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Restating the Seyed Morteza's Sarfah Theory

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Abstract

During the third to sixth century, a theory about miraculous aspects of the Quran, named the Sarfah Theory, was proposed. Seyed Morteza was one of the eminent fans of this theory. Although he had been attracted to this theory by complying with the Mu'tazilli System, he played the most significant role in developing this theory by his independent compilation named "Almouzeh-The Explanation". His scientific domination over literature, poetry, language, jurisprudence and rules, prevents us from neglecting his theory, and ignore his reasons and challenges about Sarfah theory. The issue that someone like Seyed Morteza claims that the text of Quran is devoid of miracles and its miracles are outside of its text, needs to be precisely investigated. However, his exposition of Sarfah cannot be accepted, but as it seems a new exposition of this theory can be provided and generally a good advocacy of Seyed Morteza's theory can be presented. In this paper, we accompany Seyed Morteza and claim that the thaumaturgy of Quran has aspects outside of its text. But we also declare that this miracle is associated with the way of getting through Quran. This exposition of Sarfah would be that: God has denied the Quranic revelation gift for anyone but Prophet Muhammad.

Keywords: Sarfah Theory, Textual Miraculous Aspects, Miraculous Way, Challenging Quran, The Eloquence of Quran, The Poetry of Quran, News of Unseen, The Congruity of Quran.

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1. Problem:

During the third to sixth century, a significant number of Muslim scholars were for the Sarfah theory and used to consider Quran as a miracle not due to the textual aspects but for something rather than its text. This issue brings the question to the minds that why someone like Seyed Morteza despite the proficiency that he possessed in literature, poetry, language, jurisprudence and rules, claimed that the text of Quran is devoid of miracles and the miraculous aspect of Quran was according to Sarfah that means preventing people from opposing Quran.

There is no doubt that their prejudice and predilection towards advocating the greatness and legitimacy of Quran was not less than others, and unassailably they would not have let themselves to ascribe features to Quran that it does not have or introduce Quran in contrary to what it really is. It is obvious that attributing unreal wonders and miracles to Quran is not regarded as serving Quran, yet it is even regarded as betrayal since these unreal wonders and miracles bring about unrealistic expectations in people, and then, when people refer to Quran and cannot find their expectations fulfilled, they may turn away from it.

In order to discover the miraculous aspects of Quran, first we need an enlightenment on what exactly miracle is. As it is obvious and as Seyed Morteza has said, miracle is something that nobody has the power to make it happen but the God, (The Explanation,170; Ammunition,289) and that is of two kinds: 1. Things that only God has the power to do them such as resurrecting a dead person, healing a born blind person, creating different beings, and 2. Things that even humans are able to do them in the normal way through wisdom and experience such as curing diseases that can be cured by humans; however God cures them through an unusual way. In these cases, the deed itself is not considered as a miracle but how it is done is regarded as the miracle.

As regards Quran, tow miraculous aspects can be proposed: 1. The miraculous text, 2. The miraculous way that it occurred. By miraculous text, I mean, something that can only be done by God, such as creating beings and curing fatal diseases and things like that, and by the miraculous way, I mean, how it is done through an unusual way, though there exists a usual way for doing it that can even be done by humans. For instance, both God and the human are aware of the sex of a baby in the mother's uterus (Ar-Rad (The Thunder),8). However, mankind is able to determine the sex of the baby with the help of devices that he has made. If someone can determine the sex of the baby without using any devices, this is regarded as a miraculous deed. Now, the question that is raised regarding the miraculous aspects of Quran is that whether the text of Quran is the miracle or how prophet Muhammad had received it.

The meaning of “miraculous way” is that Quran is not obtained through the usual way of thinking and contemplation, but it is obtained through an abnormal way. According to the theory of miraculous way, the inspiration of Quran to prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was the miracle since it was not done through the usual way of thinking and contemplation but it was done by inspiring with the help of angels and unseen creatures. According to this, if a person brings something like Quran by thinking and contemplating, he has not done a miraculous action. Nevertheless, if someone brings something like Quran in an abnormal way such as by revelation and angel’s connection, it would be considered as a miracle.

Therefore, the fact that Arab’s atheists have not proposed something like Quran does not mean that the text of Quran is the miracle, since there is no necessity and condition between Arab’s atheists having not proposed anything like Quran and Quran being textually miraculous. Many of the atheists did not believe in Quran and had not any motivations of proposing anything like it, this barrier would be overcome if they find faith in Muhammad and Quran, or many of the atheists were not able to propose anything like Quran due to lack of familiarity with the concepts of Quran, and that would be easy if they became familiar with the text of Quran.

This paper tries to restate the Sarfah theory of Seyed Morteza, that is to say it intends to propose a new form of Sarfah theory without its current complications. Needless to mention that theologians such as Seyed Morteza and Nezam were up to this belief that: a. The poetry and text of Quran is not a miracle. b. The poetry and text of Quran does not imply on the verity of prophet Muhammad’s claims. c. people are able to present something like or even better than the text and poetry of Quran (Rahman Badawi, Islamic Religions, page213).

In this paper, it is declared that Quran is undoubtedly a miracle, however the miraculous aspect of it is not regarding its text but it is that it has been obtained without thinking and contemplation; in other words, it has been revealed to prophet Muhammad by an unseen angel. Therefore, Sarfah theory can be restated that God has given this responsibility to the only prophet Muhammad through an angel, and has denied this gift to others.

2. The history of Sarfah theory:

Some have attributed the Sarfah theory to the era of Bani Umayyah, and have said that Ja’ad ibn Dirham (died in 118 lunar calendar) who was one of the Mu’tazilites, was the first person who believed that Quran was a creation and did not consider the eloquence of Quran to be miraculous; he also believed that mankind can present something like Quran or even better

than it (Rafei, 143-144; Mohammad Abu Zohreh, 76). However, this report from Rafei (died in 1937 AD) does not go any further, and nobody had declared that Ja'ad had refused the eloquence of Quran to be miraculous and had considered people to be able to write something like Quran or even better than it. The only thing that was attributed to Ja'ad was that he believed in Quran being created (Ibn Al-Athir, Full of History, Volume 7, pages 75-76).

What is popular is that Ibrahim ibn Sayar known by Nezam (died in 224 lunar calendar) had been the first person for the theory of Sarfah. He was one of the deans of Mu'tazila school. He was raised in Basra and then migrated to Baghdad and became popular. He was a poet, jurist and theologian and used to contribute to debates with Daryh and Ash'arites and Hashwiyyah and whom were familiar with Hadith and also with Murji'a and Mojberah (The Explanation,74).

It is obvious that Sarfah theory was first proposed by Mu'tazilite and even Sakhavy (died in 643 lunar calendar) has attributed the Sarfah theory to people of Mu'tazila (Sakhavy, Jamal Al-Qura and Kamal Al-Aqra', 216/1; Shahry, Utterances on Sarfah, page31), while the theory of miraculous text of Quran is attributed to Ash'arites and people whom are familiar with Hadith.

Anyway, the Nezam's Sarfah theory was followed by his students. Some have declared that Jahez (died in 255 lunar calendar) was of the same opinion as his teacher. He was the first person who had written a book in the field of Quran, however, his book is lost, and therefore there is a disagreement on the content of his book. Some have said that he has regarded the text and poetry of Quran as being miraculous, but apparently he did not intend to claim that the text of Quran is miraculous and nobody can oppose it. Maybe the disagreement about Jahez stems from writings that were written by later scientists named "The text and poetry of Quran" in which the miraculous text of Quran has been discussed, for instance: Muhammad ibn Yazid Vasety (died in 306 lunar calendar), with the title 'Miraculous text and poetry of Quran' (Ibn Nadim,41), Ibn Akhshid, Ahmad ibn Ali (died in 326 lunar calendar) (Ibn Nadim,41), Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Nasr Jurjani (Ibn Nadim,41; Semaan, Alansab, 80/2), Abu Zayd Balkhi Ahmed ibn Sahl (died in 322 lunar calendar) (Ibn Nadim, 153; Baghdadi, Gift of Theosophists, 59/1), Ibn Abi Dawud Sijistani, Abdullah (died in 310) (Ibn Nadim, page288; Gift of Theosophists, 1/444), Shlmghany Mohammed ibn Ali (died in 322). It seems as if the book that Shlmghany has written about the text and poetry of Quran is the interpretation of Quran (Alzryh, 4/278).

As a confirmation that Jahez was for the idea of his teacher Nezam, is that although Jahez claimed that the text of Quran had been challenged, he also stated that God has prevented

Arab people from contradicting Quran. He has stated: “God has prevented Arab people from contradicting Quran- after that prophet Muhammad had challenged them to the text of Quran- and thus there is no one who intended to accept the challenge, that if there was, they would be bothering themselves.” (The Animal, 89/4). From his point of view, Sarfah is similar to when the Israelites were wandering in the desert and were stuck in there for forty years and that was nothing but that God had deprived them of going out of there (the Animal, 6/268).

Anyway, after Nezam, a few number of his students such as Abu Ishaq Nasibi, Hisham ibn Omar and Foty (died before 218 lunar calendar) and Abbad ibn Suleiman Symry (died about 25 lunar calendar) found tendencies towards his theory. Other fans of this theory are: Abu Ishaq Esfarayeni (died in 418 lunar calendar), Abul Qasim Balkhi (died in 317/319), Andalusian Ibn Hazm (died in 456 lunar calendar) (The Explanation, page107; Al-Fasl, 3/26-31; reported from Introduction of the Explanation, page16).

This theory has found his fans among Shia people that the most important of them are: Sheikh Mofid (died in 413 lunar calendar) in Earlier articles (page 63), Seyed Morteza (died in 436 lunar calendar), Sheikh Tousi (died in 466 lunar calendar) and Abu-Salah Halabi in “Taghrib Al-Ma’arif” (page 107), Mohammed ibn Sinan Khafagy (died in 466 lunar calendar) in “The secret of eloquence” (page 89), Ghotbeddin Ravandi (died in 573 lunar calendar) in “Kheraj and Jeraih” (page 3/981-994). However, it has been said that Sheikh Tousi was firstly for the opinion of his teacher Seyed Morteza, and has expanded and confirmed it in his book named “Provision of principle”, but then he has returned from his belief in his book, “The economy” (page173) (Introduction of The Explanation,22).

It seems as if Sarfah theory finds its roots in the society of Muslims, and has come from Mu’tazilites who had rational look at religious beliefs. When Mu’tazilites compared Quran and Arabian language, they could not find much difference, and thus there were no reasons for Arabian to be unable to present something like Quran. The proof for this opinion is the statements being reported from the favorers of Sarfah theory.

For example, Farkhr Razi reports the viewpoint of Nezam: God has not revealed Quran to be a proof of prophecy, but Quran is like the other revealed books that express the legitimate and illegal commandments, and Arab people had not confronted it since God had prevented them from confronting it and had taken the necessary knowledge to do so, from them (Fakhr Razi, Nihayat Alayjaz, page26). This shows that the reason why Nezam did not consider the text of Quran to be miraculous was that he considered it the same as other holy books.

It has also been said that Abu Al-Qasim Balkhi (died in 317-319 lunar calendar) declared that the text and poetry of Quran is not a miracle. It is God that has prevented the humans from

confronting Quran, and if he had not done that, humans would have been able to, since individuals put words by each other and when they are able to say “Praise be to”, they will be able to say “Allaah” afterwards. Also, if god had not prevented them, they would have been able to bring other words together as well (The Explanation,13).

From this statement of Abu Al-Qasim Balkhi It can be deduced that the reason why they found tendencies towards Sarfah theory was that language and the combination of words are of human’s validities, and thus, declaring that poetry and organizing words are miraculous, cannot be considered to be correct. They might have found out that Quran’s verses are exactly the same language they speak, and like every other language the aim of these verses is to convey concept and notion and its concept is understandable like human’s language; because Quran has been revealed to guide people. Hence, when the words and their combination and meaning are somehow in a way that is understandable for human, declaring that human cannot present something like that is not considered to be correct (The Explanation, page 79).

Seyed Morteza says: “We have compared most of the Quran’s verses to the most eloquent Arab language, but we could not find much differences among them” (Ammunition, 381). This utterance from Seyed Morteza shows his preoccupation with denying that the text of Quran is miraculous. He had compared a large number of cases regarding Quran and the language of Arabs textually and eloquently, but had found no much differences among them; therefore, he had declared that the lack of confrontation between Arab people and Quran is not due to text of Quran being miraculous, but it is because they were deprived of being able to confront it.

Thus, it seems as though the motivation of Nezam and others in denying the miraculous text of Quran was not to oppose it fundamentally, but it was regarding the fact that they had discovered that the text and poetry of Quran and Arab’s language did not vary much, and presenting something like Quran would not be a difficult issue. Hence, Nezam had declared that Arabian people were able to challenge Quran and propose something like it but if they had not done such a thing, it was because God had prevented them from doing such a thing.

Based on these records, it is to say that Sarfah theory had inner roots, however some had considered outer roots for it. For example, some have said that it is affected by form the sect of Barahma and attributed to the word of Abu-Reyhan Biruni (Abu Zohreh, The Great Miracle, 57 and after; Shahry, Utterances on Sarfah, 36) that have reported from Barahama people: “Veda is not known for its text, . . . , and some Barahama believe that it is miraculous and nobody can create something like it; however, their educated people believe that they are able to, but they have been prevented from doing that due to deference.” (Abu-Reyhan Biruni,

Critical study of what India says, whether accepted by reason or refused, page98; reported from Shahry, Utterances on Sarfah, 36). What has been reported from Barahama people and their holy book seems to agree more with the theory of miraculous text of Quran rather than the theory of Sarfah; therefore, it is more appropriate to consider that the theory of Quran's miraculous text stems from Barahama's belief.

Some people have also said that the Safrah theory is affected by Jews. Rafei (died in 1937 AD) is the first person who has said that. He says the first thing that was declared about Quran was the saying of a Jewish person named Labid ibn Asm that had said: "Torah has been created; Quran has been created as well"; then this was issued and propagated by Talut, Labid ibn Asm's nephew. Afterwards, Bannan Ibn Samaan who is attributed to the cult of Bannaniyeh found faith in this theory and passed it to Ja'ad ibn Derham who is the first person repudiating much of what is stated in Quran besides stating that Quran had been created and its eloquence was not miracle and people were able to present the same or even better than Quran. Nobody had said such a thing before him (Hemo, Ejaz-ul-Quran and the Prophet's Rhetoric,101); however, only Rafei had reported this issue (Ibn Al-Athir, Full of History, Volume 7, pages 75-76).

It is as if when someone becomes notorious, it is common that people attribute every inappropriate belief they find to him. In contrast, when someone becomes reputable, people try to keep the inappropriate beliefs far away from him. For instance, Seyed Habbat Allah Shahrestany refuses the Sarfah theory, while he observes that great scientists such as Seyed Morteza has faith in this theory; therefore, he claims that Seyed used to debate and change his ideas about something, and that we do not know whether Seyed was for this theory to the end of his lifetime or not. (Hemo, Seyed Habbat Allah Shahrestany, Timeless miracle, page 92; Yaghub Jafary, An study on the Sarfah theory in the miraculous aspects of Quran, page 15).

The fact is that what has been discovered from the comparative studies done by great scientists such as Seyed Morteza and Sheih Mofid among Quranic and non-Quranic texts, is nothing beyond the human power. The opinion of these scientists cannot be refused easily and would better be taken seriously due to their rationalism. The prejudice and predilection they had towards Quran and their religion is undeniable; thus we cannot attribute the theory that states the text of Quran is not miraculous to someone who is against Islam and Quran.

Anyway, the Sarfah theory was highly accepted in the third and fourth centuries, but as time passed, its popularity became less and less that it does not have any fans during the recent centuries. Yaaghub Jafari, however, has contemporarily written: "Sarfah is a theory like other theories, and should be studied as well, but unfortunately some people have severely

neglected and refused this theory besides having ascribed offensive terms to it. They have considered it to be an awful, scandalous and abhorrent theory that should not even be propounded.” He continues: “We should accept that refusing a scientific theory like Sarfah is unfair and also unprofessional, and a researcher should not and cannot follow such a way of neglecting and refusing a theory. The theory of Sarfah is a theory like the theory that believes in the miraculous text of Quran, which should be discussed clearly, and then should be refused or accepted based on reasons and logic.” He then expresses his idea:

The theory of Sarfah about the miraculous aspects of Quran, that has been approved by some of our greatest scholars, is an acceptable theory, and we should not be afraid of it. The reasons having been announced by the fans of this theory besides the responses having been given by whom are against this theory, can persuade a researcher. The acceptance of this theory can even solve some problems regarding the issue of challenging the text of Quran. Basically, if we reject Sarfah theory, what can guarantee that no one will come to present something like Quran? (Hemo, pages 34-35)

Nevertheless, what is said by us in this paper is that the theory of Sarfah by Seyed Morteza needs to be restated; since this statement that God has deprived people of the necessary knowledge for challenging the text of Quran, has no supporters among the verses of Quran or Hadith, and also is not supported by any valid rational evidence. It appears that what is accepted by the verses of Quran and Hadith and even rationally, is to say that the way in which Quran was revealed was miraculous, and God has deprived people of such a way.

3. The Status of Seyed Morteza:

Seyed Morteza (died in 436 lunar calendar) was an unrivaled Shi'ite leader for 23 years, after the death of Sheikh Mofid (413 lunar calendar). This shows the greatness of Seyed Morteza's position, and that someone like him with scientific domination over literature, poetry, language, jurisprudence and rules and theology, was up to this opinion that the text of Quran is not miraculous, illustrates the importance of his theory (The Introduction of the Explanation, 23).

When someone like Seyed Morteza with his professionalism and perfection in literature, poetry, language and eloquence (The Introduction of the Explanation, page7) claims that the text of Quran is not miraculous, it should not be neglected and rejected easily. When he with all of his scientific capabilities declares that Quran is not textually miraculous, we should

reconsider our theory based on the miraculous text of Quran and do not claim on what Quran does not possess; because this would not be regarded as serving Quran, yet it is even regarded as betrayal. When people refer to Quran with high expectations, and their expectations are not fulfilled, they will totally turn their back to Quran.

The following points show the importance of Seyed Morteza's tendencies towards Sarfah Theory.

- a. Seyed Morteza had mastered poetry, and Arab's literature besides language, jurisprudence and rules. These are considered as proofs that Seyed Morteza had announced his opinion as a proficient scholar.
- b. Seyed Morteza had a prominent social position, and after Sheikh Mofid, he used to be the Shi'ite's leader for 23 years.
- c. Sarfah theory is of high importance that Seyed Morteza has written an absolute book about it which has over 300 pages. The book is named "An Explanation on The Miraculous Aspects of Quran" and is also popular by "The Sarfah". This book has 324 pages that 34 pages of it is the author's introduction, and the main content of the book is 289 pages. Seyed Morteza has explained his theory in details in the book of "An Explanation" and has present a summary of his theory in books of "Issues of confidentiality" (page323) and "Ammunition" (pages378-404).

The writings of Seyed Morteza shows that his remarks on Sarfah was not easy since they resulted in the rejection of other scholars and the statement of atheism. Seyed Morteza claimed that they had made a false statement on atheism based on lack of knowledge. (The Explanation, 72)

4. Seyed Morteza's Sarfah Theory:

The theory of Seyed Morteza about Sarfah is that the text of Quran is not miraculous and people are able to propose something like Quran; however, God has deprived them of the necessary knowledge they need to challenge Quran (The Explanation, 71,74 and 256).

Seyed Morteza does not deny the miraculous aspects of Quran; therefore, the denial on the text of Quran being miraculous is not regarded as a denial on the miraculous aspects of Quran. He says that rejecting the miraculous text of Quran does not equal to rejecting the miraculous aspects of Quran. There is no difference to say that Quran is a miracle due to its eloquence or poetry, or it is a miracle because of the way it was revealed, or it is a miracle based on Sarfah that means God has deprived people of the knowledge to bring something like it. All of these

aspects are the miraculous aspects of Quran and confirms prophecy, though how they imply on prophecy differs due to differences of the aspects (The Explanation, 46).

It is to say that Seyed Morteza has segregated the issue of challenging the text of Quran and the issue of Quran being miraculous. He has considered the challenging mode to be of eloquence and poetry of Quran and the miraculous aspect to be of Sarfah that means preventing people from proposing something like Quran by depriving them of the necessary knowledge to do that. He has said that God has prevented Arabian people from proposing a language the same or likewise the language of Quran from the point of eloquence and poetry (The Explanation, 36; Ammunition, 380).

Seyed Morteza has admitted that the challenged verses are inconclusive and do not determine a clear aspect of the challenge, and the only reason why Seyed Morteza claimed that Quran is challenged for its eloquence and poetry is that the aspects of challenging, that were common among Arabs, were eloquence and poetry, and basically poets challenged poets and prolocutors challenged other prolocutors. Even when a poet wrote a balladry to be challenged, he specified its prosody. If it was long, it should have been challenged to another long one, and if it was extensive, it should have been challenged to another extensive one (The Explanation. 40).

5. Criticism on the miraculous text of Quran's aspects:

Reviewing Seyed Morteza's sayings about the miraculous aspects of Quran shows that the aspects being the subject of debates during his life period were four: the eloquence of Quran, the poetry of Quran, news of Unseen and the congruity of Quran. Seyed Morteza believed that Quran was a miracle due to Sarfah, but he did not believe in the miraculous text of Quran because this aspect was common among the Arabian people. In the following, we are going to study his detailed criticism on these four aspects.

5.1 Criticism on the miraculous eloquence of Quran:

Seyed Morteza declares that it is not acceptable when we say that the language of Arab that is produced and spoken by them is not eloquent for them, but Quran which is written with the same language is eloquent. He tries to say that the language of Quran is what is used and produced by humans; therefore, claiming that this language is miraculously eloquent that cannot be proposed by people cannot be right (The Explanation, 112; Ammunition, 401).

Tabatabai has restated such a reasoning. He has said that human has produced language in order to convey their message to one another, thus the feature of implying the meaning and definition in language and combination of words is a feature that has been developed by humans. Therefore, it is impossible if this feature, which is derived from human's talent, goes beyond their talent and reaches somewhere that does not fit human's understanding. Hence, it is impossible for an implication or definition of a combination of words not to be understood and implied by people, or it would be apart from the conventional implications. Moreover, if we assume that among combinations of words there exists a miraculous combination, it means that every definition of the desired definitions has two different combinations of words in perfection and imperfection, and being eloquent and non-eloquent, and among these combinations, the one that is better and more eloquent does not fit in human's understanding and is miraculous. It is necessary for any desired implication and definition to have only one miraculous combination of words; while for many cases Quran has brought different word combinations for one definition which is obvious and undeniable. If the word combinations in Quran were miraculous, there would be only one combination of words for each desired implication, not more (Tabatabai, Al-Mizan, volume1, page 70).

However, Tabatabai denies the Sarfah theory and rejects the aforementioned reasoning. He points to verses such as the 39th verse of Yunes and considers features like having interpretations for Quran, and he has said that although humans have built their language, it does not mean that they are able to put any implication and definition in the combination of words (Hamman, pages 70-71). Nevertheless, one can deduce from what Tabatabai had said that God has presented some definitions and implications using human words that are understandable for them so that they can be guided, and following an understandable language would never be difficult.

The word "*interpretation*" that was pointed out in the 39th verse of Yunes, does not mean verbal implication, but it means the external fact that is implied by verses that are about afterlife. Humans are not capable of understanding the external fact of verses about afterlife, and nobody knows about that except God; however, the verbal implication of these verses is understandable for people. Similar to the aforementioned verse is this verse of Al-Araf (The Heights):

*Do they just wait for the final fulfilment (interpretation) of the event?
On the day the event is finally fulfilled, those who disregarded it before
will say: "The messengers of our Lord did indeed bring true [tidings].*

Have we no intercessors now to intercede on our behalf? Or could we be sent back? Then should we behave differently from our behavior in the past." In fact, they will have lost their souls, and the things they invented will leave them in the lurch (Al-Araf (The Heights),53).

This verse explicitly talks about dead people becoming aware of the facts that they were advised by prophets, and they wish they could return to the world and compensate. So, the meaning of interpretation in these verses is not the definition of the verses that people cannot understand it and produce something like that.

Furthermore, if unseen facts such as facts about afterlife become discussed in a text, it does not mean that the text is miraculous. If it was so, then other holy books and also Imam's Hadiths should have been miraculous since they have talked about resurrection and other unseen facts.

Seyed Morteza also says that there is no significant difference between Quran and the language of Arabs considering eloquence, and actually Quran is eloquently the same as Arab's language, and therefore, Quran being miraculous due to its eloquence cannot be justified. He declares that we have compared most of the verses with the most eloquent phrases of Arab's language, but we have not found much difference (Ammunition, 381). Thus, he has declared that Arab people not challenging Quran is not due to the eloquence of Quran, but it is due to being deprived of the necessary will to do so.

He also says that, Arabs phrases is similar to each other regarding their eloquence, and it is not possible to distinguish the better one; since scholars would disagree on the one which is better. Arab people cannot recognize the one similar to Quran language; and therefore, if they challenged Quran, they would not be able to win this challenge (The Explanation,66).

He adds that identifying the winner among the poets who challenged each other for their poems, was based on doubts, and that which poem was better that the other was not really recognizable (The Explanation,67).

5.2 Criticism on the miraculous poetry of Quran:

Some people have considered that the poetry of Quran is miraculous as is resurrecting a dead person and healing a born blind person. Seyed Morteza reports from Abu-Alqasim Balkhi (died in 317-19 lunar calendar) that proposing a poetry like Quran by people is impossible,

exactly the same as healing a born blind person is impossible (The Explanation,108; Ammunition,400).

But it is as if that comparing Quran to healing a born blind person accompanies differences, since it is true that humans cannot originate a creation or heal a born blind person because no one had done such things; however, people are able to treat so many diseases. Yet, we can say that God does such things like originating a creation or healing incurable diseases without the normal and common devices and agents; that is to say, the way God cures diseases is miraculous. Therefore, the miracle refers to the way the treatment is done, not basically to the treatment. Regarding Quran, we can also claim that the way how Quran was revealed is miraculous, not its text (The Explanation,112; Ammunition,401).

Seyed Morteza believes that individuals are able to present something like the poetry of Quran. He says that if God had not prevented people from proposing something like Quran, they would have done so; because people have put the words together and when they are able to say “Praise be to”, they will be able to say the “Allah” afterwards. And it would be the same for other words; therefore, they would be able to propose any collocations if God had not prevented them from doing so. In other words, when people themselves have used such a language and combined them meaningfully in order to convey their message, how would they be unable to propose something like Quran of which they are completely aware and even is used by them? This is exactly the same as when we say that people are not able to build a building which has been built by God and is the kind of what humans were able to build themselves (The Explanation,112; Ammunition,401).

Unless we say that composing a poem cannot be done by someone who does not have a poetic sensibility, or someone who is illiterate cannot write a book, but generally we cannot claim that the whole people cannot compose a poem or write a book. About Quran, we can say that someone who does not have poetic sensibility, does not agree and is not familiar with Quranic themes, cannot present something like Quran, in contrary, we cannot claim that someone who has poetic sensibility and is familiar with Quranic themes is unable to present something like Quran (The Explanation,114; Ammunition, 401-402).

Seyed Morteza says that Arabian people have composed various poetic proses and poems which are similar to Quran poetically; therefore, before the revelation of Quran there was something like it. Thus, when people have created such poetries from the beginning, they will be able to follow its poetry as well (The Explanation,116).

The same reasoning can be used for other miraculous textual aspects of Quran, since eloquence, news of unseen, news from ancestors or stories and news from future or resurrection, heaven and hell, and laws and ethics and etc. have all been more or less happening before the revelation of Quran, and therefore their repetition in Quran cannot be considered as miracle. The only miraculous aspect of Quran is how it was revealed that is how it is was revealed from unseen, otherwise the content and style of Quran were the same it was before the revelation of Quran.

Seyed Morteza believes that basically finding a priority among various poetries is not possible (Ammunition,381), and thus, it is not right if we say that the poetry of Quran is better than the language of Arab; because each kind of poetry has its own special status; therefore, we cannot say that the order of poetry is higher than the order of prose, or the poetry of sonnet is better than balladry; on this basis we have to compare the poetry of the same categorizes, balladry with balladry and sonnets with sonnets. The approach that Arab people implemented when bidding was the same, and it had also been said before Seyed Morteza that a poet would never challenge a narrator, but a poet would challenge a poet and a narrator would challenge a narrator.

Seyed Morteza is up to this believe that even if the poetry of Quran was created, it could not have been considered miracle. He says if the poetry of Quran was a miracle, the one that had proposed it should have actually created the miracle (The Explanation,44; Ammunition,381). This statement from Seyed Morteza means that when someone creates something for the first time as long as others can repeat his job then it would not be considered as a miracle; therefore, even the creation of Quran does not imply to being miraculous since there are some people who are able to bring something similar to or even better than Quran, and we cannot say that books such as Nahj Albalaghiah or likewise are no better than Quran. Hence, the text of Quran even being created is not a miracle.

Also as Seyed Morteza believes, even if no one presents something like Quran, it being miracle cannot be proven. He declares that if it is to consider all literal works similar to which no one has proposed anything to be miracle, then we need to refer so many poems as being miraculous. He says some poets have specialties in a specific type of poetry in a way that even if all the poems try to compose a couplet of that kind of poetry, they will not be successful. He also adds, among poets some are good at composing extensive kind of poems, so if they try to compose a non-extensive one then they would be unsuccessful. Even if other

poets attempt to write a couplet with the style that he has mastered, they will be unable (The Explanation,45; Ammunition, 381-382).

Thus, even if it becomes proven that nobody is able to present something like Quran, it does not imply on being miraculous. Finally, we can deduce that a poet has mastered a special kind of poetry in a way that nobody can challenge him; someone being unchallengeable in a technique or art does not imply on that art or technique to be miraculous.

5.3 Criticism on the miraculous news of unseen:

News of unseen means the kind of news about events of which humans cannot be aware naturally, news such as future events or the unseen world and things like that.

As it is deduced from Seyed Morteza's declarations, any events that happen in an unnatural way is a miracle; therefore, news of unseen, healing diseases without using natural devices and the revelation of Quran are all miracles.

However, if the news of unseen facts were given in other ways such as holy scriptures, like the news about resurrection, hell and heaven that is given in former scriptures, are not considered to be news of unseen, and thus, news of unseen is limited that is discussed in only a few number of Quran's Surahs (The Explanation,120; Ammunition,403).

Based on what has been said, Seyed Morteza believes that news from the past is not regarded as news of unseen, since it is nothing but the wonted news of Hejazi Arabs about the past and therefore proposing something like that is not considered to be miraculous. From Seyed Morteza's point of view, someone who is against Quran can declare that this news is said from the previous scriptures or people (The Explanation,119; Ammunition,403).

What's more, news of unseen that is based on humans' experiences is not regarded as miracle; hence, the news of unseen that is regarded as miracle is that of being given unnaturally in other words by revelation and inspiration; therefore, the miraculous aspect of news of unseen is how it is given not the news itself. Consequently, the text of Quran even its news of unseen is not miraculous, yet Quran is considered miraculous due to the way it was revealed (The Explanation,121). It is obvious that humans' castigations are of two kinds: sometimes they are based on estimations like raining and weather forecasts that are mostly true, and sometimes they are based on researches like determining the exact time of solar and lunar eclipses and sunrises and sunsets (The Explanation,122).

Nevertheless, as Seyed Morteza believes that the news of unseen was never asked to be challenged, and in Quran, atheists have not been asked to present news of unseen if able, but they were asked to present something like Quran which is aimed at the concepts of Surahs not the news of the unseen that is few in number and limited such as the news of Rome's victory against Iran after having been defeated for several years that is pointed in Rum (The Roman Empire) or the news of chatting of Prophet's wives that is pointed in Tahrim (Holding (something) to be Forbidden-Sanctions) and news like these (The Explanation,117). The concept of most of Quran is nothing but the concepts that were wanted among Hejazi Arabs, and therefore, cannot be regarded as being miraculous.

Of other observations showing that the news of unseen is not itself miraculous but the way it was revealed is, is that the news of unseen has also been given by Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him and his family), and we cannot say that what he has said is also miraculous; however, how the news was revealed is miraculous even if it was said by Prophet Muhammad (The Explanation,123).

5.4 Criticism on the miraculous congruity of Quran:

The claimants on the text of Quran being miraculous by referring to the 82th verse of An-Nisa: "Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than Allah they would have found therein much incongruity." Have stated that the only aspect or one of the miraculous aspects of Quran is being congruous.

Seyed Morteza criticizes this assertion that Quran being congruous is of its excellency, yet it is not miracle; since with complete awareness and caution one can bring statements with no incongruity (The Explanation,125; Ammunition,404).

Furthermore, this congruity would have been regarded as miracle if we had reached the knowledge that all works but Quran are incongruous. However, it has not been scientifically proven that there is incongruity in every other works; therefore, from the text of Quran one cannot imply on being miraculous (The Explanation,127).

What is more, the verse that denies incongruity in Quran can only reflect the opinion of Prophet Muhammad and other Muslims of that era that they could not find Quran incongruous, but this does not mean that non-Muslims or even the majority of Muslims had not found incongruity in it, because as the following verses of this Surah show, basically the aforementioned verse was revealed for a group of atheists who found Quran to be

incongruous, and using the term beating Quran, they opposed it (Musnad Ahmad, volume 2/181). This is while miracles are regarded as proofs for atheists to believe in the prophecy of Muhammad; thus, as Seyed Morteza has stated, congruity in Quran cannot be regarded as being miraculous.

6. Responding the objections of critics of Sarfah Theory:

Seyed Morteza has responded to every comments and objections that were attributed to the Sarfah theory during his time in his book of “The Explanation” that are going to be studied in the following.

6.1 The verses inviting to challenge:

Those who are for the idea that the text of Quran is miraculous refer to the verses inviting others to challenge such as “Say: Verily, though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another.” (Al-Isra (Children of Israel),88) and declare that this kind of verses shows that the miracle exists in the text, not out of it, and due to these verses all people are invited to bring something like Quran if they are able to; however, such a reasoning has been criticized by Seyed Morteza. He says that these verses do not state that why atheists are not able to propose something like Quran, and therefore, by referring to them we cannot declare that the reason why atheists cannot challenge Quran is the essence of Quran, but we can say that it is due to the fact that they have been prevented from doing so (The Explanation,258).

In addition, based on Seyed Morteza’s opinion all the miraculous aspects of Quran that were pointed by the supporters of the idea of miraculous text of Quran are flawed. Confirming Seyed Morteza’s opinion, it is needed to ask: “How can we declare that the eloquence of Quran is miraculous and the language which was used by Hijazi Arab people during the era of Prophet Muhammad was not eloquent? Is eloquence something rather than speaking relevantly and pertinent to audiences’ feelings? How can we declare that when those people of that era spoke to each other, they were not speaking relevantly and did not consider their audiences’ feeling? Or how can we say that Arabian prolocutors and poets who were familiar with a variety of poetries and proposed different poems and orations, are not able to present poetry of Quran that is of the same Arabic poetic writings? Or how can we assert that news of unseen in Quran is miraculous, but it is not in the former scriptures or in the Hadiths of

Imams? Or how can we claim that the concepts such as invitation to monotheistic, creation and resurrection which have been pointed out in the previous holy books, are miraculous in Quran?

6.2 Facing the challenge:

Those who agree with the idea of miraculous text of Quran have mentioned a few points: First of all, nobody can present something like Quran, secondly, anybody such as Musaylimah and Nadr ibn al-Harith who had tried to propose something like Quran was unsuccessful, thirdly, the reason why Arabian atheists started a war with Prophet Muhammad and Muslims was that they failed to challenge Quran, unless they would have not left the easier way of challenging Quran rather than starting the war. Seyed Morteza has criticized all of these points.

Seyed Morteza has brought a variety of criticisms regarding the issue that nobody can present something like Quran. He has also exemplified that when someone does not compose a poetry it does not mean that they are not able to do so, but maybe they are not motivated enough, or they do not need to, or do not like to (The Explanatin,48).

Anyway, we need to reconsider this statement that nobody can present something like Quran, since:

Firstly, how can we answer when someone claim that there is nothing special in Quran but what had happened in the past? For instance, one may say that the concepts of Quran like stories, invitation to monotheistic and resurrection are generally the ones that were more or less mentioned in Bible, or its rules are mainly the rules prevailing before the prophecy of Muhammad, although they were mentioned in Quran with some changes.

Secondly, how can we respond if someone claims that the Quranic story books written afterwards, are better organized rather than the discursive stories mentioned in Quran due to being non-repetitive, coherent, and well-organized? If anyone claims that the theological and legal books, which were written after Quran, are well-organized and complete, are better than monotheistic, divine and jurisprudent verses of Quran that are probable repetitive, incomplete and discursive, what would the answer be?

Thirdly, who must be the arbiter while challenging Quran? Should it be from Muslims who refer to Quran with prejudice, and if someone attributes a weakness to it, they would never accept? Or someone who does not have any prejudice or concerns regarding Quran? Does

someone who does not refer to Quran with prejudice accept that the text of Quran is the best text in the world and there is no better text or even similar ones to it?

Fourthly, what are the factors of challenging the Quran, and what are the distinctive features that shows the excellence of a text of a book, what features of a book make it like or better than Quran? Is it possible to say that the criterions of a book are those containing the general principles of a religion, and that the book does not deal with previous tribes and Prophet's stories in details, that the book does not have any repetition, that the book does not include specific concepts and rules that are associated with a special era such as rules related to slavery and women? Hence, can we claim that Quran is the best religious book and no other better books can be written?

Fifthly, suppose that nobody has so far challenged Quran and proposed something like it, then is this a proof for the text of Quran to be miraculous? Maybe the reason why they have not challenged Quran is that they are not motivated enough, or they do not need to or like to, or they are afraid of challenging it; therefore, there is no necessity between not challenging the text of Quran and not having the power to do so.

Anyway, it seems as though the reason for which atheists have not challenged Quran is that basically they were against the prophecy of Muhammad and were so obstinate in refusing Muhammad's prophecy, and they did not mean to seek the truth and surrender to it, as Abu Jahl the president of Quraysh at that time considered that accepting Prophet's invitation is in accordance with losing political and social position, though he actually confessed to the legitimacy of Prophet Muhammad's invitation (Tabari, Bayan Comprehensive,7/116).

Furthermore, atheists were against concepts that were mentioned in Quran which caused the fact that they lose their tendencies towards presenting something like Quran, and basically they rejected to speak or write about Quranic concepts; thus, they used to ask people not to obey Quran as it has also been mentioned in Quran: "Those who disbelieve say: Heed not this Qur'an, and drown the hearing of it; haply ye may conquer." (Fussilat (Explained in Details),26).

The verses of Quran show that atheists did not tend to challenge Quran, as is said: "And when Our revelations are recited unto them they say: We have heard. If we wish we can speak the like of this. Lo! this is naught but fables of the men of old." (Al-Anfal (Spoils of War),31).

This verse shows that atheists did not wish to present something like Quran, since they were basically against its concepts, and what had been mentioned in previous scriptures (Tales of

the ancients) regarding the afterlife or prophets' stories and things like these were rejected by them.

Seyed Morteza has considered the challenge of people such as Musaylimah and Nadr ibn al-Harith as a proof for his theory not rejecting it, and he has claimed that no wise men will propose what they have proposed not even someone who is fluent. He probably says the vulgar samples that they have presented to challenge Quran, indicate that God has prevented them from presenting something like Quran; although they were able to propose like Quran; since God has spoken and written using the language of people and there was the possibility of presenting like the language of God as similar works can be seen in the language of poets and prolocutors (The Explanation,91; Ammunition,385).

However, the fact is that the reason why Musaylimah and Nadr ibn al-Harith were unable to challenge Quran was that basically they could not and did not want to present concepts such as those presented in Quran. What was attractive for the majority of people and was magical, as Valid ibn Mughira head of the Quraysh has pointed, was the fact that Quran has criticized the superstitious beliefs and invalid traditions of atheists, and that it supports the wronged people titled as the poor, orphans and wayfarer. Thus, the governing atmosphere among the atheists of Mecca did not let them to present such concepts to challenge Quran, since whatever they might have proposed could not have the effectiveness and attractiveness and glamour that Quran had on the majority of people (The Explanation,106).

We should notice that the challenge was among atheists and Quran, not Muslims. However, basically atheists rejected concepts such as monotheistic and afterlife to consider them and present like them. What had made Quran attractive for atheists was the new aspects of Quran to which they had never been unfamiliar, but vice versa they were familiar with them and this is why they have called Quran tales of the ancients. Hence, they mainly did not believe in Quran, and had not referred to it unless they wanted to satirize and reject its concepts.

We can never compare the challenges mounted among atheists and prophet Muhammad with the challenges between Arabian people, since when Arabian people started a challenge, they had completely been richened by a cultural source, and therefore, used analogous concepts in their language, while prophet Muhammad and atheists used to bring adverse cultural concepts into discussion, and thus, atheists were unable to challenge Quran.

Therefore, we can never say that Nahj Al-Balaghiah is not similar to Quran, because Imam Ali and Prophet Muhammad were culturally in accordance with each other. But Imam Ali did

confirm the Quran, not rejected it, and therefore, he would not have challenged Quran, whereas atheists would propose something as effective as the language of Quran if they were able to.

In rejection of what some have stated that the reason why atheists of Quraysh started a war with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was that they failed to challenge Quran, Seyed Morteza says that challenging cannot prevent a war from happening, so as Arabs used to boast in their wars, and boasting would never have prevented war from happening. Hence, there is no necessity between the possibility of challenging Quran and avoiding a war so that one can deduce that the reason for which they had started a war was having failed in challenging (The Expalanation,98).

6.3 Proving God's assertions:

People who are against Sarfah Theory have asked those who are for this theory that when you claim the challenging aspect of Quran is its eloquence and it is a miracle due to being eloquent, how can you prove that the one who uses thaumaturgy with this aspect is God not the devil who may have attributed his lies to God?

Seyed Morteza answers to this question that God would not misguide his creations. If God lets the devil to attributes his lies to God, this would be the ultimate misguiding of his creatures (The Explanation,138-140; Ammunition, 385-386).

However, we may criticize this response of Seyed Morteza that if God did not mean for his creatures to be misguided, then nobody would have been misguided through any ways. It seems as if we can answer to the above question in two ways:

First, it is not of high importance that a statement has been stated by whom, but it is more important whether the statement is correct or not, and therefore, assuming Quran being devil's utterances, we would evaluate the statement logically and intellectually, if it was misguiding, we would turn our back to it, but if it was guiding, then we would follow it. As Seyed Morteza has said, we can refer to Quran by our own wisdom. If we found the concepts of Quran being sinister and invalid, then we would announce that it has been revealed by the devil; nevertheless, if we find them valid and guiding, then we will announce that it is revealed by angels (The Expalanation,143).

Seyed Morteza adds if the revelation of Quran was done by the devils or the heathen Jinns, it would then confront Muslims (The Explanation,145). This means that by referring to Quran based on wisdom, we can understand whether Quran is the language of God's or the devil's. When in Quran Muslims are praised by God and heathens are blamed, and also when people are commanded to justice and kindness besides being prohibited from prostitution, it can be understood that Quran cannot be devils' statements.

Secondly, assessing whether a statement is stated by God or the devil can be done by the one who is apprehending it. If the apprehender feels darkness, then he can understand that the statement has been stated by the devil; but if the apprehender feels, light in the heart, broadmindedness and relief, it is understood that the statement is from God; as it has also been said in Quran: "And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender, and whomsoever it is His Will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent. Thus Allah layeth ignominy upon those who believe not." (Al-An'am(Livestock),125).

Therefore, when the honesty of the prophet Muhammad is proven for us, and we have found faith in it, and afterwards based on his own wisdom prophet Muhammad claimed that Quran is the language of God not the devil, it is discovered that Quran is the language of God not the devil.

Seyed Morteza says that prophet Muhammad had never said that Quran is a deed by himself, but he had always been maintaining that an angel has revealed it to him due to the God's order; moreover, none of his companions have claimed that Quran is Muhammad's deed (The Explanation,156). This statement of Seyed Morteza means that faith in the truth of informant is another way of proving that Quran is the language of God not the devil.

6.4 Proof of Prophecy:

Seyed Morteza had probably been remonstrated that if we do not consider the text of Quran as being miraculous, how could it be a proof for prophecy of Muhamad. It seems as if there are two responses to this remonstration.

First, refusing textual miracle does not basically reject the miraculous aspect of Quran in general, since there is no difference if we claim that Quran is miraculous due to its eloquence or poetry or news of unseen or Sarfah- that means God has deprived Arabs of the knowledge to present something like Quran, since all of them are the miraculous aspects of Quran which

imply on the truth prophecy and invitation, though their implications differ due to various ways they are regarded (The Explanation,46).

Secondly, it is not necessary to prove the truth of prophecy through miracle. The sayings of Prophet Muhammad and the concepts of Quran are inherently legitimate. Essentially, people were not supposed to believe in prophecy of Muhammad regarding the miracle. Considering this issue Seyed Morteza propounds a question that if at the time of inviting Muhammad to prophecy, God had brought back all the dead people to life or had made a living bodies dead, or had sent angels to the earth calling the prophecy of Muhammad, and if God had done the miracles that atheists were expecting such as making Abdol Motaleb alive or moving the mountains of Mecca from their places, then they would have easily accepted the prophecy of Muhammad, and would have stopped doubting (The Expalanation,85; Ammunition,384).

In fact, if people were supposed to find their faith with miracle, then the best miracles would be those recommended by the atheists, for instance, bringing back to life all or most of the dead people, sending the angels, or moving mountains from their place. Thus, there is no reason for Quran to be a miracle for proving the prophecy of Muhammad. Even if we suppose that Muhammad had not been sent from God to guide people, this would never bring about a breakdown in his guidance. Through the voice of Quran, he had invited people to believe him using their wisdom, not because he has been speaking on behalf of God. The fact that idols have no advantages or disadvantages should not be necessarily stated by the prophet to be considered actual. Anyone who uses his wisdom regarding this issue would of course understand it.

Additionally, we can add that proving the prophecy is not limited to being unable to bring something like Quran, since even if we generally refuse all the miraculous aspects of Quran, we would find some other reasons for proving Muhammad's prophecy. Some other ways are mentioned in Quran.

One of them is to refer to Muhammad's background among his people. He used to be regarded as trustworthy, confidant and trustee, and he never lied and never used vulgarity regarding God, as it has been said:

And when Our clear revelations are recited unto them, they who look not for the meeting with Us say: Bring a Lecture other than this, or change it. Say [Muhammad]: It is not for me to change it of my accord. I only follow that which is inspired in me. Lo! if I disobey my Lord I

fear the retribution of an awful Day. Say: If Allah had so willed I should not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you. I dwelt among you a whole lifetime before it [came to me]. Have ye then no sense? Who doeth greater wrong than he who inventeth a lie concerning Allah and denieth His revelations? Lo! the guilty never are successful (Yunus- Jonah, 15-17).

Second was to refer to people who used to study scriptures that were trusted by atheists of Mecca and were able to lessen their doubts regarding prophet Muhammad, as it has been said in the following verses:

And if thou [Muhammad] art in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto thee, then question those who read the Scripture [that was] before thee. Verily the Truth from thy Lord hath come unto thee. So be not thou of the waverers (Yusnus-Jonah, 94);

And We sent not [as Our messengers] before thee other than men, whom We inspired. Ask the followers of the Reminder if ye know not? We gave them not bodies that would not eat food, nor were they immortals (Al-Anbiya (The Prophets),7-8);

And when Our clear revelations are recited unto them, those who disbelieve say of the Truth when it reacheth them: This is mere magic. Or say they: He hath invented it? Say [O Muhammad]: If I have invented it, still ye have no power to support me against Allah. He is Best Aware of what ye say among yourselves concerning it. He sufficeth for a witness between me and you. And He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. Say: I am no new thing among the messengers [of Allah], nor know I what will be done with me or with you. I do but follow that which is inspired in me, and I am but a plain warner. Bethink you: If it is from Allah and ye disbelieve therein, and a witness of the Children of Israel hath already testified to the like thereof and hath believed, and ye are too proud [what plight is yours]? Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk (Al-Ahqaf(The Wind-Curved Sandhill, 7-10).

Moreover, the most important thing is to refer to our wisdom in order for the prophecy of Muhammad to be proved. Prophet Muhammad used to ask the atheists of Quraysh that:

Don't you ever think that I am only a preacher trying to admonish you, I am not insane and not seeking any advantages, I do not claim that I know about the unseen or that I own the treasures of Allah, or that I am an angel. I am just trying to enlighten you (Al-An'am (The Cattle), 50);
Now We have revealed unto you a Scripture wherein is your Reminder. Have ye then no sense? How many a community that dealt unjustly have We shattered, and raised up after them another folk! (Al-Anbiya (The Prophets),10-11);

Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: I exhort you unto one thing only: that ye awake, for Allah's sake, by twos and singly, and then reflect: There is no madness in your comrade. He is naught else than a warner unto you in face of a terrific doom. *Say: Whatever reward I might have asked of you is yours. My reward is the affair of Allah only. He is Witness over all things (Saba, 46-47);

Say [Muhammad, to the disbelievers]: I say not unto you [that] I possess the treasures of Allah, nor that I have knowledge of the Unseen; and I say not unto you: Lo! I am an angel. I follow only that which is inspired in me. Say: Are the blind man and the seer equal? Will ye not then take thought? (Al-Anaam (Cattle),50).

7. Restating Sarfah Theory:

As it was previously said, we can restate the theory of Seyed Morteza and those who are for the Sarfah theory in a way that its complications become solved, and that is to say:

Firstly, the addressees of the verses inviting to challenge were the Arabian atheists at the time of Muhammad, and they were not able to propose something like Quran and also had not proposed.

Secondly, Quran is the book to guidance, and thus, the challenging aspect of Quran can be the same aspect of guidance.

Thirdly, miracle and being miraculous is to be sent from God, and therefore, the miraculous aspect of Quran is not of those aspects that are contemplatively obtainable by other than God.

Fourthly, the text of Quran has not been unprecedented regarding its style and concept and can be learnt through contemplation and thinking; hence, cannot be regarded as being miraculous.

Fifthly, the miraculous aspect of Quran is the way how it was revealed to the prophet Muhammad without any thinking and contemplation.

7.1 The addresses of challenging Quran:

It is as though Seyed Morteza and prominent Islamic scholars are up to this opinion that Quran's invitation to challenge is general and has invited all the people to challenge; yet it needs to be reconsidered. This popular idea is based on the presupposition that Quran's statements are not specified to Mshafhyn (Ghazizadeh, under the 9th reason; Yaghub Jafari,34); however, all the challenging verses of Quran have been revealed addressing and arguing with the atheists at the time of prophet Muhammad. This can be obviously understood by paying attention to the time of revelation of the related Surahs in addition to the challenging verses.

It is to say that all the Surahs containing challenging verses were revealed in Mecca addressing the atheists of Quraysh except Al-Baqara (The cow) which was revealed at the beginning of the Medina era while its challenging verse is also addressing atheists, as it is:

O mankind! worship your Lord, who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off [evil]. Who hath appointed the earth a resting-place for you, and the sky a canopy; and causeth water to pour down from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you. And do not set up rivals to Allah when ye know [better]. And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave [Muhammad], then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside Allah if ye are truthful. And if ye do it not - and ye can never do it - then guard yourselves against the Fire prepared for disbelievers, whose fuel is of men and stones (Al-Baqara (The cow),21-24).

Statements such as “And do not set up rivals to Allah” and “and call your witness beside Allah” clearly show that the addressees of these verses are atheists. Therefore, when it is to the atheists at the time of Muhammad that has been said you cannot present something like Quran, it does not mean that others cannot present as well. For instance, how can we claim

that the saying of Nahj Al-Balaqi are not similar to the Surahs' of Quran, or what greatness can we attribute to the Surahs of Quran rather than Nahj Al-Balaqi's sayings?

7.2 The challenging aspect is to be guiding:

Seyed Morteza and other scholars, who were contemporary with him, were up to this idea that the challenging aspect of Quran is its eloquence and poetry; because this type of challenge was common among Arabian people, but it seems as if these aspects are not compatible with the nature and purpose of the revelation of Quran, and if Quran intends to start a challenge associated with the purpose and nature of its revelation, it would rather start a challenge regarding its guidance, that is to say if you are able present something as guiding as Quran. We may take the following verses of the verses inviting to challenge as evidence for this implication through which it has been said to the atheists of Quraysh to bring a book better than Quran in guidance if you can:

But when there came unto them the Truth from Our presence, they said: Why is he not given the like of what was given unto Moses? Did they not disbelieve in that which was given unto Moses of old? They say: Two magics that support each other; and they say: Lo! in both we are disbelievers. Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: Then bring a scripture from the presence of Allah that giveth clearer guidance than these two [that] I may follow it, if ye are truthful. And if they answer thee not, then know that what they follow is their lusts. And who goeth farther astray than he who followeth his lust without guidance from Allah. Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk (Al-Qasas (History),48-50).

These verses have told the atheists of Quraysh that if you can present something like Torah and Quran, and then it added that they would never answer this invitation to challenge since they would always follow their own desires.

Hence, the fact that atheists were unable to bring something like Quran was not due to Quran's features. They were also unable to present something like Torah; therefore, if we do intend to claim that the text of Quran is miraculous due to the verses inviting to challenge, then we need to consider Torah to be a miracle, but then, it would be in opposition to the basis of Quran being textually miracle.

Essentially, challenging Quran is not meant for proving the fact that Quran is a miracle, yet it is meant to prove that Quran is not being created by the prophet Muhammad himself. What can be seen from all of the verses inviting to challenge is that they are revealed in order to respond the accusation of Arabian atheists that Muhammad had created Quran on his own through which they intended to take the concepts of Quran as being false; as it has been said in Quran that:

And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented in despite of Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind - Therein is no doubt - from the Lord of the Worlds. Or say they: He hath invented it? Say: Then bring a surah like unto it, and call [for help] on all ye can besides Allah, if ye are truthful. Nay, but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they could not compass, and whereof the interpretation [in events] hath not yet come unto them. Even so did those before them deny. Then see what was the consequence for the wrong doers! (Yunus (Jonah),37-39).

As can be understood by these verses, atheists claimed what prophet Muhammad had announced about afterlife was made up by himself. While it had been admitted that such concepts existed in the previous scriptures, and Quran was only confirming the previous concepts, not that it was created by Muhammad; It has also been added that Muhammad had told the atheists if they believed Quran had been created by him, then bring a Surah like it.

7.3 The text of Quran being non-miraculous:

The concepts of Quran are mainly similar to the concepts of the previous scriptures, and therefore, they were not unprecedented. The atheists of Quraysh had more or less some information about them though they were illiterate; thus, when Walid ibn Mughairah, head of the Quraysh at that time, tried to introduce Quran, he claimed that it was the same as previous scriptures, as it has been said: “And said: This is naught else than magic from of old; This is naught else than speech of mortal man.” (Al-Muddaththir (The man wearing a cloak),24-25).

Again it has been stated about the same atheists: “And when Our revelations are recited unto them they say: We have heard. If we wish we can speak the like of this. Lo! this is naught but fables of the men of old.” (Al-Anfal (Spoils of War),31).

That is to say, when the verses of Quran had been recited to the atheists, they would have said that we have heard such things, and they are nothing more than the concepts in the previous scriptures, also if we intended to we would have been able to say like it. Again somewhere else in Quran has been said:

Those who disbelieve say: This is naught but a lie that he hath invented, and other folk have helped him with it, so that they have produced a slander and a lie. And they say: Fables of the men of old which he hath had written down so that they are dictated to him morn and evening. Say [unto them, O Muhammad]: He who knoweth the secret of the heavens and the earth hath revealed it. Lo! He ever is Forgiving, Merciful (Al-Furqan (The Criterion, The Standard),4-6).

Due to these verses, atheists of Quraysh had said that Quran contained the same concepts of the previous scriptures which had been dictated to Muhammad by the book readers every morning and night, however, Quran rejects this statement and asks Muhammad to tell them that Quran has been revealed to him from God.

It has also been revealed that: “And lo! it is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds, Which the True Spirit hath brought down. Upon thy heart, that thou mayst be [one] of the warners, In plain Arabic speech. And lo! it is in the Scriptures of the men of old. Is it not a token for them that the doctors of the Children of Israel know it?” (Ash-Shuara (The poets,192-197).

These verses responded to the atheists of Mecca that Quran had been revealed by Gabriel, and the same concepts were in the previous scriptures of which the scribes are aware. It would be beneficial to refer to the 97th-101st verses of Al-Baqara regarding this issue.

Also it has been stated that these concepts were mentioned in the former scriptures: “And they say: If only he would bring us a miracle from his Lord! Hath there not come unto them the proof of what is in the former scriptures?” (Ta-Ha,133).

Moreover, it has said that what prophet Muhammad was reciting is holy scriptures containing valuable writings: “Those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters could not have left off [erring] till the clear proof came unto them. A messenger from Allah, reading purified pages. Containing correct scriptures.” (Al-Bayyina (The clear proof, Evidence),1-3).

It has also been stated in a variety of verses that Quran is a confirmation for the previous scriptures, for example: “And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be invented in despite of

Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind - Therein is no doubt - from the Lord of the Worlds.” (Yunus (Jonah),37).

It is due to the similarity between the concepts of Quran and former scriptures that prophet Muhammad asked the atheists of Quraysh to refer to the Jewish people of Medina in order for the concepts of Quran to be confirmed. For instance, it has been mentioned:

And We sent not [as Our messengers] before thee other than men whom We inspired - Ask the followers of the Remembrance if ye know not! With clear proofs and writings; and We have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them, and that haply they may reflect (An-Nahl (The Bee),43-44).

In these verses people have been told that whether they are doubtful about Quran, refer to the Jewish of Medina who are the inheritances of the reasoning of prophets, i.e. the former scriptures, and ask from them.

7.4 The way of receiving Quran being miraculous:

The Sarfah Theory of the miraculous aspects of Quran seems to be correct if we say that God has given the gift of last prophecy and revelation to prophet Muhammad, and has deprived the people after Muhammad of such a gift, as Jewish people have been told:

And believe not save in one who followeth your religion - Say [O Muhammad]: Lo! the guidance is Allah's Guidance - that anyone is given the like of that which was given unto you or that they may argue with you in the presence of their Lord. Say [O Muhammad]: Lo! the bounty is in Allah's hand. He bestoweth it on whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. He selecteth for His mercy whom He will. Allah is of Infinite Bounty (Al-E-Imran (The family of ‘Imran),73-74).

These verses stipulate that Quran is Allah’s guidance in accordance with the guidance which was given to the owners of the previous scriptures, and God would give this guidance to whomever he will and would deprive others of it. It has also been mentioned in the Jumua Surah:

He it is Who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom, though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest. Along with others of them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. That is the bounty of Allah; which He giveth unto whom He will. Allah is of Infinite Bounty (Al-Jumua (The Congregation, Friday),2-4).

These verses also stipulate that the revelation and prophecy are the gifts that were granted to Muhammad by God who has deprived others from these gifts. Again the Al-Baqara Surah states:

Neither those who disbelieve among the people of the Scripture nor the idolaters love that there should be sent down unto you any good thing from your Lord. But Allah chooseth for His mercy whom He will, and Allah is of Infinite Bounty. Nothing of our revelation [even a single verse] do we abrogate or cause be forgotten, but we bring [in place] one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah is Able to do all things? (Al-Baqara (The Cow),105-106).

These verses mention that the Jewish and the atheists desired for the prophecy and the revelation to be granted to them. However, these are the gifts that God would give them to anyone he wishes.

Based on what has been mentioned up to here, the specification of Quran is the way it was received that it was actually granted to prophet Muhammad through revelation, or the concepts of Quran, as was stipulated in its verses, were the same as the concepts in the previous scriptures, and thus, there is no miraculous aspect regarding its concepts, only the fact that Muhammad had not learnt its concepts through training of the people who used to study and read the previous scriptures; but he had learnt it through revelation; as it has been stated:

And thou [O Muhammad] wast not a reader of any scripture before it, nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood. But it is clear revelations in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge, and none deny Our revelations save wrong-doers (Al-Ankaboot (The Spider),48-49).

These verses state that Muhammad had not have read or write any books before Be'sat- the day he became responsible for the prophecy, and if he had have done so, then the people who

were doubtful about his prophecy would have become confident that he had not received Quran through revelation, but he had received it by learning from readers of the previous scriptures, yet it was not so, and Quran was revealed to the heart of Muhammad.

Somewhere in Quran it has also been stated that:

And it was not [vouchsafed] to any mortal that Allah should speak to him unless [it be] by revelation or from behind a veil, or [that] He sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Lo! He is Exalted, Wise. And thus have We inspired in thee [Muhammad] a Spirit of Our command. Thou knewest not what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of Our bondmen. And lo! thou verily dost guide unto a right path (Ash-Shura (Council, Consultation),51-52).

These verses stipulate that prophet Muhammad did not know any of the scriptures and did not have faith in them until Be'sat, and Quran was sent to him through revelation, and this is a gift which God would grant to anybody he will.

Also, in the following verses which is about challenging Quran, it is said:

Or they say: He hath invented it. Say: Then bring ten surahs, the like thereof, invented, and call on everyone ye can beside Allah, if ye are truthful! And if they answer not your prayer, then know that it is revealed only in the knowledge of Allah; and that there is no Allah save Him. Will ye then be [of] those who surrender? (Hud,13-14)

These verses are in the Surah of Hud, which was revealed to Muhammad while he was in Mecca, and are revealed addressing atheists of Quraysh who were illiterate and unaware of the concepts of holy books, thus they were told that they were unable to present like Quran. The reason for this is that they were illiterate, and they were not one of “those who were given the knowledge” and did not also have access to “the knowledge of Allah”, yet prophet Muhammad had access to the knowledge of Allah through revelation. The fact that all the verses inviting to challenge address the atheists of Quraysh, and not anybody else, is noticeable, and shows that the reason why atheists of Mecca were unable to challenge Quran was that they were all illiterate.

It should be noted that the revelation of Quran based on the knowledge of Allah does not necessarily mean that the knowledge of Allah has penetrated to the concepts of Quran with all of its depth and extensiveness; because firstly, language is the communicational link between the speaker and audience, and speaker can never put such definition and messages in his

language that the audience is unable to understand, since language is used to convey the definitions which are agreed by the linguistics, not those that the speaker has in mind. Secondly, language is basically used for conveying messages.

8. Conclusions:

The results of what has been discussed in this paper can be presented as follows:

1. Sarfah theory has been raised from considering the text of Quran, and has no external source. When scientists such as Seyed Morteza studied the text of Quran and compared it with the language of humans, they could not find much difference among them. The text of Quran is protreptic similar to the text of previous scriptures which have been revealed to guide people, thus we need to consider it as a book for guidance not as the miracle of prophet Muhammad.
2. Not only are not all the aspects which were considered for the text of Quran being miraculous by Islamic scholars, ascertainable, but also they are problematic and breakable, and there is no verse in Quran which explicitly implies on those miraculous aspects. The only miraculous aspect of Quran which has been stipulated by Quran in a variety of verses is how it was received. Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, who had never read or written any of the former scriptures, with the help of an angel called Gabriel.
3. Anyway, Quran is a proof for the prophecy of Muhammad, and certifies that he was in connection with the unseen, and the verses of Quran were revealed to him from unseen. The structure of Quran is the best certification on the fact that Quran is not sayings of Muhammad himself, but someone spoke to him and instilled the messages of Allah in him. In Quran this someone is called by Gabriel.

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