

Overview

Hurufe Muqatta'at

Arabic Language

Importance of Stories

Sūrat al- Yūsuf

Verses 1-3

الر ٓ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ
 إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ
 نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ
 الْغَافِلِينَ

12:1 - Alif Lam Ra. Those are the verses of the Manifest Book

12:2 - Surely We have sent down it as an Arabic Quran so that you may understand.

12:3 - We narrate to you the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran though before this you were certainly one of those who were unaware.

Questions for Reflection

1. Why was the Quran revealed in Arabic?
2. How do we use the aql to understand the message of the Quran?
3. Why does Quran use stories? what other stories are there in the Quran?

Commentary

The first three letters are Al-Ḥurūf al-Muqatta'at or abbreviated letters. The letters stand for certain words.

The verses are part of a book that is manifest and makes things clear. It guides the intelligence and allows the believer to distinguish between Truth and Falsehood. One who follows the Quran and absorbs its teachings is able to understand things very well. Their understanding might differ from others because faith and belief give a different perspective on things. It gives them a light that makes the straight path very visible and easy to follow.

The Holy Quran has been revealed in the Arabic language. One reason is that it was the language of the Arabs, and the religion of Islam first started there and spread to the rest of the world. Arab civilization at that time was in ignorance and many of its customs and rituals were inhuman. To bring about a change in society and create a complete transformation Islam had to talk to the people in their own language.

Apart from that, scholars say that the Arabic language is very rich both in vocabulary and syntax. It is able to convey the message of God more aptly than other languages would. The Quran has been translated into so many other languages, but none of the translations can really do justice to the richness of the original language. For those who do not understand the Arabic language it would be good to learn the language and understand first-hand the message of God.

The Quran has been revealed so that its message may be understood. It is not enough to recite and read the translation. Although there is great reward for it, but the ultimate purpose of the Quran is for human beings to really understand what God is telling them and apply it to their lives. Imam Zayn al-‘Abidīn (a) says: The verses of Quran are a treasure house of knowledge, so whenever the door is opened you should look into it. (Mizān al-Hikmah, H#16235)

This Sura been named the best of stories because:

- 1) It has many interesting elements that are emotionally touching; a young child left in the well, an old father grieving for his son, life in prison, change of fortunes as Nabi Yusuf becomes a vizier, establishing a rule based on faith and justice.
- 2) It shows the hand of God in every part of the story. The plan of the brothers is nullified by the decree of God who gives Nabi Yūsuf great honor and reunites him with his family.
- 3) It shows the results of evil qualities like lying and jealousy.
- 4) It shows the effects of a dream on the future of a nation. It is the best of stories but can only be good for us if we take lessons from it and apply them to our lives.

The Quran is a book of guidance that trains the human being. Some reasons why it uses stories to teach people is because:

- 1) Stories show people practical examples from history. Even if people know certain truths, to know the experiences of others and how they lived their lives, makes that knowledge into a reality.
- 2) People find stories interesting. It is a good way of getting attention and attracting people.
- 3) People are more eager to learn from stories than from lessons. Sometimes subtle lessons can be picked up from stories.
- 4) All types of people love stories. Whatever their level of intellect, education, background . . . etc. everyone understands a story. History is of great benefit to human beings.

Imam Ali (a) says in Nahj al-Balāgha in his will to Imam Hasan(a): *My child, even though I have not reached the age which those before me have, yet I looked into their behaviour and thought over events of their lives. I walked among their ruins till I was as one of them. In fact, by virtue of those of their affairs that have become known to me it is as though I have lived with them from the first to the last. I have therefore been able to discern the impure from the clean and the benefit from the harm.* Letter no. 31, Nahj al-Balāgha

The verse ends by saying that before these verses were revealed the Prophet did not know these stories. This is in answer to those who accused the Prophet of getting the Quran from other people. Although the story of Yūsuf existed with the Jews and Christians many of the details were different. The Prophet was told the true story through Jibrīl who brought down revelation from Allah.

Lessons

- 1) Arabic is the language of the Quran. Learning Arabic not just to be able recite the Quran, but also to be able to understand what it says. Understanding the language of the Quran helps a lot to appreciate its beauty and the depth of its message.

Practical Implementation

- 1) Explore different translations to see how Arabic can be translated in different ways

2) Stories are a good way of teaching and understanding a message. There are many benefits of reading good literature. Read up on the stories of Islam and other good stories.

Cross reference verse

Stories of other Messengers before the H.Prophet (S) – 40:78

Connecting Topics

Quran Translations in different languages

<http://tanzil.net/trans/>

Al-Ḥurūf al-Muqatta' a

https://en.wikishia.net/view/Al-Huruf_al-Muqatta'a