

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## UNDERSTANDING VERSE 42:51 - WHO CAN RECEIVE 'WAHI'?

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Often when one encounters the Arabic term 'wahi' in Muslim thought, it is usual to note it widely understood as Prophetic inspiration alone. However, from a Quran's perspective, we will note that such a restriction of the term is unwarranted.

The Arabic root 'W-H-Y' means to reveal, to indicate, to signify, suggest a thing (in the mind), a signal, to inspire or to point out.

وَحَىٰ aor. يَحِيّ *To indicate, reveal.* وَحَىٰ n.a. A revelation, بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحِّينَا 11 v. 39, "Under our inspection, and according to our revelation."

Source: Hans Wehr - A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic [1]

وحى

4. أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِ *He (God) revealed to him; or spake, or made known, to him by revelation — Also, He suggested to him; or put into his mind. (Mughnee voce أَنْ.)*

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [2]

A reader will note the following verse in the Quran.

#### 042.051

"It is not fitting for any human (**Arabic: I-basharin**) that God should speak to him except by inspiration (**Arabic: wahyan**), or from behind a veil (**Arabic: hijabin**), or by the sending of a messenger, then he reveals (**Arabic: fayuhiya**) with His permission, what He wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise"



Illustration - Joseph Islam

The Arabic word 'I-basharin' in the above verse refers to 'any' human and not anyone in particular. Therefore, the term covers all mankind.

The verse makes it clear how communications from God reach humans.

- (1) Through inspiration / suggestions / indications etc (wahi)
- (2) Behind a veil (Hijab) - See Prophet Moses's <sup>(pbuh)</sup> example below
- (3) By sending a messenger

#### (1) THROUGH INSPIRATION, SUGGESTIONS, INDICATIONS etc (WAHI)

It is clear that God's creation (including mortals) have the ability to receive 'wahi' from Him in various capacities. For example:

- (i) The various heavens were inspired (awha) to perform a specific function (41:12)
- (ii) The bees were inspired (awha) to build habitations in the mountains and trees (16:68)
- (iii) The Earth will be inspired (awha) on The Day (99:5)
- (iv) With respect to humans who were not messengers, the mother of Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> received 'awha' to put her baby into the river and not to fear (28:7).

Therefore, it is evident from the verse that human beings (bashar) have the capacity to receive inspired suggestions from God, a thought in one's heart or mind or an indication by which a particular truth / understanding can be manifested.

## (2) BEHIND A VEIL (HIJAB) - GOD CAN NEVER BE SEEN FACE TO FACE

God only communicates with humans behind a hidden barrier. It is to be appreciated that even when God spoke directly with Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> (4:164), God still remained **unseen**. There always existed a 'Hijab' (screen) between God and the Prophet.

The Quran makes the point of an inability to see God absolutely clear in response to Prophet Moses's <sup>(pbuh)</sup> request where "...God said, **By no means can you see me**" (Ibn tarani - 7:143).

Even an indirect manifestation to reveal God's glory (tajjala) proved futile where He sent the mountains crashing to dust (dakkan) and Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> fell down into a swoon and senseless (sa'iqan). (Please See 7:143).

In effect, the 'Hijab' (screen) between God and man can never be breached and remains in force despite the form of communications that may be used by God.

## (3) BY SENDING A MESSENGER

God also sends messengers to mankind as part of ongoing guidance (see verse 7:35). This is a form of communication that has always existed from God and is set to continue as clearly cited by the verse. **Please see related article [1] below.**

The imperfect verb 'yuhî' which has been used in verse 42:51 has been used in the Quran for the kind of revelations made to messengers of God for a particular mission or a revelation to the angels. For example, please see 3:44, 8:12, 11:49, 12:102, 12:109, 16:43, 21:7, 21: 25, 34:50 and 42:3. However, it has also been used for satanic inspirations as well. See 6:112 and 6:121.

Therefore, the verb 'yuhî' is not restricted to 'Divine' revelations alone and in its general sense, captures inspiration in a wider sense whether it is good or bad.

Furthermore, to restrict the ability to receive 'wahi' to certain chosen individuals is incorrect from the perspective of the Quran. All humans have the capacity to be inspired in one form or another.

The mother of Prophet Moses <sup>(pbuh)</sup> was not a prophetess but was inspired (28:7), as are the bees. They too are inspired by God in their capacities to perform a particular function (16:68).

However, 'wahi' in terms of 'Prophethood' has **ceased** for mankind (khatama nabiyyina 33:40) with Prophet Muhammad. <sup>(pbuh)</sup>

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## FINAL THOUGHTS

In summary, all humans have the capacity to receive 'wahi' from God in one form or another and in some cases in particular, **to warn mankind.**

### 016:002

He sends down the angels with the inspiration by His commandment **on whom He pleases of His servants, saying: Give the warning that there is no god but Me, therefore be careful (of your duty) to Me.**

### 040:015

The Exalter of Ranks, the Lord of the Throne. **He causes the Spirit of His command upon whom He will of His slaves, that He may warn of the Day of Meeting,**

This point was advanced to the Arabian Prophet in verse 42:51, so that he could best understand how he was being inspired for a particular mission for mankind and so that he may remain reassured. (Please see verses: 7:2, 21:7)

The following verse (42:52) makes it absolutely clear that before his ministry, the Prophet did not know what the revelation was nor did he have a concept of true 'imaan' (la imaanu). He was a man of great character (68:4), was given 'wahi', became the first to submit (6:163, 39:12) and then he subsequently guided others.

### 042:052

"And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know **(Arabic: ma kunta)** what the Book was **(Arabic: ma-lkitab)**, nor the faith **(Arabic: la imaanu)**, but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you show the way to the right path"

Prophet Muhammad <sup>(pbuh)</sup> not only received 'wahi' as a Prophet of God, but also in other capacities. There is a hint of this in verse 66:3 where the truth of a particular situation was manifested to him in his capacity as a husband. This type of manifestation of truth is open to all mortals where circumstances can reveal the truth of a matter.

### Related Article:

- (1) [End of Prophethood - Continuation of Messengers?](#)

## REFERENCES

[1] WEHR. H, A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, Edited by J.Milton Cowan, 3rd Edition, Spoken Languages Services Inc. 1976, Page 157

[2] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 8, Supplement, Page 3050

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