

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The Encyclopaedia of Proofs and Miracles

The evidence for the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ and the truth of the Qur'an

Scientific miracles · Historical and archaeological witnesses · Prophecies fulfilled

The foretellings of the Torah and the Gospel · The world of jinn, sorcery and the unseen

Explained so that a child can follow · 151 colour illustrations

151 proofs, ordered by their strength



Part Six

The Miracle of the Language and the Challenge



The greatest miracle is not in the sky or in the earth — it is in the Book itself: a challenge left open for one thousand four hundred years that no one has dared to take up.

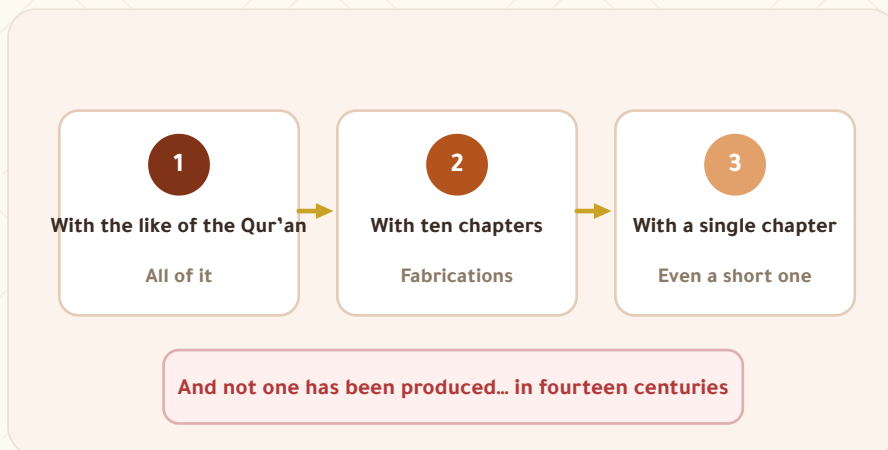
12 entries



A Challenge Lowered Three Times — and Never Taken Up

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our servant, then produce a chapter the like of it and call upon your witnesses other than God, if you should be truthful.

Surah al-Baqarah — verse 23



The challenge comes down step by step until it reaches the least that is possible

In plain words

The Qur'an challenged the Arabs to produce the like of it. When they failed, it lowered the bar: ten chapters. When they failed, it lowered it further: **a single chapter**, even one of three short verses. And no one has produced it to this day.

What did people believe then?

The Arabs were **the nation of eloquence beyond dispute**. Poetry was their register and their pride; markets were held for it at Ukaz and Dhu al-Majaz, and the great odes were hung on the Kaaba. Among them were Imru al-Qays, Zuhayr, Labid and Tarafah. And they had every reason to bring down this call by the easiest possible route.

What does science say today?

Fourteen centuries have passed, and people have tried, and nothing has stood. Whoever reads what was ascribed to Musaylimah the Liar, Ibn al-Muqaffa and others finds it **an object of ridicule rather than a rival**. And the challenge still stands, and the means today are vastly greater: language academies, universities, digital dictionaries and computers that analyse style. And yet not one text has been produced of which the people of the language say: this is its like.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

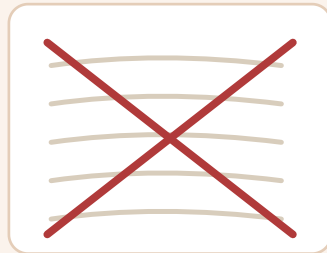
Two things make this challenge unique. First, **the descending gradation** — the opposite of what a challenger normally does. One who overreaches raises the bar so it stays out of reach; this one lowered it until it reached the least possible: **a single chapter, even the shortest in the Qur'an**. Second, that it **permitted them to enlist anyone**: "and call upon your witnesses other than God" — gather all of you and summon whom you wish. Then it asserted the outcome in advance in another verse: **"But if you do not — and you never will"** — an assertion about the future that no gambler would dare make.

You Did Not Recite Any Scripture Before It

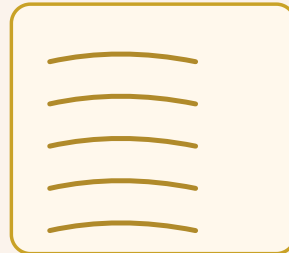
And you did not recite before it any scripture, nor did you write one with your right hand; otherwise the falsifiers would have had cause to doubt.

Surah al-Ankabut — verse 48

Had he read and written, the denier would have had an argument



He neither reads nor writes



The most eloquent book in Arabic

Being unlettered here is not a defect... it is the proof

In plain words

The Prophet ﷺ **could neither read nor write**, and studied under no one. And the verse mentions this and gives the reason: if he had read and written, **people would have doubted** and said he copied from books.

What did people believe then?

Writing was rare in Mecca and illiteracy was the norm. Yet there were people in Mecca who read and wrote, and in the peninsula there were Jews and Christians with books and scholars. So had the Prophet ﷺ been a reader and a writer, the accusation would have been ready and there would have been no answer to it.

What does science say today?

The Prophet's illiteracy ﷺ is among the most firmly established historical facts of his biography, and his opponents in his own time did not dispute it — and they were the most eager of people to find fault. They **accused him of everything but this**: they said poet, magician, diviner and madman, and they said "it is only a man teaching him" — and the Qur'an answered: "The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this is a clear Arabic tongue." That is, the man they pointed to did not even speak good Arabic.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

Here the Qur'an **presents the argument that could have been made against it and then refutes it**. That is a method only a confident speaker takes. The verse says: the wonder is not that this book is great, but that it came on the tongue of **one who neither reads nor writes**. And it raised the stakes further: the text contains the reports of earlier nations and precise historical detail, complete legislation on inheritance, judgement and war, and descriptions of cosmic matters not yet known. All of that from a man who could not read a single line. And that is the meaning of "**otherwise the falsifiers would have had cause to doubt**" — his being unlettered is what closed the door on doubt.



Twenty-Three Years — Without a Single Contradiction

Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found within it much contradiction.

Surah an-Nisa — verse 82



A book not written at one sitting, never reviewed and never revised

In plain words

The Qur'an came down **in pieces over twenty-three years**, a verse and verses as events required — in war and in peace, in hardship and in ease. And yet you find in it no contradiction, no change of method, and no retraction of anything said before.

What did people believe then?

Books are composed at a sitting and then reviewed and revised before publication, so their contradictions are removed. The Qur'an, by contrast, was recited to people **as soon as it came down**; they memorised it and wrote it, and there was then no way to amend what had passed. And everything revealed in Mecca was in the hands of its opponents years before the migration.

What does science say today?

Anyone can test this for himself today: let him write a text in pieces over twenty years, dealing with creed, law, history, ethics, the cosmos and the soul, and then have it reviewed at the end and find no contradiction in it. Researchers — Muslim and otherwise — have searched the Qur'an for fourteen centuries looking for a contradiction, and whole books were written on "the difficult passages of the Qur'an" and "the interpretation of differing verses", and they all concluded that what appears to differ is **a difference of variety, not of opposition**.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

The verse here offers **a scientific, applicable criterion**, not a claim. It says: had it been human, **you would have found in it much contradiction**. And that is logically sound: a text extending over twenty years in changing circumstances must carry the mark of its author's changing state. And the more remarkable thing is that the tone did not change with the circumstances: the verses of pardon and mercy came down **after victory**, not before it, and the verses of steadfastness and promise came down **in defeat and siege**. Had the text been a reflection of its author's condition, the opposite would have been expected.

The Testimony of al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah

By God, it has a sweetness and a beauty upon it; its lower part is abundant and its upper part bears fruit; and no human being says this.

Narrated by al-Hakim and al-Bayhaqi in the Dala'il — famous in the books of biography

Said by the shrewdest of Quraysh and its bitterest enemy

"It has a sweetness... and a beauty upon it"

"Its lower part is abundant, and its upper part bears fruit"

"No human being says this"

Then he went back and said: "This is nothing but magic handed down"

He acknowledged the truth... then chose a verdict that would please his people

In plain words

Al-Walid ibn al-Mughirah was among the shrewdest of Quraysh and the most expert in speech, and among the bitterest enemies of the call. When he heard the Qur'an he described it in the most beautiful terms and said: **"No human being says this."** Then his people pressed him and he said: "This is nothing but magic handed down."

What did people believe then?

Quraysh were looking for a single word to say to the pilgrims about Muhammad ﷺ before the season, so they gathered around al-Walid because he was the most sensible of them and the most learned in poetry and eloquence. They put to him: a diviner? a madman? a poet? a magician? — and he **rejected every one of these** with arguments drawn from the craft of speech itself.

What does science say today?

The story is famous in the books of biography and commentary, and what was revealed about him is in Surah al-Muddaththir: **"Indeed, he thought and deliberated. So may he be destroyed, how he deliberated. Then may he be destroyed, how he deliberated. Then he considered. Then he frowned and scowled. Then he turned back and was arrogant and said: This is nothing but magic handed down."** The verses describe his psychological state precisely: thinking, then deliberating, then considering, then frowning, then turning away in arrogance, then the verdict with which he satisfied his people. And his arguments rejecting divination and poetry are transmitted from him in detail.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

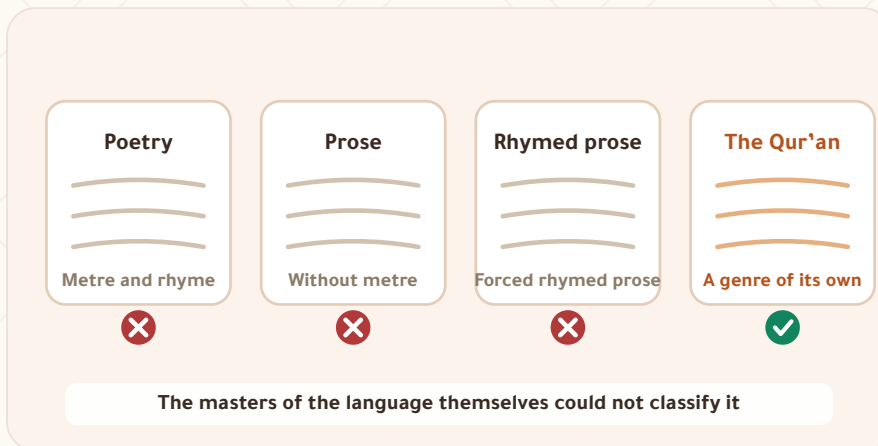
The testimony of an opponent is the strongest of testimonies, especially when he is **an expert in the field he testifies about**. Al-Walid was an arbiter of poetry to whom odes were submitted. And he drew a precise technical distinction between the Qur'an and everything that outwardly resembled it: he said of poetry, "I know all of poetry... and this is not poetry", and of divination, "this is not the murmuring of a diviner nor his rhymed prose". Then he described its structure: **"its lower part is abundant and its upper part bears fruit"** — its surface is beautiful and its depth is rich in meaning. That is a technical description from a hostile specialist, not the praise of an admirer. And his retraction **under his people's pressure** — recorded in the Qur'an itself — reveals that the denial was a social stance, not an intellectual conviction.



Not Poetry, Not Prose, Not the Rhymes of Diviners

And it is not the word of a poet — little do you believe. Nor the word of a soothsayer — little do you remember.

Surah al-Haqqah — verses 41-42



A text that fits into none of the known moulds of Arabic

In plain words

Arabic had three forms of elevated speech: **poetry** with its metres, free **prose**, and **the rhymed prose of the diviners**. And the Qur'an is none of them — it is a genre standing on its own.

What did people believe then?

The Arabs were the most expert people on earth in the metres, measures and rhymes of poetry, detecting a broken line by instinct. They knew the rhymed prose of the diviners and mocked its artifice. And yet **their verdict on the Qur'an wavered violently**: they said poetry, then magic, then divination, then the legends of the ancients — each opinion cancelling the one before it.

What does science say today?

The Qur'an differs from poetry because it **follows no metre and no fixed rhyme**; it differs from prose because it has **an internal rhythm and regular cadences**; and it differs from rhymed prose because in the diviners' rhyme **the wording is forced for the sake of the cadence**, whereas in the Qur'an the cadences follow the meaning rather than govern it. This is an established topic in both Arabic linguistic studies and orientalist scholarship. The orientalist Arberry said that its rhythm has no parallel in the languages he knew.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

The **wavering of the opponents in classification** is the evidence. When the experts of a craft are unable to place a text under any category of their own craft, and their verdict on it contradicts itself from one gathering to the next, that is a mark that it lies outside the genre they know. And the Qur'an recorded this very wavering against them: "**Look how they strike comparisons for you, so they have gone astray.**" Then it challenged them by the standard they had mastered: not by the sword and not by wealth, but **by the very craft in which they excelled every other people on earth**. And one who fabricates a book does not gamble on challenging his opponents in the field where they are supreme.

A Book That Reproaches the One Who Brought It

He frowned and turned away because there came to him the blind man. But what would make you perceive that perhaps he might be purified?

Surah Abasa — verses 1-3

Verses containing open reproach of the Prophet ﷺ

"He frowned and turned away" · "May God pardon you; why did you give them permission?"

"It is not for a prophet to have captives" · "And you concealed within yourself"

Then recited aloud to the people in prayer

Memorised and written down and never removed

One who fabricates a book does not put the blame of himself into it

In plain words

In the Qur'an there are verses that **reproach the Prophet ﷺ himself** and correct a position he took. These verses are recited aloud to people in prayer, memorised by young and old, and they were never removed and never softened.

What did people believe then?

One who claims prophethood needs **a complete image with no defect in it**, and his enemies lie in wait for any slip. So for a text to come down reproaching him and declaring his judgement mistaken, and then to be recited in the mosque before everyone, runs counter to every political and psychological calculation.

What does science say today?

The examples are many and explicit: **the whole of Surah Abasa** reproaching him for turning from a blind man to the chiefs of Quraysh; "**May God pardon you; why did you give them permission?**" over his permitting those who stayed behind from Tabuk; "**It is not for a prophet to have captives until he inflicts a decisive slaughter in the land**" over the captives of Badr; "**And you concealed within yourself what God is to disclose, and you feared the people, while God has more right that you fear Him**"; and "**Why do you prohibit what God has made lawful for you?**" And Aisha, may God be pleased with her, said: had the Prophet ﷺ concealed anything of the revelation, he would have concealed this verse.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

This is among the strongest rational arguments in this section, and it is what historians call **the criterion of embarrassment**: a text that harms the interest of the one who transmits it is nearer to truth. And note that the reproach did not fall on marginal matters but on **major political and military decisions**: the treatment of prisoners, permission given to the hypocrites, and a personal situation in his own household. Add to that another detail: the Qur'an **answered some questions and not others**, and indeed the revelation was withheld from the Prophet ﷺ for days during the affair of the slander while his own wife stood accused, until people said what they said. Had the matter been in his own hands, it would not have been delayed a single day.

His Own Speech Never Resembles the Qur'an

Nor does he speak from his own inclination. It is but a revelation revealed.

Surah an-Najm — verses 3-4

The Qur'an



A rhythm, cadences and a structure of its own eloquence of an eloquent man... without that structure

The noble hadith



One man... and two styles nobody ever confuses

Stylistic analysis distinguishes the two without difficulty

In plain words

The Prophet ﷺ was the most eloquent of the Arabs, and his sayings are at the summit of eloquence. And yet **his speech has never once been confused with the Qur'an by anyone** — the two styles differ plainly, and not once has a hadith been mistakenly ascribed to the Qur'an.

What did people believe then?

Had the Qur'an been of his own composition ﷺ, his style would have been one throughout all his speech — for a person carries a stylistic fingerprint he cannot escape, especially over twenty years. And his companions heard both daily, and the two were never confused for them for a single moment.

What does science say today?

Stylometry is an established science today, attributing a text to its author by measuring word distribution, sentence length and structural patterns. It has been applied to the Qur'an and the hadith and their difference is plain. The clearest structural difference: the Qur'an rests on **regular cadences**, on shifts of address and on movement between pronouns, and the hadith does not follow this construction. And then the Qur'an **addresses the Prophet ﷺ himself with command, prohibition and reproach** and instructs him to "Say" — more than three hundred times.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

Add to this a third category: **the sacred hadith** — what the Prophet ﷺ relates from his Lord in meaning, and which is nevertheless **not counted as Qur'an and is not recited in prayer**. So we have three levels of speech uttered by one man, sharply distinguished in ruling and treatment: the Qur'an is worshipped through its recitation, it is the object of the challenge, and it is transmitted by mass narration letter for letter; the sacred hadith is ascribed to God in its meaning and narrated in the Prophet's own wording ﷺ; and the prophetic hadith is his own speech. This **precise threefold distinction** has stood from the very first day and has never blurred. Had all of it come from one human source, this separation could not have been maintained for twenty years.

And There Is for You in Retribution, Life

And there is for you in legal retribution, life, O people of understanding, that you may become righteous.

Surah al-Baqarah — verse 179

The most eloquent thing the Arabs said

“Killing most averts killing”

14 letters

And the Qur'an said

→ **And there is for you in retribution, life**

Fewer letters... and far more meaning

It affirms life, not merely the negation of killing · and names the goal, not the means

And it qualified it with just retribution, not killing in general

One example among hundreds studied by the scholars of rhetoric

🔍 In plain words

The most eloquent thing the Arabs boasted of on this subject was their saying: **“Killing most averts killing.”** Then the Qur'an came with a sentence of **fewer letters and far richer meaning**: “And there is for you in retribution, life.”

⌘ What did people believe then?

“Killing most averts killing” was counted the summit of concision among the Arabs and was cited as a proverb. They competed in compressing great meanings into few words, and counted that the highest degree of eloquence.

⚙️ What does science say today?

The scholars of rhetoric analysed the difference between the two and found seven points and more. Among the clearest: that the Qur'an mentioned **life**, the beloved goal, while the proverb mentioned killing, which is hated; that it qualified it with **“legal retribution”**, that is, just and lawful killing, while the proverb left killing unqualified so that it included injustice; that it affirmed **a continuing life for the whole society** rather than the mere negation of a single case; that it avoided repeating the word “killing” twice; and that it closed with the moral purpose: “that you may become righteous”. All of that in fewer letters.

✦ Why is this a decisive miracle?

What matters here is not this single example but **that it is not an exception**. The whole of Arabic rhetorical science — meaning, exposition and embellishment — arose in the first place from the attempt to explain the inimitability of this text, and hundreds of books were written in it, from al-Baqillani's *The Inimitability of the Qur'an* to Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani's *Signs of Inimitability and Secrets of Rhetoric*. That is, **an entire human science arose to analyse one book** — and there is no parallel to that in the history of any language on earth. And to this day researchers still draw out of it what those before them did not.

I Was Given Comprehensive Speech

I was sent with comprehensive speech.

Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim — agreed upon



“Religion is sincere counsel”



“No harm and no reciprocating harm”



“Deeds are but by intentions”



“A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hand Muslims are safe”

A handful of words... whole chapters of law built upon them

Universal rules that order thousands of cases

In plain words

Among the distinctive qualities of the Prophet ﷺ was that he would say **few words carrying much meaning**. Whole chapters of jurisprudence and law have been built on hadiths of a few words.

What did people believe then?

Brief wisdom is known among all nations: the proverbs of the Arabs, the maxims of India, the counsels of the Greeks. But these are **general moral exhortations**, not rules on which an integrated legal system is built. And the difference between a maxim and a legal principle is fundamental.

What does science say today?

Take one example: “**There shall be no harm and no reciprocating harm**” — four words in Arabic. A whole branch of Islamic jurisprudence was built on it, covering neighbourly relations, building, divorce, sale, pre-emption, usurpation, ownership and the limiting of an owner’s rights. It became one of the **five great maxims** on which all the schools of law turn. And like it is “Deeds are but by intentions”, which the imams counted a third of all knowledge, and of which ash-Shafi’i said that it enters into seventy chapters of jurisprudence.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

The ability to formulate **a universal rule that is comprehensive and exclusive at once** is far harder than writing a long text. The rule must take in everything that falls under it and exclude everything that does not, and it must hold up against cases that never occurred to its author. That is what legislators labour at today, producing texts in volumes that are then amended every year. That a text of four words should stand for fourteen centuries and take in situations that did not exist at all — industrial pollution, digital harm — is something that deserves a pause. And note that the hadith itself attributes this to a gift and not to acquisition: “**I was sent** with comprehensive speech.”

A Book in the Breasts of Millions

Rather, it is distinct verses in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge.

Surah al-Ankabut — verse 49

The most memorised book in human history



Millions who have memorised it, on every continent and in every generation

A living copy in every breast — it cannot be burned and cannot be altered

In plain words

The Qur'an was not preserved in books alone — but in **the breasts of people**. And for fourteen centuries it has been memorised in every generation by millions of human beings, among them children who do not speak Arabic at all.

What did people believe then?

Ancient books were kept in a handful of copies held by priests and scholars. If the library burned or the copy was lost, the book was lost — which happened to many books now known only by their titles. And illiteracy was an obstacle to the spread of any text.

What does science say today?

The number of those who have memorised the Qur'an today is estimated in the millions, in Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, Pakistan, the Arab lands, Europe and America. International competitions are held in which they compete in reciting it letter for letter with correct vowelings and intonation. And **most of them are not Arabs** — that is, they memorise a text in a language that is not their mother tongue. No other book in human history is known to have been memorised in such numbers and with such precision.

Why is this a decisive miracle?

The effect of this on **the impossibility of alteration** is where the significance lies. A text preserved in books alone can be changed by controlling the copies. But a text memorised by millions of people across distant continents, bound by no single authority, no single language and no single state, and recited in prayer five times a day — to change one letter of it is **practically impossible**, because it would be exposed at the first congregational prayer. And this is precisely what the verse indicates: "distinct verses **in the breasts**" — not "in scrolls". It is the practical realisation of "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We will be its guardian", by a human mechanism open to observation and counting.

Every Verse Closes With What Suits It

And God is Exalted in Might and Wise. And God is Forgiving and Merciful. And God is Hearing and Knowing.

Closings scattered throughout the Qur'an

Swap one closing for another and the meaning breaks

A context of punishment and power

"Exalted in Might and Wise"



A context of repentance and forgiveness

"Forgiving and Merciful"



A context of supplication and complaint

"Hearing and Knowing"



More than six thousand verses... and every closing in its right place

A precise harmony between the content of a verse and the name of God that closes it

🔍 In plain words

Most verses of the Qur'an close with two of the beautiful names of God. And the remarkable thing is that **every closing suits the subject of its verse precisely** — swap one closing for another and you feel at once that something has gone wrong.

⌘ What did people believe then?

Arabic poetry keeps a single rhyme throughout an ode, and often **the wording is forced for its sake** until the line is padded with a word it does not need. That is a fault the critics recognise. And the rhymed prose of the diviners was more forced still. So one would expect such forcing in any text with regular cadences.

🔗 What does science say today?

In the Qur'an it is exactly the reverse: **the cadence follows the meaning rather than governing it**. A verse of punishment and retribution closes with "Exalted in Might, Owner of Retribution"; a verse of repentance with "Forgiving and Merciful"; a verse of supplication with "Hearing and Knowing" — because the one who supplicates needs to be heard and his condition known. The most famous example of this precision: the verse of theft closes with **"Exalted in Might and Wise"** — might in carrying out the penalty and wisdom in legislating it; and when the verse of repentance follows it, it closes with **"Forgiving and Merciful"**. Whole books have been written on this under the name of "the science of the cadences".

✦ Why is this a decisive miracle?

Try this yourself: take any long rhymed text in any language and test whether every rhyme suits the content of its sentence precisely. You will certainly find places padded for the sake of the metre or the rhyme — and that is natural in human work. The Qur'an has more than six thousand verses, most of them ending in a cadence, revealed **in pieces over twenty-three years** with no draft and no revision. That this harmony should hold across that number, and given that manner of revelation, is not explained by linguistic skill, however great.

And Now — What Will You Do With All This?

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them

❖ *that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?* ❖

Surah Fussilat — verse 53



Sky



Earth



Life



History



The unseen

Many independent threads... all pointing one way

The probability of their coming together by chance is near zero

You are not asked to submit to a single proof... but to look at them all together

🔍 In plain words

You have reached the end of the book. Every proof that has passed before you can be argued with on its own. But the real question is: **what is the probability that all of them should come together by chance in one man?**

⌘ What did people believe then?

Every nation in history had something it exalted. But the question that separates them is: did it have anything that **could be tested and falsified**? Legends do not offer a prophecy bounded by a date, nor a cosmic description contradicting the science of its own age, nor an open challenge that stands for fourteen centuries.

🌀 What does science say today?

What you have read here is five entirely independent threads, none of them depending on the others: **a cosmic description** contradicting the science of its age and then confirmed by science centuries later; **archaeological witnesses** that came out of the ground after being denied; **dated, specific prophecies** that came to pass as stated; **texts in the books of the opponents themselves**, still in their hands; and **an open linguistic challenge** never taken up. Were one thread to fall, the other four would still stand.

★ Why is this a decisive miracle?

The reasoning here is the reasoning of **the accumulation of independent evidence**, which is what is applied in the courts and in science alike. One proof may be a possibility, and two may be a coincidence — but dozens of proofs from fields with no connection between them — astronomy, geology, medicine, archaeology, history and language — all pointing in one direction, is not explained by chance. And the Qur'an does not ask blind submission of you; it calls you to look and to reflect in more than seven hundred places: "Do they not look?", "Do they not reflect?", "Do they not reason?", "Say: bring your proof." And it has set before you what it promised: **"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves."** And you have seen. The rest is left to you alone.