



Introduction to Qur'an

First Session (1/4)

NOVA Life-Long Learning (NOVA-LLI)

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WELCOME
to
Introduction to Qur'an
Class !

Introduction to Qur'an - Outline

- **Session 1:**
 - Belief in Divine books
 - Meaning and definition of Qur'an
 - History of revelation and Prophet Muhammad
 - History of collection and compilation
 - Different names of Qur'an
 - Contents, main topics, and main purpose
 - Qur'an and other divine scriptures
 - Preservation of text
- **Session 2:**
 - Organization and main units
 - Presentation style and literary quality
 - The sound of the Qur'an
 - Addressees of Qur'an
 - Some sciences of the Qur'an
 - Translations of Qur'an
- **Session 3:**
 - Interpretation of Qur'an (Exegesis/Tafseer)
 - Understanding the meaning
 - Other sciences of Qur'an
- **Session 4:**
 - Scientific knowledge in the Qur'an

Texts

- **Focus on Power Point presentations**

References:

- The Qur'an with translation and commentary:
 1. Towards Understanding the Quran: Abridged version
 - Abul Ala Maududi / Zafar Ishaq Ansari
 - With more detailed commentary available online at:
 - <http://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php>
 - iPhone app: MyQuran
 2. The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali
 3. Teachings of The Qur'an, Ayub Hamid
 - Available online at: <http://www.teachingsofthequraan.com/index.php>
- Introduction to the Qur'an, M. A. Draz

The Qur'an: A divine book

Main Islamic Beliefs:

1. God (Allah)
 2. Angels
 3. **Divine Books/Scriptures, including Qur'an**
 4. Prophets/Messengers
 5. Life after death and Day of Judgment
 6. Divine decree and plan (Qadaa and Qadar)
- They are also called
 - “Pillars of Faith” or “Articles of Faith”
 - Summarized into 3 parts:
 1. Belief in God
 2. Prophethood
 3. Next Life

The Qur'an

- Linguistic meaning:
 - Root word of Qur'an : Qara'a (read, recite)
 - Qur'an: A reading, a recitation, to read, to be read
- Accordingly, it is the most ever read book
 - Due to required reading in the five daily prayers in all areas of the world with different time zones
 - Because of this, it is being read all the time (24 hours a day) by millions of people all over the world
- Also, the most memorized book

The Qur'an: Definition

- Definition (a brief one):
 - The Qur'an is the word or speech of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad through archangel Gabriel in Arabic language
- Language of revelation is Arabic
 - “The Qur'an” refers only to the original Arabic text
 - Its translations in other languages are not called “The Qur'an”, but they are called “Translations of The Qur'an”

Translation of The Qur'an

- Translation of Qur'an is the meaning of Qur'an according to the understanding of the translator(s)
 - Translations are the selected words of human beings in another language, and not the direct words of God in Arabic
 - Possibility of distortion and loss of spirit & impact
- To develop a deep knowledge of Qur'an, need to study it in Arabic
- However, an authentic translation can be trusted, and it is a good start to learn the message of the Qur'an
- Recipient of Quran: Prophet Muhammad

Prophet Muhammad

- Prophet Muhammad is a descendent of Abraham and Ishmael
- Abraham moved his wife (Hager) and baby Ishmael to Makkah
- Muhammad was born in Makkah as an orphan (father died before his birth)
- He lost his mother at age of 6 and had a tough life as a child
- Grew up and became very popular among people
- Famous for his conduct and compassion
- His nickname became “trustworthy-honest man”
- Went to seclusion, contemplation, and meditation in his late 30’s
- Received the first revelation from God at age of 40

Prophet Muhammad

- Lived for 23 years as a prophet to receive the complete set of revelations (The Qur'an)
 - First 13 years in Makkah and under persecution
 - Last 10 years in Madinah establishing Islam as a system and way of life
- All details of his life and his sayings are available
- No mysteries surround his life
- A life full of sacrifices and hardships
- A role model and example for Muslims in all aspects of life
- The final prophet of God
- His teaching and traditions (Hadith and Sunnah) – separate from Qur'an
 - Secondary source of knowledge in Islam

Revelation History of Qur'an

- First revelation of Qur'an to the prophet (by the angel while he was in cave at age of 40):
 - *“Read (proclaim) with the name of your Nurturing Master who created (everything), He created human from a clinging substance. Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, Who imparted knowledge by means of the pen. He taught man what he did not know” (96:1-5)*
- Continuation of revelation for next 23 years
 - Sometimes a few verses and sometimes a full chapter
 - In different time intervals and circumstances
 - But all in speech form

Method of Revelation

- I. Prophet receiving revelation in two different forms:
 - A. Angel appearing in human form and conveying revelation to prophet
 - B. Angel coming to prophet and informing him by a sound form (like ringing of a bell) to prepare him and conveying revelation to him - heavy on him

- Qur'an explains three methods of communication between God and human beings:
 - 1. Inspiration, 2. Revelation thru angel, and 3. From behind veil
 - *“It is not (fitting/possible) for a human being that Allah speaks to him, except by way of inspiration, or from behind a veil, or that He sends an angel messenger to reveal with His permission what He wills. Surely, He is All-High, All-Wise.” (42:51)*
 - All 3 methods used for communication with the prophet

Collection of Qur'an

1. Collection by memorization

- Prophet memorizing it
- Prophet dictating to his companions (right after encounter with angel)
- Many companions memorized the whole Qur'an
- Memorization of a few chapters for daily prayers required by everyone
- More was encouraged by the prophet

2. Collection by writing

- Some specific qualified scribes were designated to write the revelation right after the prophet's encounter with the angel
- Qur'an has been preserved until today using both methods

Annual Review and Confirmation

- A full review of all revealed parts every year during Ramadan (its last 10 days) by the prophet under supervision of the angel in the mosque (Masjid)
- Two full reviews in the last year of his life

Compilation History

- Memorization by Prophet and many companions
- Writing of Qur'an during Prophet's life
 - Since paper did not exist in there, revelations were written by designated companions in fragments on parchments and loose materials, such as cloth, dry skin of animals, scraps of leather, etc.
 - A complete record of all revelations was available at the end of Prophet's life
- Compilation
 - The initial writings were compiled later into a book form during the time of Abu Bakr (first Caliph) – only one copy
 - More copies were made and distributed during time of Uthman (the 3rd Caliph)
 - While maintaining dialect of Quraysh

Compilation History

One of the oldest copies of Qur'an manuscript now kept in Samarkand (Tashkent), Uzbekistan



Current
book form



Order of Revelation vs. Compilation

- Order of revelation: Chronological order of revelations as received from the angel
- Order of compilation : Current order of Qur'an
- The order of compilation of Qur'an is different from the order of its revelation
- Compilation was ordered using a location index that was provided by the prophet (under supervision of the angel) for every revelation
- The recitation in prayers also followed the compilation order
- At the end of 23 years, a harmonious book was a miracle
- Wisdom of difference : Order of making vs. order of usage

Contents of Qur'an

It contains foundations for an entire system of life, covering a whole spectrum of topics:

- Introducing Allah and His Oneness (Tawheed)
- Extensive coverage of accountability and next life as well as other Islamic beliefs
- All kinds of teachings to establish justice and morality
- Rights and obligations at all levels
- Personal law, family law, and public law
- Social set of rules for a community to live by
- International law and external relations
- Crimes and punishment
- Guidance on how to deal with other Muslims, the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), infidels, and hypocrites
- Guidelines for establishing and keeping treaties
- Rules of war and peace
- Social and economic policies
- Stories of past prophets and communities followed by the lessons learned
- Reminders of God's favors to His creation and related duties
- Coaching and training of Muslims to excel in all areas of life
- etc.

Main Purpose of Qur'an: Guidance

Main purpose is not to be a book of philosophy, or history, or any mythologies of religious nature, or science, but main purpose is guidance of humanity. The guidance is provided in different forms, such as:

- Identifying appropriate and inappropriate ideas, thoughts, actions and behaviours for people
- Mentioning various traits of human behaviour along with the consequences they are going to bring
- Describing different kinds of human personalities indicating types destined to eternal success and others heading to utter failure
- Talking about everyone, as a person as well as a human being
- Appealing to every aspect of human's personality including heart and mind, intellect and emotions, scientific wisdom and artistic faculties, hope and fear, and logic and feelings
- Guiding people to establish justice, peace and excellence
- Talking to the reader throughout the Book and instructing about what is good, warns of what is going to harm, explains what is expected, and recommends the way the reader should respond to its message
- *“We have revealed to you the Book that explains everything and is Guidance, Mercy and Good News to the Muslims.” (16:89)*

Major Categories of Guidance

The guidance provided by the Qur'an can be divided into four major categories:

1. Reminding people about purpose of life and keys of success in this world and next world
 - Such knowledge is the essence and substance of the Qur'an and the main purpose and reason for its revelation
2. Informing people about the things that they have no way of finding out except through revelation
 - Such as infiniteness of God, God's infinite ways to make things happen; the existence and nature of angels and Jinn; the realities of next life; the existence and animosity of Satan and his efforts to mislead people; the miracles God showed through messengers; etc.
3. Citing signs of nature so that people can reflect upon those signs and logically accept the tenets of the Islamic faith
 - Citing these signs not meant to teach people about the science of the things mentioned as the signs, but to present them as points of reflection for understanding its message
4. Citing historical anecdotes to help people understand the point being made by the Qur'an in the light of the similar situations that occurred in the past

Names of Qur'an

- Many different names have been used within the Qur'an to refer to it
- Each of these names reflects a special and unique aspect of the Qur'an

1. **Qur'an (reading, to be read): It is to be read**

This is the main name. It is used 70 times to refer to it.

Example: *Verily this **Qur'an** does guide to that which is most right". (17:9)*

2. **Kitaab (book, scripture, a writing): It is available in a text form**

- Example: *"We have revealed to you (o' people) a **book** in which you are mentioned. Will you not then understand?" (21:10)*

3. **Tanzeel (revelation, sent down): It is a revelation from God**

Example: *"Verily this is a **revelation** from the Lord of the Worlds" (26:192)*

Names of Qur'an

4. **Furqan (criterion, distinguisher): It is a standard of right and wrong**

Example: “Blessed is He Who sent down the **Criterion** to His servant, that it may be An admonition to all creatures”. (25:1)

5. **Dhikr (reminder, remembrance) : It is reminder about important facts**

Example: “We have sent down the **reminder**, and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)”. (15:9)

There are more names/attributes for Qur'an, but the above 5 are primary names of Qur'an

Reflect on meaning, sequence and connection of these 5 names

Like a story, the names of the Qur'an are connected because first it was read by the angel and then from Prophet Muhammad's tongue, and then written from a revelation sent from the heavens to earth which in its entirety distinguishes between right and wrong when everyone needs a reminder.

Relationship of Qur'an with other Divine Scriptures

1. Qur'an asserts being a revelation from the same source as previous revelations
 - *"We have revealed to you as We revealed it to Noah and the Messengers after him; We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms."* (4:163)
2. Confirms belief in all previous scriptures and prophets
 - *Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord; we make no discrimination between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)."* (3:84)
3. Confirms that the main message and purpose is the same
 - *"We never sent any messenger before you [Muhammad] without revealing to him: 'There is no god but Me, so worship Me.'" (21:25)*
 - *"We sent Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice ...". (57:25)*
4. Revives and protects original and essential teachings of past prophets and their books
 - *"And We have sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming and preserving the (original teachings of) previous Books..." (5:48)*

Preservation of Qur'an

- At human level : Preserved both in memory and in writing
- Further, additional assurances are declared within the Qur'an to preserve it from any changes
 - *“Indeed, it is we who have sent down the Reminder (the Qur'an), and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).” (15:9)*
 - *“... indeed it is an unassailable Book. Falsehood cannot come to it from before or behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Praised one.” (41:41-42)*
 - *“(O Prophet) do not move your tongue (during revelation) for (reciting) it (the Qur'an) to receive it in haste. It is surely upon Us to protect its collection and its recitation.” (75:15-16)*
 - *“This is the Book in which there is no doubt. It is guidance for the righteous”. (2:2)*
 - *“This is revelation of the Book in which there is no doubt. It is from the Lord of the Worlds”. (32:2)*
 - *“Do they not then reflect on the Qur'an? Had it been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found in it many discrepancies.” (4:82)*
- Evidence: A single text and single version all over the world for the last 1400 years (in Arabic)
 - Not possible if it was left merely in the hands of Muslims