

Miracle in Islam - *Mujiza* or *Ayah*?

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A. *Mujiza* or *Ayah*?

The trilateral root ‘ayn jīm zāy (ع ج ز) occurs 26 times in the Quran. Arabic word '*mujiza*' is derived from it. It means "that by means of which [the Prophet] confounds, overwhelms, his opponents" or in simple words “miracle”.

Generally, we use the word 'miracle' or '*mujiza*' to describe something that perplexes human mind and can't be explained. However, the shocking fact is that Qur'an does not use the technical Arabic word (مُعْجَزَةٌ *Mu'jiza*) for 'miracle'. When we go through statements in Quran that talk about so-called-miraculous events, we do not find the Arabic word '*mujiza*' mentioned in the text.

Instead of '*mujiza*', Quran uses the term '*Ayah*' (literal meaning - 'sign') to describe such events [what we call as miracles].

B. Quran as witness

Let us ponder over few examples from Quran

1. Prophet Salih and the miracle of the she-camel:

Prophet Salih referred to the she-camel as '*Ayah*' of Allah. In general, people think that the she-camel was sent as '*mujiza*' or miracle but Quran says that she was an *Ayah* from Allah. Refer Quran 7:73

In English translations you can see the word "Miracle" added in bracket in front of the word '*ayah*'.

72 So We saved him and those who were with him by a mercy from Us, and We cut the roots of those who belied Our Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.); and they were not believers.

73 And to Thamud (people, We sent) their brother Salih. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah! You have no other ilah (God) but Him. (La ilaha illallah: none has the right to be worshipped but Allah). Indeed there has come to you a clear sign (the miracle of the coming out of a huge she-camel from the midst of a rock) from your Lord. This she-camel of Allah is a sign unto you; so you leave her to graze in Allah's earth, and touch her not with harm, lest a painful torment should seize you.

Arabic word '*Ayah*' is used but word '*miracle*' is added in bracket

2. Prophet Moses and miracles for *Fir'aun*:

Quran describes all miracles shown to *Fir'aun* as ‘*Ayah*’ of Allah.

Then [Musa (Moses)] showed him the great *AAYAAT* (plural form of '*ayah*', usually translated as miracles). Quran 79:20

But [*Fir'aun* (Pharaoh)] belied and disobeyed. Quran 79:21

Quran is saying that Prophet Moses showed ‘*Aayaat*’ to *Fir'aun*. We know that Moses showed many events to *Fir'aun* that we understand as miracles.

➤ Quran 20:22 – Stick as snake was an *Ayah* and not *Mujiza*.

- Quran 20:56 – Allah showed all *Aayaat* to Firaun.
- Quran 20:72 – Magicians surrendered and believed in *Ayah* shown to them.
- Quran 10:92 – Preservation of *Firaun's* body is an *Ayah* from Allah.
- Quran 7:106-109 – *Firaun* asked Moses to show the *Ayah*, Moses showed the *Ayah* of snake and stick and magicians were surprised to see; they attributed this event to sorcery.

Quran 7:130-132 refers to “years of drought and shortage of crops” as ‘*Ayah*’. Similarly, events of flood, locusts, lice, frogs, blood are referred to as *Aayaat* of Allah sent for *Firaun*.

C. What difference it makes whether it is ‘*Mujiza*’ or ‘*Ayah*’?

One may question - what is the big deal in the use of word ‘*Ayah*’ or absence of word ‘*Mujiza*’? When we use word ‘miracle’ or ‘*Mujiza*’ for an event then we assume it to be:

- ✓ Super natural event
- ✓ Something that is beyond human perception
- ✓ Something that goes against laws of nature.

However, Quran attributes these events to be *Aayaat* of Allah. Arabic word ‘*Ayah*’ is difficult to translate in any language because it comes solely from Allah. Loosely, we can translate it as ‘Sign’. *Ayah* of Allah are of two types:

- In the Quran: Every sentence in the Quran is an *Ayah* of Allah.
- Outside the Quran: Everything surrounding us reflects *Ayah* of Allah.

1. Time and again Allah urges readers of Quran to deeply ponder over *Aayaat* of Allah.
2. Quran also says that in the ‘work’ of Allah there is *Ayah* for those who think.

Ayah of Allah is for human beings to ponder upon, derive guidance and benefit. When we assume that it’s not an *Ayah* but a super natural event then we deprive mankind of the benefits of *Ayah*.

We keep on discovering and knowing more details of *Ayah* or 'signs' of Allah.

For example, Quran 2:164 says that those who use ‘*aql*’ or intellect will find many things from following *Aayaat* of Allah:

1. Creation of heavens and the earth
2. Alternation of day and night
3. Sailing of ship through oceans
4. Rain
5. Moving Creatures
6. Movement of wind

Quran says that all the above events are *Aayaat* of Allah for those who use intellect / AQL. Today, science has discovered many aspects of above *Aayaat* of Allah, which earlier people did not know. The more people pondered over above *Aayaat* of Allah, more knowledge they gained.

Similarly, the more we will ponder over so-called-miracles or '*Mujiza*', better we will understand its mechanism. *Mujiza* is neither super natural nor it's against the laws of nature. If we ponder over it more, we will be able to explain its mechanism better.

D. Conclusion

1. Quran uses the Arabic word '*Ayah*' to indicate events that we deem as miracle. Quran never uses the word '*Mujiza*' in context of such events.
2. With the passage of time, we keep on moving from less knowledge domain to more knowledge domain.
3. Whatever the so-called-miracle occurred in the past, they occurred as part of God's laws. We might discover many of these laws in future. We will explore more and more regarding *Aayaat* of Allah.
4. Miracles of Quran are for us to ponder over and derive the guidance.
