to the worship of the One God alone. And in these verses, the message can be no clearer.

The darkness of the ocean is likened to the condition of the souls of those who deny and reject this Quran. Of course, some people are further astray than others and hence the different layers, or depths, of darkness. It gets to the point where some souls are so much in the darkness of denial that it is as if they are blind; not with their hearts, but with their souls. They can no longer distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood. And it concludes by making it clear that light, meaning guidance that clarifies the difference between right and wrong, is not only singular (as opposed to the levels of darkness which are many) but also, it comes only from Allah. You will never be guided aright if you don't turn humbly to Him and seek that guidance.

As evidence, many well known authors in science have declared publically that this Quran could have come only from Allah, but they have refused to submit to Him. They know that anyone who thinks that Muhammad wrote the Quran is only proving his own ignorance and foolishness. Such an idea means that Muhammad would have had to travel back in time to witness the Big Bang and describe it for us, then observe the expansion of the universe from his intergalactic vantage point and tell us about it, then travel deep into the earth's molten core to demonstrate the stabilizing effects of the mountains and accurately describe them as stakes or pegs.

Not finished, this Super-Prophet would then be off to the deep oceans where he would dive where no human could survive unaided and observe the light principles described above, and still have some time left over to describe for us in amazing detail the formative stages of human development in the womb with eyes more powerful than many modern day microscopes. Who would believe such tales and ignore the power and ability of the Creator who *is* able to tell us all this information and more besides it? As foolish as that may sound, there many among mankind who have deceived their own souls thus, and once again we are reminded, "*Indeed, for those to whom Allah gives not light, there is no light whatsoever!*"

Numerical Miracles in the Quran

Another fascinating miracle of the Quran involves its numerical code or structure. This area of Quranic study is one of the newest as it depends greatly on computer analysis of the verses to detect all the patterns; and there are many interesting findings in this area of study as well, Glory be to Allah.

Similar to the scientific verses discussion above, there are far too many mathematical miracles to discuss in this short chapter so I will be forced, as I was above, to limit the discussion to one amazing point. Before I begin detailing it, I want to urge the reader with some caution, because there are many people who have been led astray by believing everything is about numbers or part of some code.

One such group today is called the Submitters who followed a man who found some patterns concerning the number 19 in the Quran. Afterwards though, he unfortunately attempted to declare himself a Messenger of God and began trying to change the religion of Allah, Islam, and the Quran. Allah being the ultimate Protector of His religion, this man and others like him in the past have failed, and indeed any others who attempt such foolhardy tactics in the future will no doubt meet the same end.

Once again, the miracle of the Quran is not in scientific facts, numbers, eloquence or history – but the miracle of the Quran is how it raises up righteous people who worship Allah as He should be worshipped, standing strong for justice and morality. The side points are beneficial to consider but don't make the mistake of taking them as the priority or goal of the Quran.

With this in mind, the mathematical miracle of the Quran herein presented relates to Jesus. As the scientific miracles were not revealed for science, but for the guidance of humanity, these mathematical findings in the Quran present the same goal – guidance. Allah has stated what may be translated to mean:

Indeed the similarity of Jesus as considered by Allah is that he (Jesus) is like Adam; Allah created him from dust, then said to him, "Be", and he was. [3:59]

So, taking this interesting verse in mathematical terms, one could state that Jesus = Adam as far as Allah is concerned, because both of them were the result of the Creative ability of Allah. Adam was created from dust, without father or mother, when Allah said to him, "Be!" and similarly Jesus was immaculately conceived from a woman without any involvement of a man when Allah said "Be!" and Jesus came into existence.

If some argue that Jesus is God or son of God because of the Immaculate Conception, then Allah reminds them that Adam was also born miraculously. Indeed Adam was born without either a father or mother. As far as our physical bodies are concerned, they are all merely dust. In Allah's sight then, Jesus was dust just as Adam was, or indeed as all of humanity once was. This is the main religious lesson that comes from this verse. So where then is the miracle?

First Mathematical Point

If one was to go through the whole Quran, he would discover that the number of times that the word "Jesus" is written is in twenty-five places. Similarly, he would also find that the number of times that the word "Adam" is written is also in twenty-five places. We see then conclude that the similarity of Adam and Jesus is not only in their nature, but also mathematically in the reiteration of their names.

Second Mathematical Point

Taking it a step further, in the above mentioned verse where both names are written (3:59) is the only verse where the two names are mentioned together. Counting the

number of times each Prophet's name has been mentioned from the start of the Quran, amazingly we discover that this is the 7th time each one is mentioned, and counting from the back of the Quran, this verse also represents the 19th time each Prophet is mentioned. In other words, there are six times that Jesus is mentioned from the beginning of the Quran till this verse, and the same holds true for Adam, and vice versa from the back. Once again, they are similar as mentioned in the verse.

Third Mathematical Point

The 19th time "Adam" is mentioned and the 19th time that "Jesus" is mentioned also both occur one time in the 19th Chapter (Surah Mariam). In comparison of the second mathematical point mentioned above, we can note that it is also the 7th occasion of their mention counting from the end of the Quran.

Fourth Mathematical Point

The 19th time that "Jesus" occurs is found in sura 19, verse 34. Whereas the 19th time that "Adam" occurs can be found in sura 19, verse 58. And from the verse 34 to verse 58 there are 25 verses (counting with verse 34 as verse number one of the twenty-five), and as we know the number 25 is the number of times both are mentioned in the Quran.

This is just an example and concerning this specific verse, there are even more mathematical combinations which would take us too far off our main topic to be mentioned here. But again, Allah shows us through the Quran that not only are Jesus and Adam similar in their miraculous origins of creation by Allah's creative statement, but that this similarity also holds true throughout the Quran in mathematical terms.

The Preservation of the Quran

This last point of our introduction to the Quran leads us to one of the most practically important characteristics of the Quran, and that is its preservation. Logically, if Allah wished to send down a Message for all of humanity from the time of the Prophet Muhammad till the Day of Judgement it would reasonably have to be protected from any changes, be they additions or subtractions.

Interestingly, one of the strongest arguments against Christianity being the final message for mankind is this very point. As it is well documented, the language which Jesus used to preach during his lifetime was primarily Aramaic. So naturally we would want to have in our possession one Aramaic copy of the Gospel with no other variant copies being in existence. But the problem is that there is no Aramaic Gospel or Bible.

The oldest manuscripts of the New Testament of the Bible are either in Greek or Hebrew, but none in the original language of Jesus. So, current day Bibles rely on a translation (actually many different versions of the same story) to try to piece together what Jesus really said and did during his brief life. Moreover, any English Bible is actually a

translation of a translation! How then could this be the final message to mankind when the original wasn't even preserved? Surely God would preserve it if it were meant for the rest of time.

But this is indeed one of the characteristics of the Quran. It has been preserved not only in writing from the time of the Prophet, but also in the hearts of thousands, even millions, of devoted worshippers ever since the time of its revelation. Surely, this is something that rational people need to ponder over.

In fact, Allah has taken it upon Himself to protect this Quran from corruption and changes, or even loss, when He said what can be translated to mean:

***We have without doubt sent down the Message
and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption) [15:9]***

How the Quran Was Preserved: Memorization and Print

The current as it was revealed by Allah has reached us today unchanged and pure through two ways that both provide a check and balance system to one another, and there is no other system of religion which has continued till this day that possesses such a secure form of transmission.

The Prophet Muhammad himself was the first to begin memorizing the revelation after the Angel Gabriel had brought it to him, as is evidenced by these verses, which may be translated as follows:

Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and spread it; and when We have spread it, it is upon you to follow its recital [75:16-19]

... a Messenger from Allah, reciting its scriptures, kept pure ... [98: 2]

The Prophet also instructed his Companions to memorise it. One prominent example is that of the Companion (similar to disciple) of the Prophet, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, who was the first man to recite the Qur'an publicly in Mecca, shows that even early on in the spread of Islam that the recitation of the Quran from memory was practised by the Companions. The later caliphate (Islamic leader) Abu Bakr also was known to recite the Quran from memory in front of his house in Mecca. In fact, the Islamic scholar Al-Suyuti records that over twenty of the famous Companions, in addition to the hundreds of less well known Companions, had committed the entire Quran to memory and had been approved to teach it to others due to their great proficiency in it.

It is thus well established in Islamic history that the Qur'an was memorised during the lifetime of the Prophet by his Companions, and furthermore that this tradition continued among the subsequent Muslim generations through till today. Today, it is estimated that

there are well over 10 million Muslims who have memorized the entire Quran, with the vast majority of the rest of the Muslims have memorized at least some parts of it.

Commenting on the importance of the memorization of the Quran to the preservation of the Quran, author John Burton writes in his book *An Introduction to the Hadith*, “The method of transmitting the Quran from one generation to the next by having the young memorize the oral recitation of their elders had mitigated somewhat from the beginning the worst perils of relying solely on written records....”

Secondly, the Quran was also, of course, written down and compiled into a book, or mus-haf, as it is known in Arabic. This process though was done in two phases:

1. Writing down of the Quranic revelation on different parchments, and other materials, as it descended upon the Prophet.
2. The Gathering of all these parchments and segments into one book.

The first of these phases was well known to have occurred throughout the revelation time period during the life of the Prophet Muhammad, whereas the completion of the second phase occurred about 15-20 years after his death. We shall now take a more in depth look at these stages to better understand the process of collecting the Quran.

The reports and evidences of the Quran haven been written from the very beginning are numerous and I will only give one famous example here to substantiate this point. When the Message first came down upon the Prophet, he was in Mecca, his birthplace. After the people began to hear of the news of the revelation, they began to oppose him fiercely and the early converts to Islam were very few and very weak. There was much fear and the majority didn't declare their faith in public. One such person who initially opposed the Prophet greatly was Umar ibn Al-Khattab.

One day, Umar awoke and decided that he had heard enough about this man Muhammad and decided that he would kill him and end the matter once and for all. On his way to kill Muhammad, someone came and told him that some members of his own family had accepted Islam in secret. Enraged he went off to his sister's home to investigate the matter.

Upon arriving, he aggressively shoved his brother in law to the side and struck his sister causing her to bleed. They then came forward and admitted their conversion, and feeling remorse over hitting his sister so hard he requested to read it and promised he wouldn't injure the parchment on which it was written. After ritually washing himself as his sister requested him to do, he read the page in which a portion of sura 20 was written. Upon reading just a few of the verses his eyes became moist with tears, and he remarked ‘How fine and noble is this speech’ Thus, this well known historical event illustrates how, even in the earliest days of the spread of Islam, large passages of the Quran had already been written down

Concerning the collection of the Quran into one volume, many people ask, “Why wasn't the Quran collected into one written volume during the life of the Prophet?” There are at least four clear reasons why this didn't happen, as follows:

1. The Quran itself was not revealed in one time, but rather sequentially over 23 years. In fact, the scholars believe that the last verses to be revealed of the Quran came down just nine days before the death of the Prophet.
2. Some verses were abrogated, or replaced by Allah, in the course of the revelation, and thus it was not always known when something was revealed whether another verse later would be revealed to replace or reverse a previous one.
3. The verses and suras (chapters) were not revealed in the order in which they would be later recorded, but were arranged at a later time before the death of the Prophet under the guidance of the Archangel Gabriel. This means, that sometimes a segment of verses would be revealed and later another verse might come down and Allah would command for it to be inserted in the middle of the segment received previously.
4. The Prophet was severely ill before his death and during the descent of the last revelations.

Yet, nonetheless there are many evidences that support the presence of written volumes of the Quran in a gathered form during the life of the Prophet. One such evidence is the historical report that states, “When people came to Madina to learn about Islam, they were provided with copies of some of the chapters of the Qur’an to read and memorize them.” Another powerful evidence comes from the Quran itself which states what is translated to mean,

This is indeed a Qur’an most honourable, in a book well guarded, which none shall touch except those who are pure: a revelation from the Lord of the Universe [56:77-80]

From the hadith (transmitted statements and actions of the Prophet) we also read the following from Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar, who states:

The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: “Do not take the Qur’an on a journey with you, for I am afraid that it might fall into the hands of the enemy (and then they may abuse it)”.

Another well known hadith states that during the Final Pilgrimage of the Prophet that he gave a sermon to the large gathering of Muslims there, and that in it he said: *‘I have left with you something which if you will hold fast to it you will go astray - a plain sign, the book of Allah (Quran) and the practice of his Prophet (Sunnah).*

This advice from the Prophet also indicates that the Quran was available as a book, or in one volume, before his death, or otherwise he would have described it in other terms.

Concerning the positioning of verses in the suras, the Companion, and later caliph, Uthman states that in the latter days of the Prophet, whenever a verse was revealed, that he used to call someone from the scribes (who used to write for him) and tell them:

“Place these verses in such and such sura”. This passage demonstrates clearly how the Prophet gave instructions for the arrangement of the material.

Furthermore there are three hadith in the famous collection of Bukhari (recognized as the most authentic book in Islam after the Quran), stating that the Archangel Gabriel used to recite the Qur’an with the Prophet once a year in the fasting month of Ramadan, but that he recited it with him twice in the year which he died.

Lastly, the position and arrangement of the verses was obviously well known to the Companions, as they needed this knowledge in order to perform their daily prayers, which involves the recitation of parts of the Qur’an in the prayers.

In summary then, the following factors provide for significant evidence to establish the collection of the Quran in writing during the lifetime of the Prophet:

1. Quranic revelation used to be written down very early in the days of the Prophet’s call.
2. The Prophet had many scribes who wrote down scripture when it was revealed.
3. The Prophet himself instructed his scribes as to where the verses should be placed upon their revelation, and thus established the position and arrangement.
4. This position and arrangement was well known to the Companions and strictly maintained by them in their daily prayers and elsewhere.
5. The Archangel Gabriel reviewed the entire Quran with the Prophet annually in Ramadan, and went through it twice in the year the Prophet died.
6. There are several established reports about the existence of the written Quran, in the form of a book, during the lifetime of the Prophet.

So, upon his death, the Messenger had left the Muslims of that era, and those to come, hundreds of Companions who had memorized the entire Quran as well as written copies of the chapters with verses arranged and ordered, some in volumes and others loosely separated.

So, the writing and collection of the Quran, both being done in the lifetime of the Prophet, comes in sharp contrast to the collection of the religious scriptures of other faiths. It is an undeniable fact that the Old and New Testament scriptures, were written, compiled and edited over much longer periods of time, sometimes centuries; and even today are subject to criticism and re-evaluation as was done with the King James Bible when it was rejected by some Christian groups in favor of another newer translation. This, of course, also is beside the fact that the entire Gospel of Jesus, as mentioned previously, has been either lost or destroyed.

The Final Preparation of the Quran

The Quran that remains in the hands of billions of Muslims today was prepared in two main stages by the two Companions, and caliphs, Abu Bakr and Uthman.

In the year 633 CE (about six months after the death of the Prophet), the noble Companion Abu Bakr was the caliph of the Muslims and led them in the Battle of Yamama. It was in this crucial battle that a large number of Muslims who had memorised the Qur'an were killed. Thus, some of the Companions feared that unless a standard written copy of the Qur'an were prepared that portions of the revelation might be lost.

It was decided after some deliberation that the scribe of the Prophet during his lifetime, Zaid ibn Thabit, would lead the task of gathering all the written portions of the Quran, and using the memory of multiple persons as a check and balance, compile one volume. This committee was composed of some of the most devout, God-fearing and trustworthy Companions of the Prophet, and also included those who had memorized the entire Quran. Zaid himself, it should be noted, was also one of the main Companions certified by the Prophet during his life to teach the Quran.

This official manuscript on which the Qur'an was collected, remained with Abu Bakr till his death, and then with the next caliph, Umar ibn Al-Khattab till his death, and finally it remained with Hafsa, Umar's daughter. It should be further noted that other personal manuscripts of the Quran did exist with some of the well known Companions at this time as well. Some modern day critics have tried to use the presence of these copies to indicate some sort of jealous quarreling between the Companions whereas no such thing has ever been documented in any authentic sources.

In fact, a careful study of these other manuscripts indicates that they differed from the official copy of Abu Bakr by sometimes no more than twelve or fifteen verses, and that none of these Companions with the deficient copies ever held their copy to be more correct or complete than the official manuscript collected by Zaid ibn Thabit and his team.

Indeed, the copy of the Quran prepared by Zaid ibn Thabit's was unanimously approved by all of the Companions at that time, without exception. Concerning the ijmaa', or unanimous concensus of the Companions, the Prophet had said,

My community will never agree upon error. (Ibn Majaah)

Had Zaid ibn Thabit even have made one mistake even of a single letter in transcribing the Quran, the memorizers of the Quran, (which totalled in the tens of hundreds at that time) would have caught it right away and corrected it publically. This is exactly where the check and balance system of preservation of the Quran comes into play; a system which is not found for any other scripture besides the Quran.

Concerning the second and final stage of the preparation and dissemination of the Quran, known as the manuscript of Uthman, we read the following historical account in the hadith of Bukhari,

Narrated Anas bin Malik: Hudhaifa ibn Al-Yamaan came to 'Uthman at the time when the people of Syria and the people of Iraq were waging war to conquer Armenia and Azerbaijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Syria and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Quran, so he said to Uthman, 'O Chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Qur'an), as

Jews and the Christians did before'. So Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, 'Send us the manuscript of the Qur'an collected by Abu Bakr so that we may compile the Quranic verses in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you'. Hafsa sent it to Uthman. Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, Abdullah bin Az-Zubair, Sa'id bin Al-'As and Abdur Rahman bin Hari ibn Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, 'In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Quran, [concerning pronunciation or dialect only] then write it in the dialect of Quraish as the Quran was revealed in their tongue'. They did so, and when they had written many copies, Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. Uthman then sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt.

So what then is the difference between Abu Bakr's and Uthman's manuscripts? None. So, the Quran that Uthman had mass produced and sent off to the Muslim provinces to be the standard or official Quran is the same manuscript (mus-haf) that Abu Bakr had collected only six months after the death of the Prophet. This version of the text, also known as "Mus-haf Uthman" again, constitutes the consensus of the Companions, whom all agreed that it contained what Muhammad had brought as revelation from Allah. Indeed, upon this collection, Naysaburi records that Zaid ibn Thabit said: "I saw the Companions of Muhammad (going about) saying, 'By Allah, Uthman has done well! By Allah, Uthman has done well!'"

The last and most powerful statement that can henceforth be mentioned is that of the copies made by Uthman, two still exist till this very day. One is in the city of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and the second one is in Istanbul, Turkey. As a matter of fact, their text and the order of their verses and surahs can be compared with any other copy of the Qurann from any place or period of time, and they will be found to be nothing less than identical.

It is this amazing feat of preservation that prompted British author Sir Williams Muir, author of *Life of Mohamet*, to write, "There is otherwise every security, internal and external, that we possess the text which Muhammad himself gave forth and used", and he continued by writing, "There is probably no other book in the world which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text". Of course since the time that these passages were written, another two hundred years have already passed still without any change in the Quran, and why should there be when the Master of the Universe Himself has undertaken the protection of this book.

Concluding Remarks

The noted German Muslim writer Ahmad von Denfer has written an excellent book on the sciences of the Quran, called *Ulum al-Quran*. I include here his well written comments on the Quran as a conclusion to this chapter.

Those who embark upon a study of the Qur'an often proceed with the assumption that this Book is, as it is commonly believed to be, a detailed code of guidance.

However, when they actually read it, they fail to find detailed regulations regarding social, political and economic matters. In fact, they notice that the Qur'an has not laid down detailed regulations even in respect of such oft-repeated subjects as Prayers and Zakah. The reader finds this somewhat disconcerting and wonders in what sense the Qur'an can be considered a code of guidance.

The uneasiness some people feel about this arises because they forget that God did not merely reveal a Book, but that he also designated a Prophet. Suppose some laymen were to be provided with the bare outlines of a construction plan on the understanding that they would carry out the construction as they wished. In such a case, it would be reasonable to expect that they should have very elaborate directives as to how the construction should be carried out. Suppose, however, that along with the broad outline of the plan of construction, they were also provided with a competent engineer to supervise the task. In that case, it would be quite unjustifiable to disregard the work of the engineer, on the expectation that detailed directives would form an integral part of the construction plan, and then to complain of imperfection in the plan itself.

The Qur'an, to put it succinctly, is a Book of broad general principles rather than of legal minutiae. The Book's main aim is to expound, clearly and adequately, the intellectual and moral foundations of the Islamic programme for life. It seeks to consolidate these by appealing both the person's mind and to his/her heart. Its method of guidance for practical Islamic life does not consist of laying down minutely detailed laws and regulations. It prefers to outline the basic framework for each aspect of human activity, and to lay down certain guidelines within which man can order his life in keeping with the Will of God. The mission of the Prophet was to give practical shape to the Islamic vision of the good life, by offering the world a model of an individual character and of a human state and society, as living embodiments of the principles of the Qur'an

With this being said, we shall now move on to the other source of Islamic scripture, the Hadith – or traditions – of the Prophet Muhammad where will see more of the details that the author described above.