

ALI 249: The Compilation of the Qur'an

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Session 3

Assurance of Preservation in the Qur'an

We believe that the Qur'an is a literal word of God, and its scripture has been preserved in its original form, without any loss or distortion. The Qur'an also says: **إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ**, Indeed, we have revealed the Reminder (Qur'an) and We will most surely be its guardian (Al-Hijr, 1:9). The Qur'an also says: **إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ**, Surely on Us the collecting of it and the reciting of it (Al-Qiyāma, 75:17)

Steps Taken by the Prophet Muḥammad (s)

- The Qur'an has been preserved and recorded by the companions of the Prophet (S) under his supervision.
- Does it mean he also compiled the Qur'an? How much it is important that the Qur'an should have been compiled in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (s)?
- So, we have two issues which need to be distinguished from each other. One is preservation and recording of the Qur'an and the second is compilation of the Qur'an which was done by Imām Ali (as) after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad(s)

Steps Taken by the Prophet Muhammad (s)

- Imam Ali (s) says, There was no Qur'anic verse revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (s) but he would recite it to me, and I would note it down in front of him. He also taught me *Nāsikh* and *Mansūkh* (Abrogation) of the Qur'an, *Tafsīr* and *Ta'wīl* of the Qur'an, and *Muḥkamāt* and *Mutashabihāt* of the Qur'an, and prayed to Allah that I get the ability to understand and always preserve the verses of the Qur'an. Since that time I never forgot any Qur'anic verse.
- Unfortunately, later on the Qur'an compiled by Imām Ali (s) was not accepted by the Muslims and, as a result he had to confine this copy to him and his progeny but the Qur'an which was compiled at the time of 'Uthmān, was endorsed by Imām Ali (s)

Steps Taken by the Prophet Muhammad (s)

- This may be noted that throughout the course of the twenty-three years of revelation, the Prophet Muhammad (s) was concerned with every aspect of preserving the Qur'anic text from any sort of corruption. So, out of the small pool of people who could read and write, he appointed scribes to note down the verses as they were revealed.
- He would also tell them exactly where the verse to be fixed in a chapter. The Scribes were known as the “recorder of revelation”.

Steps Taken by the Prophet Muhammad (s)

- Prophet Muhammad(s) stressed the importance of memorization of the Qur'an.
- The Muslims also had the religious obligation to memorize parts of the Qur'an in the five daily prayers they were required to recite from memory.
- He would also encouraged to recite the Qur'an from written text
- He also made the reference point in the lives of the Muslims.
- The teaching of the Qur'an had been considered a very important task
- Muslims of that time were very anxious to know about any new Qur'anic verse and would eagerly study and memorize what they received.

The Collection at the Time of Abū Bakr

- The Prophet had willed that the Qur'an be compiled in a book form so that It would not be lost or distorted like other Divine revelations.
- In the battle of Yamāma, around 80 (or by some accounts 400) Muslims who had memorized the Qur'an were killed. This caused Abu Bakr to worry that the Qur'an might be forgotten if there were more lives lost, and so he commissioned Zaid b. Thābit to gather the Qur'an from the heart of those who had memorized it, and the pieces of wood and bone on which it was written, and to paper a single official codex. The Qur'an was thus gathered into single compilation

The Collection at the Time of ‘Uthmān

- The next major event in the history of the compilation of the Qur’an occurred at the time of ‘Uthmān. By this time empire stretched across a vast area and several codices *muṣḥafs* were in use in different locations. In addition to these *muṣḥafs*, several others were also available throughout Muslim lands.
- On hearing this ‘Uthmān consulted the companions who resided in Medina, who all agreed that the various copies in use needed to be checked and confirmed to be authentic
- Initially, ‘Uthmān appointed a committee of four persons made up of Zaid b. Thābit, ‘Abdullah bin al-Zubair, Sa ‘id b. al- ‘Ās and ‘ Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith to transcribe a master copy of the Qur’an

Order of the Qur'an

- Whether the arrangement of verses in their respective chapters was based on the instructions of the Prophet(s) (*tawqīfī*) or was decided on by the deliberations of the companions (*ijtihādī*)?
- One of the very important argument of the proponent of the *tawqīfī* is that the Qur'an used to be recited and taught at the time of the Prophet companion, such as 'Adullah b. Mas'ūd and Ubay b. Ka'b.
- Another argument of the proponent of the *tawqīfī* is that there are no conclusive or reliable traditions that prove that there was any discussion by the companions at the time of the compilation about the order of the chapters.

Order of the Qur'an Cont..

- On the other hand, one of the arguments of those who hold the *ijtihādī* view is that the arrangement of chapters is not important because each self-contained, especially because different copies of the Qur'an had different arrangements.
- Another argument is that as long as the Prophet (s) was alive, there was still a chance that more chapters would be revealed. Therefore, the arrangement of chapters could only be done after he passed away and revelation came to an end.



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the course session