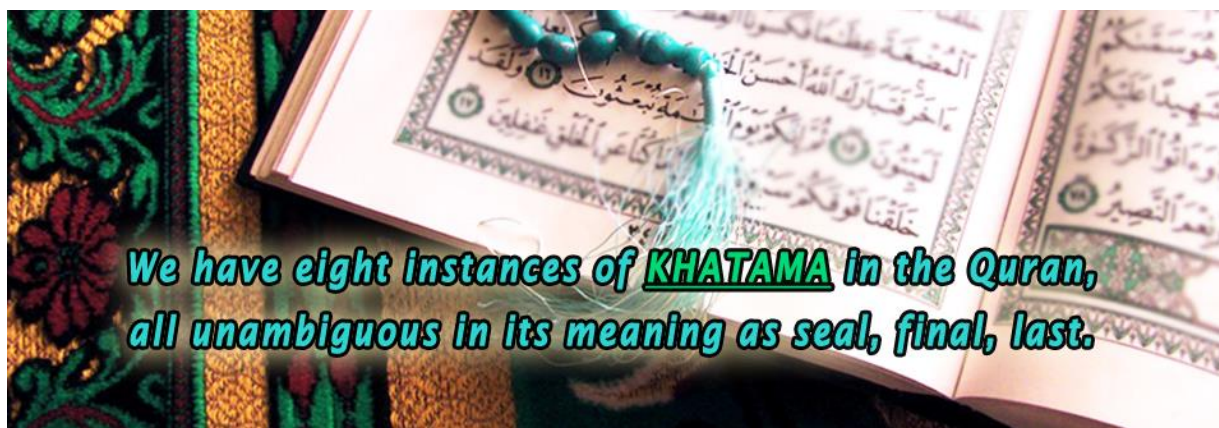


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## KHATAMA IN THE QURAN

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Thankfully, and maybe even as a pointer to divine wisdom, the word Khatama has come in Quran on more than one occasion. Perhaps this is Allah's way of telling people that if they doubt the meaning of Khatama in one verse, they should refer to other verses that contain the same word. In case of Khatama, we have eight instances, of its occurrence in the Quran, all unambiguous in its meaning as seal, final, last.

Of course, the word Khatam has come on different scales of noun, verb, infinitive but the root is the same, viz, Khatama.

The verses have been listed below in order of their occurrence in the Quran:

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

*“Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment”.*

(Al-Baqara: 7)

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ انظُرْ كَيْفَ نَصَرَفَ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ

*“Say, “Have you considered: if Allah should take away your hearing and your sight and set a seal upon your hearts, which deity other than Allah could bring them [back] to you?”  
Look how we diversify the verses; then they [still] turn away”.*

(Al-An'am: 46)

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

*“Muhammad is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets. And ever is Allah, of all things, Knowing”.*

(Al-Ahzab: 40)

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَى أَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

*“That Day, We will seal over their mouths, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will testify about what they used to earn”.*

(Ya-Sin: 65)

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ  
الصُّدُورِ

*“Or do they say, "He has invented about Allah a lie"? But if Allah willed, He could seal over your heart. And Allah eliminates falsehood and establishes the truth by His words. Indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts”.*

(Ash-Shura: 24)

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَغَشَاوَهُ فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

*“Have you seen he who has taken as his god his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Then will you not be reminded?”*

(Al-Jathiya: 23)

يَسْقُونَ مِنْ رَحِيقٍ مَخْتُومٍ

*“They will be given to drink [pure] wine [which was] sealed”.*

(Al-Mutaffifin: 25)

خِتَامُهُ مِسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ

*“The last of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete”.*

(Al-Mutaffifin: 26)

The third instance of Khatam's occurrence in the Quran in Surah Ahzab, verse 40 is of particular interest to our discussion. Why the other seven Quranic verses do not need to be discussed while debating meaning of Khatama, is something the Bahá'is can tell us. From my point of view all the eight verses are relevant to our discussion on Khatama, and in any case, the Quranic verses were not meant to be studied in isolation. Parts of Quran endorse other parts since there is no contradiction in it - 'Do they not then meditate on the Quran? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy' (Surah Nisa, verse 82).

Let's begin with the eight Quranic verses with the occurrence of Khatama; I have preserved Surah Ahzab, verse 40 for the end. In all the eight verses, there are some common and striking observations, which should not escape the attention of the Bahá'is:

1. In all the eight verses, Khatama comes with the literal meaning of seal or close. All litterateurs I have mentioned in the dictionary meaning of Khatama are unanimous in their view that Khatama in all these verses is applicable with the literal meaning of 'seal/close'. No other literal or metaphorical meaning of Khatama can be applied to these verses.
2. Seal is the only literal meaning that is appropriate for these verses. Using a different meaning from 'seal/close' can actually alter the interpretation of the verse completely.

For example, take the first instance of Khatama in Surah Al-Baqara, verse 7,

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

*“Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment”.*

If we had to take the metaphorical meaning of ornamentation, then the verse would read like this:

‘Allah hath set an ornament upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment’.

Notice the meaning has changed completely. From a rebuke with the real meaning of 'seal', it has turned into a compliment with the metaphorical meaning of 'ornament'! Hardly a penalty for the guilty ones! I leave it to Bahá'is to decide whether Allah meant it as seal or ornament. Likewise in Surah Yaseen, verse 65, it is unlikely that Allah wants 'to ornament their mouths. But their hands will speak to us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did'. It is most likely that He wants to 'set a seal on their mouths’.

3. In addition to the fact that only the literal meaning 'seal' makes any sense of the eight Quranic verses, even the exegesis (Tafseer) of these Quranic verses reveals that Allah meant 'seal' and not ornamentation.

Without delving into the eight Quranic verses that mention 'Khatama', I will directly go to the 40th verse of Surah Ahzab and see what the reliable Quranic scholars have had to say about the meaning of Khatama in their exegeses. Below is the list of Muslim scholars of the Quran and hadith. I have referred to all their exegeses in my quest to establish the meaning of Khatama as 'seal' as opposed to ornamentation:

- Tafseer-e-ibn Kathir by Imamul Hafiz Imaduddin Abul Fida Ismail Ibn Umar Ibn Kathir
- Tafseer-e-Kashshaaf by Zamakhshari
- Tafseer-e-Thaalabi by Allamah Abi Zaid Thaalabi
- Tafseer-e-Thauri by Imam Abi Abdillah Sufyan Ibn Saeed Masrooq Al-Thauri (popularly known as Sufyan Thauri)
- Tafseer-e-Jalalain by Jalaaluddin Suyuti and Jalaaluddin Mahalli
- Tafseer-e-Qurtubbi by Abu Abdillah Muhammad Ibn Ahmed Al Ansaari Al Qurtubbi
- Ad Durrul Manthoor Bi Tafseer Bi Maathoor by Imam Jalaaluddin Suyuti
- At Tafseerul Shaheerat by Shaikh Muhammad Abdoh
- Tafseer-e-Baizaavi by Baizaavi
- Tafseer-e-Fakhre Raazi by Imam Fakhre Raazi

Having read the tafseer of Surah Ahzaab, verse 40, I find that all the scholars of Quran that I have listed, have interpreted 'Khaatam-al-Nabiyyin' as 'Seal of Prophets'. They have based their opinion on the basis of Quranic verses, the correct Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), historical events before and after the advent of Islam, Arabic literature and the rules of Arabic grammar. Anyone who studies their exegeses of the Quran like I have studied will reach a conclusion that I have reached viz. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is Seal of Prophets and not Ornament of Prophets.

4. I have referred to most of the popular English translations of the Quran viz. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall, S V Ahmad Ali, M M Shakir and have found them all consistent in translating 'Khatama' as 'Seal'. Even non-Muslim translators hostile to Islam, like Sale, Rodwell and Palmer, to name a few, have translated 'Khatama' as 'Seal'. In other words, apart from the Bahá'is and Qadianis, no one seems to believe that 'Khatama' is ornament. On the contrary, they all believe that 'Khatama' means 'Seal'. As far as the Bahá'is are concerned I am particularly interested in learning which Quran translation they have been referring to. If they have their own English

translation of the Quran (approved by the Universal House of Justice), I would like to see it.

Having studied the meaning of Khatama, first from the viewpoint of Arabic literature and then from several exegeses of the Quran, I believe there is no reason to suggest that 'Khaatam-al-Nabiyyin' means anything other than 'Seal of Prophets'. To put it plainly, it means Seal of Prophets because there is no reason to even remotely conclude otherwise.

I will make the same claim I have made in my earlier articles - if Bahá'is have reason to believe that Quranic scholars of repute like Jalaaluddin Suyuti, Ibn Kathir, Zamakhshari, Fakhre Raazi are wrong in their evaluation of 'Khatama' as 'Seal', then let them advance better names to challenge the Islamic stance on 'Khatama'.

