

ALI 249: Absence of Distortion (*Tahrif*)
in the Qur'an
A Quick revision on the Preservation and
Compilation of the Qur'an

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Preservation & Compilation of the Qur'an

- ▶ As the Quran was being revealed, the prophet Muhammad (s) made special arrangements to ensure that it was written down. He dictated the verses orally and instructed scribes to mark down the revelation on whatever materials were available: tree branches, stones, leather, and bones
- ▶ The issue of preservation and recording of the Qur'an should be separated from the compilation of the Qur'an in book format.
- ▶ It is narrated from Zayd b. Thābit that he said, We would sit in the presence of the Prophet(s) and write the verses of the Qur'an on sheets (riqā') (Al-Itqān, vol. 1, p.203).

Compilation of the Qur'an at the Time of the Prophet (s)

- ▶ Allah says in the Qur'an: رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً, *A messenger from Allah reciting purified pages* (Al-Bayyina, 98:2). According to Āyatullah Nasir Makarim Shirazi, the word *ṣuḥuf* is a plural of *ṣaḥīfa* which means the pages on which something is written but in this verse, *ṣaḥīfa* means contents of the Qur'an.
- ▶ Allah says: إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ, *It is for Us to collect it and to recite it* (Al-Qayāma, 75:19). According to Allama Ṭabaṭabaī in tafsīr al-mizān, this verse says that Allah will gather this Qur'an in the heart of the Prophet (s), according to Āyatullah Javād Mughnia, هذا عهد من الله أن يجمع القرآن في قلب محمد، و يثبتته عن لسانه.

Was the Qur'an Compiled at the Time of the Prophet (s)? - 1

- ▶ According to Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi, the Prophet would rush to recite the Qur'anic verses during the revelation because he had the fear of forgetting them but Allah says, do not move your tongue during revelation for reciting it to receive it in hurry, we will not only store it and let it be recited by you (after revelation is completed) but also it is undertaken by Us to explain it. These verses also denote the absence of the distortion in the Qur'an.
- ▶ On the other hand, Āyatullah Khū'ī is skeptical of reports that suggest that the task of the Qur'an was begun after the Prophet Muhammad(s) passed away. These reports are inconstant and contradictory and therefore none of them can be relied upon. He said, the Prophet (s) had challenged the unbelievers and idolaters to produce the like of the Qur'an, and like of ten chapters from it, and even one chapter. It means chapters of the Qur'an were available to them (al-bayān, P.72)

Was the Qur'an Compiled at the Time of the Prophet (s)? - 2

- ▶ On the other hand, it is narrated from zayd b. Ṭabit, the Qur'an was not compiled when the Prophet (s) died.
- ▶ Another point is related to the word *jam*' which is very confusing in Islamic literature. Sometimes it was used in the meaning of memorization, and sometimes it was used in the meaning of writing of the Qur'an on papers, bones or stones.
- ▶ So, according to one view point, words of every sūra has been organized in complete one sūra but compilation and arrangement of the chapters of the Qur'an were put in order after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (s)
- ▶ We have also some aḥadith in which the Prophet directed Imam Ali (s) to collect the verses from different papers, pieces of clothes etc. and compile it, and don't waste it as Jews wasted Taurāh.

Distortion(*Tahrīf*)in the Qur'an

- ▶ Incorrect interpretation does not mean *tahrīf* in the Qur'an
- ▶ Changing a verse or chapter in a sequence is not a *tahrīf* in the Qur'an
- ▶ Changing a reading style with slight variation is not a *tahrīf* in the Qur'an.
- ▶ Difference in dialect and pronunciation is not a *tahrīf* in the Qur'an

Distortion(*Taḥrīf*)in the Qur'an cont...

- ▶ Wherever the Qur'an used the word *taḥrīf*, it aimed to mention intellectual (*ma'navī*) *teḥrīf*: *مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ*, *Of those who are Jews) there are those who (alter words from their places. (Al-Nisā', 4:46)*
- ▶ Addition to the original Qur'anic text cannot be considered *taḥrīf* because either this addition is known or unknown. In both conditions the Qur'an cannot be called distorted.
- ▶ Omission from the Qur'anic text. There are reports that some Qur'anic verses have been omitted, either accidentally or purposely from the present Qur'anic text.

Distortion(*Tahrīf*)in the Qur'an cont...

- ▶ The main issue when discussing *tahrīf* is to deal with this last type. The essential question is whether any material has been lost from the Qur'an or not?

- ▶ There are some *aḥādīth* in shia and sunni books who have reported that *tahrīf* has occurred in the Qur'an, and as a result some Sunni and Shia scholars believed that the Qur'an has been distorted. In support of their claim they cited weak and insubstantial traditions.

Evidence that the Qur'an is Free from *Tahrif*

- ▶ **Historical fact** :From the very first day of its revelation, Muslims were paying special attention to the Qur'an, and the Prophet Muhammad was himself used to give directions to the Muslims to record and preserve the Qur'anic verses. Also those who memorized the Qur'an got extraordinary amount of attention from the Muslim community of the time of Prophet Muhammad (s)
- ▶ **Mutlitple and diverse sources of Aḥādīth** :An important feature of the Qur'an is that the transmission of its verses is *mutwawātir*. This means that it has been transmitted through multiple and diverse sources at every stage following its revelation, and in every generation. Every phrase, word and even vowel of its text has been faithfully passed down from hand to hand by different Muslims in different lands at different times

Evidence that the Qur'an is Free from *Tahrif*

- ▶ **The Divine guarantee of preservation** : A matter of great peace of mind for Muslims is God's assurance that He will Himself undertake the responsibility of safeguarding the Qur'an: *إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ*, *Indeed, we have revealed the Reminder (the Qur'an) and We will most surely be its guardian* (Al-Hijr 15:9)
- ▶ Similarly, the Allah says in the Qur'an: *لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ*, *Falsehood does not come to it from before it or from behind it. it is a sending down from the one, the wise, the praised* (Fuṣṣilat, 41:42)
- ▶ **Inimitability (ʾIjāz) nature of the Qur'an** is also a most important sa: *قُلْ لئن اجتمعت الأنسُ و الجنُّ على أن يأتوا بمثلِ هذا القرآنِ لا يأتونَ بمثله و لو كانَ بعضهم لبعضٍ ظهيراً* *guards against any corruption in the Qur'an, Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it, though some of them were aiders of others* (Al-Isra', 17:88)

Evidence that the Qur'an is Free from *Tahrīf*

Cont...

- ▶ In addition, Ahlulbayt (as) would always use the Qur'anic verses as an evidence in their arguments against atheists.
- ▶ According to some *Aḥadīth*, when afflictions and calamities befall you, seek shelter in the Qur'an.
- ▶ According to some *Aḥadīth*, all narrations must be presented to the Qur'an. If any *ḥadīth* contradicts with the Qur'an, it must be put aside.
- ▶ Hadith al-Thaqalayn is a strong proof of absence of distortion in the Qur'an.

**Thank You for attending the
course**