



Ramadan Daily Quran Study, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2023

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Fast 22: Revealed Books — What is revelation and the need for it?

- The word *kitāb* (كتاب), meaning ‘book’, has been used in the Holy Quran to mean a revealed book. It has been used in the Holy Quran: (1) for the Quran itself, (2) for its chapters, (3) for any previous revelation, (4) for all previous revelations taken together, and (5) for all revealed books including the Holy Quran.



- The Arabic word for ‘revelation’ is *wahy* (وحي). In its highest form, this word has come to signify the Divine word which is communicated to prophets, and to saints or righteous servants of God (*auliyā’*) who were not prophets.
- The same word *wahy* is also used in the Quran to mean God establishing the laws of nature in the world and His granting of instincts to animals. In connection with creating the heavens and the earth, it is said that Allah “spoke” to the heaven and the earth and that He: “...revealed in every heaven its affair.” — 41:12
- So there is a kind of revelation through which the laws of nature are made to operate in the universe. Regarding the honey bee, the Quran says:



وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّعْلِ أَنْ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾
ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلًّا ...

“And your Lord revealed to the bee: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build, then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. ...” — 16:68–69

- This is really an example of the Divine revelation being granted also to the lower creation, so that what they do by instinct is said to have been taught by revelation from God.
- As regards revelation to human beings, on several occasions the Holy Quran speaks of *wahy* having been granted to those righteous servants of God *who were not prophets*, men as well as women.



- (1) The mother of the prophet Moses is said to have received a revelation though she was undoubtedly not a prophet, and (2) so are the disciples of Jesus who were not prophets:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي

1. “And We revealed to Moses’ mother, saying: Suckle him; then when you fear for him, cast him into the river, and do not fear, nor grieve...” —28:7

So this is what was revealed to the mother of the infant Moses.

وَإِذَا وَحْيَتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي

2. “And when I revealed to the disciples (of Jesus), saying, Believe in Me and My messenger...” —5:111



- The highest form of revelation was granted to prophets only, brought to them by the angel Gabriel in the form of words. This is the surest and clearest form of revelation, and such was the revelation of the Quran to the Holy Prophet. This is called *revelation that is recited in words (wahy matluww)*. It is the highest and most developed form, and it was in this manner that revelation was granted to all the prophets of God in every nation.
- What the Quran calls as revealed books of God are this highest type of revelation. The ten commandments revealed to Moses, and other laws, and the Lord's Prayer of Jesus are examples of this revelation.



- In Islamic books, the word *wahy* (revelation) has often come to be applied to this highest form of revelation only. This has made people wrongly think that only prophets receive *wahy*. But in fact the word *wahy* has been used in the Quran in a much wider sense, including revelation to non-prophets.
- **Why did Allah send revealed books?** Speaking of Adam, the Holy Quran has stated the reason why revelation from God was needed, and the purpose which it fulfilled.
- Humans were created to have two aims before them: (1) to conquer nature and (2) to conquer self — to bring under their control *the powers of nature and their own desires*. In the story of Adam, as related in the Quran, Adam stands for any human being, for humanity.



- The Quran tells us that Adam was given the knowledge of things, meaning that humans were endowed with the capacity to obtain knowledge of all things; they were also gifted with the power to conquer nature, because the angels (who are the controlling powers of nature) were made to submit to him, as the Quran says. However, *Iblis* or the devil (the inciter of lower desires) did not submit, and men and women fell victim to his evil suggestions (2:31, 2:34, 2:36).
- Humans were powerful against all, but weak against their own selves. Their greater conquest lay in the conquest of one's inner self. This conquest could only be brought about by a closer connection with God. It was to make this possible for mankind that revelation was needed.



- In the story of Adam in the Quran, as man proved weak against his own desires and passions, God's help came to him in the form of certain "words from his Lord" (2:37), that is to say, in the form of Divine revelation which was granted to Adam. And as for his descendants, the Divine law was given:
 - "Surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve." — 2:38
- In these words human beings are told that, with the help of Divine revelation, they shall have no fear of the Devil's temptings. The obstacle to the development of the human faculties would be removed, and men and women will go on advancing to higher stages.