

ALI 373: Miracles of the Qur'an – session 2

ACADEMY FOR LEARNING ISLAM

NOVEMBER 2016

Class Outline

Introduction to Qur'anic terminology

Introduction to Kalami terminology

The purpose of miracles

- The ways of proving prophethood
- What a miracle demonstrates
- Are miracles necessary?

The Prophet's (S) miracles

The miracles of the Qur'an

Qur'anic Terminology

Ayah

- The word ayah means sign
- The word ayah is employed in the Qur'an for verses, nature and miracles
- The word ayah is used for miracles because it is a sign of prophethood

وَ قَالُوا لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ آيَةً وَ لَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

They say, "Why has not a sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah is indeed able to send down a sign," but most of them do not know.

(6:37)

Qur'anic Terminology

Bayyinah: A clear argument

Something that is clear is said to be bayyin.

The word bayyinah in the Qur'an is employed with the meanings of clear arguments or clear miracles.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ

Certainly We sent Our apostles with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice; (57:25)

Qur'anic Terminology

Burhan: Proof

The Qur'an employs the word *burhan* for rational arguments and also for miracles.

اسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ وَ اضْمُمْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ
فَذَانِكَ بُرْهَانٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَ مَلَائِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

“Insert your hand into your bosom. It will emerge white, without any fault, and keep your arms drawn in awe to your sides. These shall be two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his elite. They are indeed a transgressing lot.” (28:32)

Kalami Terminology

In the study of Kalam, the word *mu'jizah* is used for miracles that are presented by prophets.

The word *mu'jizah* is derived from the word *l'jaaz*

l'jaaz means to incapacitate or render incapable

A Mu'jizah must have the following characteristics:

- A supernatural act
- Carried out by someone who claims to be a prophet
- Accompanied with a challenge to reproduce the same
- Cannot be taught or learnt

Purpose of Miracles

There are three ways of proving the prophethood of a prophet:

- Declared or announced by another prophet
 - The prophethood of the latter should be established independently
 - The indication should uniquely apply to the person claiming prophethood
- Amalgamation of contextual indicators
- Miracles

Purpose of Miracles

A miracle demonstrates that the individual has a special relationship with Allah (S).

The argument is based on the following premises:

- a. God is al-Hakim and never acts in a manner that nullifies His objectives
- b. The purpose of sending prophets is to guide human beings
- c. When an individual performs a miracle, people have a good reason to follow him and accept his pronouncements.
- d. If God allows impostors to perform miracles, they may misguide a segment of the society.

Purpose of Miracles

Are miracles necessary?

The prophets of God focused on preaching the right beliefs and reviving intrinsic values.

They furnished rational arguments to demonstrate the right beliefs

They also called on people to revert to their conscience to revive good values.

If miracles were required to demonstrate their points, wouldn't it imply:

- Their belief system was not rational?
- Their arguments were not rational or logical?

Purpose of Miracles

In addition to this, the demonstration of the correct beliefs through firm proofs absolves the insightful scholar from needing to consider miracles, and therefore it is said that miracles are meant to satisfy the common person, for his intellect may not comprehend the intellectual realities. As for the select, they do not need such demonstrations.

Allamah Tabatabai in al-Mizan

Purpose of Miracles

Brief review of Qur'anic verses

- Not all prophets presented miracles
- Prophets presented rational arguments before miracles

“I certainly bring you a manifest proof from your Lord. So let the Children of Israel go with me.” He said, “If you have brought a sign, produce it, should you be truthful.” (7:105-6)

Purpose of Miracles

- Prophets did not accede to people's demands for certain miracles (17:90-93)
- The sound hearts were convinced by rational arguments more than miracles.

Follow them who do not ask you any reward and they are rightly guided.

Why should I not worship Him who has originated me, and to whom you shall be brought back? (36:21-22)

Miracles of the Holy Prophet (s)

1. Splitting of the Moon (Shaqq al-Qamar)
2. Me'raj: the nightly ascension
3. Prophecies not mentioned in the Qur'an
4. Conversation with animals and inanimate beings
5. Answering of his supplications
6. Qur'an

Miracles of the Qur'an

1. Complete internal harmony in the Qur'an
2. Profound ideas presented by an unlettered person
3. Literary style of the Qur'an
4. Accurate scientific facts
5. Historical accuracies
6. Prophecies in the Qur'an
7. Transformative miracle

Miracles of the Qur'an

PART TWO

NOV 2016

Summary of Week One

1. Terms: ayah, bayyinah, Burhan and mu'jizah
2. Miracles prove prophethood
3. Impostors cannot perform miracles because it would contradict the *hikmah* of Allah (S).
4. Miracles are not required for proving theological or ethical claims
5. The Holy Prophet (s) had many miracles
6. The most important miracle of the Prophet (S) is the Qur'an
7. The Qur'an has many miracles

Scientific Miracles

1. The Qur'an is not a book of science
2. The Qur'an does contain scientific facts
3. There is no conflict between the Qur'an and science

And the sun runs on to its place of rest: That is the ordaining of the All-mighty,
the All-knowing. (Yasin: 38)

4. Scientific facts and theories should not be imposed upon the Qur'an
 4. Eg. Big Bang theory

Scientific Miracles

The expansion of the universe

- In 1929, Edwin Hubble discovered that the universe is expanding

We have built the sky with might, and indeed it is We who are its expanders.
(51:47)

The creation of the skies and the earth

- Recent calculations demonstrate that the universe is 13.5 billion years old and the earth is 3.5-4 billion years old.

Say, “Do you really disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days, and ascribe partners to Him? That is the Lord of all the worlds!” (41:9)

Prophecies of the Qur'an

1. Realities which are unseen or unknown to human beings are known as *ghayb*
2. The opposite of *ghayb* is *shahadah*
3. Examples of *ghayb* include:
 1. God, angels, barzakh, heaven and hell.
 2. Historical facts which have been forgotten
 3. Events which will occur in the future and they are unexpected (prophecies)
4. Prophecies must fulfill the following conditions:
 1. Should be specific and particular
 2. Should prophesize unexpected events
 3. The events must occur exactly as prophesized

Prophecies of the Qur'an: The Romans

1. In the battle of Antioch (613 CE), the Persians captured important Roman territories.

in a few years. All command belongs to Allah, before and after, and on that day the faithful will rejoice (30:4)

2. The term bid' in Arabic refers to 3-9 years.
3. The Roman king Heraculis led an army and defeated Persian allies and forces in the year 622 CE.
4. In the year 627 he soundly defeated Khosrow's armies and it led to the overthrow of Khosrow.

Prophecies of the Qur'an: Abu Lahab

1. Abu Lahab was an uncle of the Prophet and polytheist.
2. The Qur'an predicted that Abu Lahab and his wife would die as non-believers
Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and perish he! Neither his wealth availed him,
nor what he had earned. Soon he will enter the blazing fire, (111:1-3)
3. Question: Wasn't it expected that Abu Lahab and his wife would die as non-Muslims?

The Literary Miracle

The literary beauty of the Qur'an can be captured by two qualities:

- Fasahah: the statements of the Qur'an are easy to pronounce and beautiful to hear.

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذُكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضاً أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ

- Balaghah: expressing profound and difficult concepts in simple words.

He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to their capacity, and the flood carries along a swelling scum. And from what they smelt in the fire for the purpose of ornaments or wares, a similar scum. That is how Allah compares the truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it leaves as dross, and that which profits the people remains in the earth. That is how Allah draws comparisons. (13:17)

The Literary Miracle

- The gradual revelation of the Qur'an is also a miracle in itself
- The Qur'an was revealed over a period of 23 years
- There were differing circumstances over this period of time
- Human beings learn through experience and situations
- Most writers go through an evolution in their content and their style of writing
- There is a harmony in the content and style of the Qur'an throughout 23 years

Do they not contemplate upon the Qur'an, for had it been from other than Allah, you would have found a lot of discrepancies in it (4:82)

The Literary Miracle

1. The literary miracle mesmerized the people of Arabia

- The leading poets of Arabia confessed to the eloquence of the Qur'an

By Allah, I have just heard a speech from Muhammad which is neither the speech of man nor jin. Surely it has a sweetness and a beauty to it. It is like a tree whose branches are fruitful and its roots are firm. It supercedes and cannot be superceded. (Walid bin Mughirah upon hearing verses of surat al-ghafir).

- They tried to cast the prophet as a poet (sha'ir), sorcerer (kahin) or magician (sahir).
- They would discourage visitors from listening to the prophet's (s) recitation of the Qur'an

The Literary Style

The Qur'an challenged the poets of Arabia to produce a similar speech:

- The Jinn and human beings cannot produce a book like the Qur'an (17:88)
- Humans cannot produce ten surahs like the surahs of the Qur'an (11:14)
- Humans cannot produce a surah like the surahs of the Qur'an (10:38)
- Humans will never produce a surah like the surahs of the Qur'an (2:23)

The Transformational Miracle

Arabia before the advent of Islam:

- Most people were polytheists and idol worshippers
- Most people were superstitious and blind followers of tradition
- Lacking in education, literacy, books and schools.
- Lacking in noble morals and respect for human rights: mysoginy, infanticide, racism.
- Lacking in peace and unity among various tribes.
- Lacking governance and justice system.
- Lacking in self-belief, courage and a greater vision.

The Transformational Miracle

The Lord appointed Muhammad to warn the people of the world and to act as the trustee of His revelation and His Book. And you Arabs were spending your days with the worst faith and in the worst places. You were residing in stony places and amongst deaf snakes (which did not move because of any sound). You drank muddy water and ate coarse food (e.g. lizards and flour of date-palm stones). You shed the blood of one another and sought separation from your kith and kin. You had installed idols amongst you. You did not refrain from sins

Imam Ali (a)

The Transformational Miracle

Arabia after the advent of Islam:

1. Flourishing of education through schools, books, observatories and debates
2. Discovery and engineering of technology
3. Expansion of Muslim empire from China to Abdulusia
4. Teachers and exemplars of theology and morality
5. Establishing centers of governance and courts
6. Unity and relative peace amongst the tribes of Arabia

The Transformational Miracle

My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.

Of humble origins, Muhammad founded and promulgated one of the world's great religions, and became an immensely effective political leader. Today, thirteen centuries after his death, his influence is still powerful and pervasive.

Michael Hart, The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History