

## ALI 096: Themes from Sura al-Jumuah Session Two

### Verse 2 - Questions for Tadabbur

1. Reading the verses below, can you conclude that the Prophet (s) could not read and write?
2. If the Prophet (s) was not able to read and write, how could he command and encourage others to read and write?
3. Why would God reveal His Book to a Prophet who could not read and write? What would be the advantage/s?
4. What instances do you remember from the history of the Prophet (s) which could be used to support, or oppose, the argument that the Prophet (s) could not read and write.

### Cross references from other verses

(1) أَلَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ

Those who follow the Messenger, the Unlettered, whom they find written down with them in the Taurat and the Injeel (7:157)

(2) قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

Say: O people! surely I am the Apostle of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth there is no god but He; He brings to life and causes to die therefore believe in Allah and His apostle, the Unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may walk in the right way. (7:158)

(3) وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لِأَنَّكَ لَمُبْطِلُونَ

And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, for then could those who say untrue things have doubted (29:48)

(4) قُلْ لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا تَلَوْتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَدْرَاكُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

Say: If Allah had desired (otherwise) I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have taught it to you; indeed I have lived a lifetime among you before it; do you not then understand? (10:16)

(5) وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِن جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا نَّهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants; and most surely you show the way to the right path (42:52)."

(6) لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

Truly Allah conferred a benefit upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His communications and purifying them, and teaching them the Book and the Wisdom, although before that they were in manifest error (3:164). "

(7) وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ

Nor does he speak out of desire. This is naught but revelation that is revealed; the Lord of Mighty Power has taught him (53: 3-5).

## Quotes from Western Writers

Evidently no one thought of teaching him (the great Prophet) reading and writing. At that time the art of reading, and writing was of little significance to the Arabs. For this very reason, there were no more than seventeen persons among the Quraysh tribe who could read and write. It is not known that Muhammad himself should have written anything. After his appointment as Prophet, he had a special scribe for him. Yet the most popular and eloquent Arabic book was recited by him. He had a better acquaintance and grasp of the affairs than the educated ones.

William James Durant, "History of Civilization (Persian Version)", vol II, p 14.

Although he was unschooled, the early verses sent down to him spoke of the pen and knowledge; namely of writing, putting into writing, learning, and of teaching. In no other major religion has knowledge been so extensively appreciated, and no other religion can be found in which such an importance has been attached to knowledge, at its initial stage of development. Had Muhammad been a scholar, no surprise would be caused at the verses having been sent down into the *Ghar Hira'* (Hira' Cave), since a scholar appreciates knowledge, but the Prophet was neither schooled nor tutored. I congratulate the Muslims on their religion having so dearly regarded, at its inception, the acquisition of knowledge.

Constante Vergil Giorgio, "Muhammad - a Prophet to be Acquainted with Afresh", 1st edition, p 45.

Furthermore, if Muhammad was not unschooled, he would not have been capable of propagating a new religion, for an unschooled person is better aware of the needs of the common (illiterate) people and thus is more capable of helping them to the right path. However, whether the Prophet was schooled or unschooled, undoubtedly, he was possessing the highest degree of intellect, wisdom and awareness.

Gustav Lubon, "The Civilization of Islam and the Arabs", 4th edition, p 20.