

## Transcript: Beliefs, Revealed Books

The revelation of the Qur'an began in the year 610CE, on a dark night towards the end of the month of Ramadan [Q. 2:185].<sup>1</sup> Muhammad had gone to spend time in deep meditation and spiritual retreat in a cave on Mount Hira, just outside Makka. A light appeared on the horizon and drew closer [Q. 53:3-10].<sup>2</sup> Eventually it was identified as the Angel Jibril (Gabriel). Jibril halted a distance away from Muhammad and spoke the word *iqra*, commanding him to 'recite' or 'speak forth.'

Muhammad did not know what to do. Jibril came closer and said again *iqra*. At this, Muhammad said that he didn't know what he was supposed to say. Like most people at this time, Muhammad had not received any formal book-based education. He was *ummi*, meaning that he had not received education on earlier scriptures and he was "unlettered." The significance of this is that what Muhammad was about to recite could not have come from him. He could not have made it up himself. It must have been given to him by God [Q. 10:37-38, 17:88, 45:2].<sup>3</sup>

Jibril then embraced Muhammad. During this embrace, the heart of Muhammad, as the seat of wisdom and knowledge, was purified in receiving the revelation from God. After the embrace, when Jibril again said *iqra* to Muhammad, the first verses of the Qur'an just welled up from his heart and flowed from his lips [Q. 96:1-5].<sup>4</sup> This was

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<sup>1</sup> Q. 2:185 The month of Ramadan in which the Qur'an was sent down, as a guide to humankind, also clear [signs] for guidance and the criterion [between right and wrong] [is the fasting month]. So whoever amongst you witnesses the month; let him fast it. But whoever is ill or on a journey, let it be the same number of other days - God wants ease for you, He does not want hardship for you - so that you will complete that number of days and glorify Him for having guided you; and so perhaps you will be grateful.

<sup>2</sup> Q. 53:3-10 Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him], taught him by the One of great powers, possessed of sound judgement. He settled, while he was on the highest horizon. Then he drew nearer and nearer until he was within two bows' length or even nearer, where He revealed to His servant whatever He revealed.

<sup>3</sup> Q. 10:37-38 This Qur'an could not have been forged by anyone besides God; rather it is a confirmation of what preceded it, and a clarification of the details of the Book, in which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds. Or do they say, "He [Muhammad] has forged it?" Say, "Then bring a chapter like it, and invoke whoever you can, besides God, if you are truthful."

Q. 17:88 Say, "Should humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another."

Q. 45:2 This is the sending down of the Book from God, the All-mighty, All-wise.

<sup>4</sup> Q. 96:1-5 Read in the name of your Lord who created; he created the human being from a clot. Read, and your Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen, he taught the human being what he did not know.

the start of the process of revelation that would go on for the next twenty-two years [Q. 17:106, 25:32].<sup>5</sup>

As Muhammad was a pure being, his heart was a fit resting place for the revelation which was sent down to him without any fear of corruption or interference [Q. 2:97].<sup>6</sup> As it came from Muhammad's heart to his lips, it was preserved from error by the Angel Jibril acting as the 'Trusted Spirit' [Q. 26:192-195].<sup>7</sup> This process of revelation is called *wahy*, which is linked to the word *tanzil*, and refers to the 'sending down' of the Qur'an from God to our world in a human language, Arabic [Q. 12:2, 41:44, 42:7].<sup>8</sup>

For a further twenty-two years, the Qur'an continued to come down to Muhammad in a series of revelations, with occasional intervals. These revelations came from God who has the capacity to communicate through the *Kalam Allah*; the speech or word of God from whom it can't be separated. It exists beyond time with God and not here on earth. By tradition, the *Kalam Allah* is contained on the Preserved Tablet, *al-Lawh al-Mahfuz* in Heaven [Q. 43:2-4, 85:21-22].<sup>9</sup> From here it has been sent down to Prophets in various languages throughout human history. The Qur'an is the earthly deposit of the Speech of God in Arabic.

The same process of revelation was used for all the earlier Books. So the Qur'an says that revelation was sent down, for example, to Moses, to Jesus and to Muhammad. The Angel Jibril was the agent in those earlier revelations too [Q. 2:97].<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Q. 17:106 We have sent the Qur'an in parts so that you may recite it to the people a little at a time, and we have sent it down piecemeal.

Q. 25:32 Those who reject faith say, "Why has not the Qur'an been sent down to him all at once?" So it is, that We may strengthen your heart with it, and We have recited it [to you] gradually.

<sup>6</sup> Q. 2:97 Say: Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel [should know for certain that] he brought down the [revelation] upon your heart by God's permission, a confirmation of what preceded it, and guidance and glad tidings for the believers.

<sup>7</sup> Q. 26:192-195 This is indeed [a Book] sent down by the Lord of the worlds, brought down by the Trusted Spirit upon your heart [so that you may be one of the warners], in a clear Arabic language.

<sup>8</sup> Q. 12:2 Indeed We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an so that you may apply reason.

<sup>9</sup> Q. 43:2-4 By the Manifest Book: We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may reason, and indeed it is with us in the Mother Book [and it is] surely sublime and wise.

Q. 85:21-22 Rather it is a glorious Qur'an, in a preserved tablet.

<sup>10</sup> Q. 2:97 Say: Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel [should know for certain that] he brought down the [revelation] upon your heart by God's permission, a confirmation of what preceded it, and guidance and glad tidings for the believers.

The guidance sent in all the Books was essentially the same although there were differences in specific application. We don't know how many Books were sent throughout human history or how many Messengers there were. But the Qur'an mentions five by name:

Abraham, who was sent with a Book referred to as *Suhuf* (sheaves or leaves)

Moses, who was sent with the *Taurat* [Q. 6:91]<sup>11</sup>

David, who received the *Zabur* [Q. 17:55]<sup>12</sup>

Jesus, to whom was sent the *Injil* [Q. 5:46]<sup>13</sup>

And Muhammad to whom was revealed the Qur'an.

Each of these originally was a complete guide to living a God-conscious life. Our problem is that we can't be sure that what we have in the Hebrew Bible or Gospels today is exactly the same as the original revelations. This is why the Qur'an was needed as the final and definitive text. It corrects earlier error and gives clear guidance on matters that have become unclear [Q. 2: 77-79].<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Q. 6:91 They [the Jews] did not appreciate God with the appreciation due to him when they said, "God has not sent down anything to any human." Say, "Who had sent down the Book that Moses brought as a light and guidance for the people, which you make into parchments that you display, while you conceal much of it, and [by means of which] you were taught what you did not know, [neither] you nor your fathers?" Say, "God [sent it down]"; then leave them to plunge deeper into their game.

<sup>12</sup> Q. 17:55 Your Lord knows best whoever is in the heavens and the earth. Certainly We show some Prophets more favour than others, and we gave David the *Zabur* [Psalms].

<sup>13</sup> Q. 5:46 And in their [the earlier Prophets] footsteps we sent Jesus son of Mary, to confirm that which was before him of the *Taurat* [Torah], and we gave him the *Injil* [Gospel] in which there is guidance and light, confirming what was before it in the *Taurat*, and as guidance and advice for the God-conscious.

<sup>14</sup> Q. 2: 77-79 Do they not know that God knows what they conceal and what they make public? And there are among them illiterates, who do not know the Book, but [see in it their own] desires, and they do nothing but guess. Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say, "This is from God," in order to make a small profit by means of it! Woe to them for what their hands have written and for the gain they make from it.