

The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

HUROOF-E-MUQQATAT (DISJOINTED LETTERS)

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**MY VIEWS ARE EXPRESSED AS A RESPONSE TO AN EMAIL QUESTION RECEIVED WITH REGARDS
THE ABOVE SUBJECT**

Question:

"I noticed that the *huroof muqattaat* are, most of time, followed by one or more attribute of the Qur'an itself. So, somehow they are related with the Qur'an itself. I don't know the connection---maybe someday we all will. I am in complete darkness about their significance, but I will be most interested to know what you personally think about the *huroof muqattaat*? What could they possibly mean in chapters they occur in?"

Response:

With regards the Quranic 'Huroof-e-Muqqatat' (Disjointed letters), there have been numerous theories that have been advanced throughout scholarly history, but they all remain **theoretical**.

However, I personally do note something similar in the Hebrew Tanakh, for example with the Acrostic Psalms (alphabetically ordered verses with a Hebrew letter appearing in turn covering all the 22 alphabets). However, I do also appreciate that any similarity may also be superficial.

Psalms Chapter 119

קט ראש-דברך אמת ; ולעולם, כל-משפט צדקך. 160 The beginning of Thy word is truth; and all Thy righteous ordinance endureth for ever. {P}
 ומדבריד (ומדברך), קסא שרים, רדפוני חנם ; ופחד לבי. 161 SHIN. Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of Thy words.

[1]

This vague similarity with the Quranic ‘Huroof-e-Muqqatat’ has always been quite interesting to me, not only because they appear in scripture but also due to both languages being of Semitic stock.

With regards the latter point of the languages being of Semitic stock, I find Hamiduddin Farahi’s ‘proposal’ quite interesting with regards the Quranic 'Huroof-e-Muqqatat'.

Hamiduddin Farahi basically claims linkage with the Hebrew alphabet, as he leans on Arabic being derived from the earlier ‘Semitic’ stock of languages. Of course, some similarities are quite evident to one who speaks or studies both. Also, Hebrew letters have been known to have pictorial symbolism. For example, the ‘Aleph’ in Hebrew represented an ox head or yoke and if one were to correlate that with the Arabic letter ‘Alif’ from Surah Baqarah, one notes the mention of the narrative with regards Prophet Moses’s (pbuh) people and the instruction to them to sacrifice a Cow (2:67). Surah Baqarah initiates with the letter ‘Alif’ (followed by Lam-Miim).

The ‘Nun’ in Ancient Hebrew represented a fish and in Surah 68 (Al-Qalm - The Pen) which initiates with the Arabic letter ‘Nun’, we find the cautionary verse “and be not like the companion of the fish” (68:48). This is obviously a reference to Jonah (Yunus) (pbuh) and his story with regards the whale.

I suppose the ‘theory’ gains a little more support when one consults Surah ‘Ta-Ha’ (Chapter 20) which initiates with the Arabic letter 'Ta'. The similar Hebrew ‘Teth’ symbolises a serpent, snake or means to roll or curve. In Surah 20, one also notes narratives which depict Prophet Moses, (pbuh) the rod and the snake. In verse 20:20, one notes the mention of a snake in action, gliding, running or in motion. It is interesting to note here how the ‘Teth’ in Hebrew has that motion of the snake. We then further note in Surahs 26 and 28 that they also initiate with the Arabic letter ‘Ta’ and once again in both Surahs, one finds narratives of Prophet Moses (pbuh) and the mention of the serpent.

Hamiduddin Farahi's claim is very interesting only as **a theory** as an exhaustive analysis still needs to be conducted to give this theory any further credence.

I personally not only find it interesting, but significant to note that despite no fixed theory, no Muslim(s) has ever tampered with the letters, edited it or removed it from the scripture. This is despite the fact that the true meaning of the letters has remained largely unknown or may have become lost within the very early periods of Islam. The Quran also does not elaborate on their

meanings. Muslims have no doubt kept to the authenticity of the scripture by keeping these unknown letters within the scripture and its recitation.

An example of the original picture symbolism of the Hebrew alphabets can be sourced at the link below.

<http://www.biblicalhebrew.com/alphabet.htm>

I personally have not advanced a theory of my own. With the 'Huroof-e-Muqqatat', I have rather felt inclined to assign it to the 'Mutashabihaat' of 3:7.

Your brother,
Joseph.

REFERENCES

[1] MECHON MAMRE [online], Available at <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt26b9.htm> [Accessed 1st September 2011]

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