

# QUR'ANIC STUDY

Madrasah Textbook  
for Grades 8 – 11 (ages 13 – 15 years)



**The Academy**  
FOR LEARNING ISLAM

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*In His Name, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*

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## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

### CONTENTS & ARRANGEMENT OF QUR'ANIC STUDY LESSONS

The completed lessons in the subject of *Qur'anic Study* would be in the following form, divided in six major sections.

#### **Section 1 Familiarizing with the Qur'anic Text**

- Some Definitions
- The Division in the Qur'an
- The Secondary Division
- How to locate an Aya of the Qur'an.
- Different Names of the Qur'an
- How the surats derive their names.
- Makki and Madani surats
- Huruf al-Muqatti'at*

#### **Section 2 Reading, studying and teaching of the Qur'an**

- Rewards of Reading the Text
- Etiquette of the *Tilawah*
- Reading without understanding!
- Memorizing of the Text
- Some Du'as in the Qur'an
- Teaching of the Qur'an
- Guide to the reading & studying of the Qur'an

#### **Section 3 Understanding the contents of the Qur'an**

- The content of the Qur'an
- Understanding the Qur'an
- Ahkam* and *Mutashabihat* verses
- Ahlul Bayt and the Qur'an
- Translating and interpreting the Text
- Early *Tafasir* of the Qur'an
- Contemporary *Tafasir* of the Qur'an
- Guide to English Translation and Commentaries

#### **Section 4 History of the Qur'an**

- Revelation and modes of revelations
- Early *Huffaz* and their role
- Transforming the revelation into written form
- Collection of the written form of the text
- Chronological arrangement of the surats
- Compilation of the text into a book form

The Reason(s) for the Revelations  
*Nasikh* and *Mansukh* verses  
Changes in the presentation of the written form  
Attempts to change the Text  
Early prints that are extant

**Section 5    *Qur'an, the Final Message of God***

Authenticity of the Qur'an  
Preservation of the Text  
The Marvels of the Qur'an  
Qur'an, the Living Miracle  
Science in the Qur'an  
Comparing with previous scriptures  
How others see the Qur'an

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What follows are ten lessons on *Qur'anic Study* as a sample for the review by Madrasahs in North America. We have also given two Quiz papers at the end of these lessons for teachers to assess their students. Finally, a Select Bibliography has been provided so that Madrasah teachers who wish to pursue these lessons can refer to some of these books.

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## LESSON 1

## WHY QUR'ANIC STUDY?

It is our nature that whenever something new is introduced we tend to ask: "Why do we need it?" The subject of the *Qur'anic Study* is new to many Madrasahs and therefore, let us begin this lesson by knowing some of the reasons for studying this subject.

The Holy Qur'an tells us in 25:30<sup>1</sup> that on the Day of Judgement Prophet Muhammad (s)<sup>2</sup> will cry out to the Almighty God: **O my Lord! surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing.** Islamic scholars say that this refers to the attitude of those Muslims who have ignored the Qur'an. These include those Muslims who are indifferent to what the Qur'an says, those who have no idea as to what the Qur'an requires of them, and those whose lifestyles do not reflect the teachings of the Qur'an. No reasonable Muslim would like to be classified in a group like this.

Having understood the graveness of forsaking the Qur'an and abandoning its teachings let us now see what are the benefits of studying the Qur'an. The Ma'sumin (a)<sup>3</sup> have left us with so many *hadiths*<sup>4</sup> on the importance of reading, memorizing, understanding, and acting upon the Qur'an that any Muslim who is aware of them would never miss the opportunity of studying the Qur'an. For this lesson, let us have a look at only one hadith of the great prophet of Islam on the study of the Qur'an.

The Holy Prophet<sup>5</sup> (s) said to one of his companion by the name Ma'adh:

If you are anxious for the life of the lucky ones,  
desire the death of martyrs,  
wish salvation on the Day of Judgement,  
want guidance at the occasion of going astray,  
then start the study of the Qur'an.  
This is because the Qur'an is:  
the word of Allah,  
instrumental in saving you from satan, and  
helpful in increasing the weight of your good deeds.

This hadith clearly gives out many benefits which we can get from studying the Qur'an. It leaves no doubt in any Muslim's mind as to why s/he should be involved in learning and studying the Holy Qur'an. We can say that a Muslim's success in this life and in life hereafter lies in studying and following the Qur'an.

Let us ask ourselves as to how much do we know about the Qur'an? Perhaps, very little! Why not then learn more about this *Asmani Kitab*<sup>6</sup> which was revealed to the Holy Prophet for the benefit of all Muslims. Furthermore, we can look at our day to day actions and compare them with the teachings of the Qur'an, and ask: Are they in

line with the Qur'anic commandments? If yes, then we surely are amongst the fortunate. If no, then we are in a clear error! May the Almighty save us from such a state.

#### Notes:

1. The number 25:30 means verse 30 of chapter 25 of the Holy Qur'an. Throughout this subject we would indicate a reference to the Qur'an thus.
2. The letter "s" after the name of the Prophet stands for: SALALLAHU 'ALAYHI WA AALIHI WA SALLAM. This means, "O Allah, send your blessings on Muhammad and his family."
3. The letter "a" here, stands for: ALAYHIMUS SALAAM, i.e. "Peace be upon them." Please note that if it appears : after the name of Bibi Fatima, it stands for ALAYHAS SALAAM (peace be upon her); after the name of a male Ma'sum it is read as ALAYHIS SALAAM (peace be upon him); and ALAYHIMAS SALAAM (peace be upon both of them) after the name of two Ma'sums.
4. Hadith means the sayings (or traditions) of any one of the Fourteen Ma'sumin (a).
5. By Holy Prophet we mean Prophet Muhammad (s), the great noble prophet of Islam.
6. Asmani Kitab means Heavenly Book. The Qur'an was revealed to the Holy Prophet from the Almighty God. Other Heavenly Books are: *Zabur*, revealed to Prophet Dawud(a); *Tawrat*, revealed to Prophet Musa(a); and *Injil*, to Prophet 'Isa (a).

#### QUESTIONS

1. Give five reasons why every Muslim should study the Qur'an.
2. Define the words: Asmani Kitab and Hadith.
3. What will you say every time you say or hear the name of the great prophet of Islam? What does this formula mean?

#### ASSIGNMENT

Write in your own words a short essay, in about 100 words, "What is the Qur'an?"

#### LESSON 2

##### SOME DEFINITIONS

In this lesson we will learn the explanations of some terms related to the study of the Holy Qur'an. We begin by specifying what the Qur'an is. Then we will see how the Qur'an differs from other holy literature such as Hadith and *Hadith al-Qudsi*. The lesson will end by defining the words *Sura* and *Aya*.

#### *What is the Qur'an?*

In lesson 1, we learnt from the prophetic tradition that the Qur'an is the word of Allah (st). Let us see what we mean by this. Prophet Muhammad (s), beginning from age forty till his death at about sixty three years<sup>1</sup>, uttered verses and passages which were revealed to him from the Almighty God through angel Jibraeel. These verses and passages were written down by appointed scribes<sup>2</sup> and other Muslims. Apart from writing the revelation, many Muslims during this period memorized all or part of it.

The complete collection of all the revelation sent down to the Prophet during this period is what constitutes the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is the word of the Almighty God. Each and every word therein is exactly what was revealed to the Holy Prophet which he later transmitted to his audience. All Muslim scholars agree to the fact that the entire contents of the present Qur'an are divinely sourced and nothing has been left out from what was revealed to the Prophet and later on transmitted for the use of Muslims of all age. In the Qur'an itself there are several verses which clearly state that the Qur'an is the word of God. We quote the following verse: **Will they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found in it much discrepancies.** (4:82)

In addition to many verses confirming that the Qur'an is the word of Allah, the Ma'sumin (a) have also affirmed to this fact in numerous hadiths. The following hadith from various Ma'sumin attest to the source of the Qur'an.

Prophet Muhammad(s): **The Qur'an is Allah's banquet, learn from it whatever you can.**

Imam 'Ali (a): **Surely the Qur'an is Allah's proof over His creation.**

Imam 'Ali ar-Ridha (a) : **The Qur'an is the solid rope of Allah.**

#### **How does the Qur'an differ from *Hadith* and *Hadith al-Qudsi*?**

The Qur'an is holy and so are the sayings of the Ma'sumin (a). Then what is the difference between them? Also, what about the sayings which the Holy Prophet has related from Allah and yet we do not find them in the Qur'an? In other words, what makes the Qur'an so unique and different from other religious literature?

Hadith are the sayings of the fourteen Ma'sumin (a). Although the Ma'sumin only say what is in line with the Almighty God's pleasure, the words uttered by them are not the direct words of Allah. The hadiths are their words which describe, say, Allah's commands. As for *Hadith al-Qudsi*<sup>3</sup>, it constitutes all those utterances which the Holy Prophet presented to the people as words of God, but not as part of the Qur'an which was revealed to him through the angel Jibrael. Excerpts from the Tawrat with Muslims is an example of *Hadith al-Qudsi*. Unlike the Qur'an, its collection is not complete and does not remain pure from being altered or changed.

#### **Definitions of the Sura and the Aya**

We will cover a detailed discussion on surats and ayats in future lessons but here we just wish to introduce these two terms. This is because we will be using these terms quite often.

**Sura**<sup>4</sup> means an enclosure. In the Qur'an it is the collection of verses, sometimes few and sometimes very many, and thus loosely translated as the chapter of the Qur'an. Its plural in arabic is *Suwar*.

**Aya**<sup>5</sup> means a sign or mark. Each and every aya of the Qur'an is the sign of Allah's

creation. It communicates to the human the greatness of God's making. It has also been translated loosely in English, as the verse of the Qur'an. Its plural is Ayaat.

**Notes:**

1. Muslim historians say that the period of the revelation was 22 years, five months and one day (or 15 days, if we take Rabi'ul Awwal 12, 11 A.H. as Prophet's death date).
2. It is said that there were about 40 scribes appointed by the Prophet for writing down the revelation as and when it was transmitted to them.
3. Hadith al-Qudsi literally means "the sacred traditions." If all of it is collected it may become the size of the Qur'an.
4. Some spell it as SURAH, with 'h' being silent. Both spellings are correct. We will spell 'Sura' throughout.
5. It is also spelled as Ayah, or Ayat.

**QUESTION**

1. The Qur'an is the word of Allah. What do you understand by this? Write your answer in about 10 lines.
2. How does Hadith and Hadith a-Qudsi differ from the Qur'an?
3. What do you understand by the words: Aya and Sura?

**ASSIGNMENT**

Read translations of the following verses and write what you understand by them: 97:1, 2:6, and 48:1.

**LESSON 3****UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN**

We learnt that it is necessary for all Muslims to understand the contents of the Holy Qur'an. By doing so we can: believe in the fundamentals of Islam taught by the Qur'an, act according to its orders, refrain from what is forbidden in it, and take lessons from the stories therein. The question which comes to our mind automatically is: "Can we understand the Qur'an so as to be able to act upon it?" This lesson will deal with answering that question.

Not all the passages containing commands and directions in the Qur'an are crystal clear. There are those that are easy to understand by just reading few verses or a passage from the Qur'an. There are other commands which can only be understood if all verses on the subject appearing throughout the Qur'an are studied. And, there is a third type of verses in the Qur'an which can only be understood after studying relevant hadith from the Ma'sumin (a). The Qur'an itself refers to this matter when it says: **He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical (3:6).**



Let us look at the examples of each of the above three types of passages. If we were to study, for example, *Suratut Tawhid* (112)<sup>1</sup> we'll be able to know that the Qur'an emphatically states that there is One and Only God. There is none like Him. The complete sura is:

**In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the Merciful.**

**Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.**

This passage and the like of it are easy to understand. Other verses on the subject of Tawhid are found in many places in the Qur'an. These either expound on the Oneness of Allah (st)<sup>2</sup> or emphasize the concept that there is no god save Allah (st).

The second type of passages are those that can not be understood in isolation. They have to be studied along with other verses on the subject, otherwise the meaning will either be not clear or complete. For instance, we read in *Suratu Yasin* (36), verse 6 that the Holy Prophet may warn a people **whose fathers were not warned**. One may conclude from this verse that Prophet Muhammad (s) came to guide the Quraysh of Mecca only, whose immediate ancestors were never warned by any other prophet. This would limit the mission of the Noble Prophet of Islam to one place, i.e. Mecca and its vicinity, and to one time in history, i.e. the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, from 570 to 632 C.E. But what we learn from other verses of the Qur'an is that Muhammad is the final messenger of Allah (st). His prophethood is universal both in space and time. Take for instance the verse 34:28 which reads: **And We have not sent you but to all human kind**. Thus, the verse in *Suratu Yasin* states only a part of the whole picture.

The third type of verses and passages are those that talk of commands and directions which need an explanation from the Holy Prophet or from the Infallible Imams (a). The daily five prayers, for instance, is believed to be obligatory by all Muslims. Every practicing Muslim does not pass a day but says his/her prayers. If you ask them the reason for saying the prayers with punctuality and discipline, most probably they would respond: "that is what the Almighty tells us in the Qur'an". But in actual fact, the Qur'an only repeatedly commands the Muslims to establish prayers at different times. The details of how to say the prayers, what to recite in it, and how many *Rak'at* to recite were all learnt by Muslims from the teachings and practices of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams.

Before we end this lesson let me clarify one more aspect of this topic. It may have crossed our minds when reading this lesson that "if many parts of the Qur'an is not easy to understand then why study the Qur'an?" Well, it is a fair question, but it gives us an additional point that the Qur'an can only be understood if it is thoroughly and systematically studied. This is why we are taking these lessons. It also prepares us for the next lesson on **AHLUL BAYT AND THE QUR'AN**.

**Notes:**

1. A number in parentheses after the name of a sura indicates the chapter number of the Qur'an.
2. The letters "st" after the Divine Name, Allah, is short for SUBHANAHU WA TA'ALA, i.e. "Glorified is He, the Exalted."

**QUESTIONS**

1. Write briefly, in five sentences, what you understand from the contents of Suratut Tawhid.
2. As regards to understanding various passages of the Qur'an the lesson discusses three types of passages or verses. Which are these three types of passages?
3. What would you say when you utter or hear the proper name of God: Allah? What does the formula mean in English?

**ASSIGNMENT**

Write briefly what you know about *Hadith at-Thaqalayn*.

**LESSON 4****AHLUL BAYT AND THE QUR'AN**

When discussing the lesson on UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN, we learnt that some verses of the Qur'an need to be clarified by other verses and that not all Ayats of the Qur'an can be understood clearly. Also, when it comes to *'Ibadat*, i.e. acts of worship, the Qur'an presents the general principles without getting into detailed instructions. The question that automatically follows is how can we overcome these hurdles in the way of studying and understanding the Qur'an? This lesson will discuss those who, according to both the teachings of the Holy Prophet and Islamic history, are the best interpreters of the Holy Qur'an.

All Muslims believe without any doubt that the best and most knowledgeable authority on the Qur'an was none other than the Holy Prophet himself. The Qur'an calls him as the **instructor of the Book and wisdom** (2:129, 3:164 and 62:2). He instructed various people on different sciences of the Qur'an. He then repeatedly urged them to read and study the Qur'an. Because of this many Muslims busied themselves in teaching the Qur'an to the people of Madina as they embraced Islam. However, from those who were well versed with the Qur'an were the Ahlul Bayt (a). These people were very close to the Divine revelation because of their special love and devotion to Allah and His Messenger. Historical records are witness to the extraordinary service and sacrifice the Ahlul Bayt made in upholding the Qur'anic teachings.

In describing the special status of the Ahlul Bayt the Qur'an states, **Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O People of the Household of the Prophet, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing (33:33)**<sup>1</sup>. In the entire Qur'an we do not find a statement of total purification for any other except the Ahlul Bayt. Allah, *subhanahu wa*

*ta'ala*, in this verse says that it His wish to eliminate all sorts of evil and vice from the Ahlul Bayt and make them pure completely. This is why we refer to them as Ma'sumin, i.e. people with immaculate characters, free from all faults and errors. After the death of the Holy Prophet, the Ahlul Bayt are the most worthy of interpreting the Qur'an correctly. They have a deep knowledge of the Holy book and are pious.

In *Hadith ath-Thaqalayn*, narrated by many scholars from both Sunnis and Shi'as, the Prophet said, **I leave amongst you *Thaqalayn* (i.e. two precious things). If you hold fast to them both you would never go astray. These are: the Book of Allah (i.e. the Qur'an) and my household members (i.e. the Ahlul Bayt).** The Muslims have been ordered by the Prophet to follow the Qur'an and Ahlul Bayt in order to seek guidance. The relation between these two is inseparable. Together they make the Islamic law<sup>2</sup>. Individually, they compliment each other: the Qur'an instructs the Muslims to love them (42:23) and they in turn reflect the Qur'anic teachings in their lifestyles. In *Nahjul Balagha*<sup>3</sup> we read that Imam 'Ali (a) says Prophet Muhammad (s) came with a light to be followed. It is the Qur'an. If you ask it to speak it won't do so; but I will tell you about it. This means that the Qur'an is *Imam as-Sakit* (the leader and guide who is silent) and the Ahlul Bayt are *Imam an-Natiq* (the leader and guide who speaks).

The special relation of the Ahlul Bayt with the Qur'an can further be explained in the light of Qur'anic verses and Hadith from the infallible Imams. The Qur'an says, **But none knows its<sup>4</sup> interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge (3:7).** In another verse the Qur'an advises the Muslims to ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know" (16:43 and 21:7). In *Usule Kafi*<sup>5</sup> we come across many sayings from the Ma'sumin that both, **those firmly rooted in knowledge and the People of Remembrance** are none other than the Ahlul Bayt. We quote one hadith each for the above two verses. Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) says, **We are the ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge, we know the true interpretation of it.** On the Ayats 16:43 and 21:7 Imam Muhammad Baqir (a) said, **The Messenger of Allah (s) said: 'I am the Remembrance, and the Imams are the People of Remembrance.'**

We end our discussion on the distinctive relationship of the Ahlul Bayt with the Qur'an by quoting Imam Ali (a) from *Nahjul Balagha*. He says, **We, the Ahlul Bayt possess the doors of wisdom and light of governance.** The summary of our lesson is: i) The Ahlul Bayt, i.e. Bibi Fatima and the twelve Imams, according to the Qur'an are free from all kinds of impurities; and ii) They are the most knowledgeable to interpret the Qur'an appropriately as the Prophet himself would have done.

#### Notes:

1. This part of verse 33:33 of the Qur'an is known as *Ayatut Tatheer* because it says about the *Taharat* (purification) of the Ahlul Bayt.
2. The two main sources of the Islamic Shi'ah law (*Shari'ah*) are: The Qur'an and the Hadith and Sunnah (the sayings and practices) of the Ma'sumin (a).

3. The book *Nahjul Balagha* is the collection of Imam 'Ali's sermons, letters, wills, and sayings. It was compiled by Ash-Sharif al-Radhi (d. 406 A.H.).
4. This sentence is the continuation of verse 3:7 which we first quoted in lesson 3. Here "it" refers to the allegorical and unclear verses.
5. The book *Usule Kafi* is one of the well known books of Hadiths of Ma'sumin. It was compiled by Shaykh Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-KULAYNI (d.329 A.H.)

### QUESTIONS

1. Write three reasons why the Ahlul Bayt (a) are the most worthy of interpreting the Qur'an correctly.
2. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to love the Ahlul Bayt. Find this verse from the Qur'an and write it.
3. Memorize the Arabic text of Ayatut Tatheer.

### ASSIGNMENT

Go through the text of the Qur'an and try to find out how the text is divided into small sections. Are these sections equal in length?

## LESSON 5

### DIVISIONS IN THE QUR'AN

In order to familiarize with the contents of the Qur'an, we need to know how the Qur'an is divided into various parts, and what the basis of these divisions are. The following lesson will cover this aspect of Qur'anic study.

When discussing about divisions in the Qur'an we can say that there are two types of division: primary division and secondary division. Each of these types have various units of division within them. Before we study these units, we will first define the terms primary division and secondary division.

By primary division we mean the original division of the Qur'an into surats and ayats. This division has been there since the time of the compilation of the Qur'an. The secondary division, on the other hand, refers to that division which was introduced later on by Muslim scholars to facilitate the reading and understanding of the Qur'an. We will learn about the secondary division in the next lesson, *Insha Allah*.

### THE PRIMARY DIVISION

The division of the Qur'an into Ayats and Surats and their arrangement was done under the direct supervision of Prophet Muhammad (s). The surats and ayats are divided into unequal sizes. In Lesson 2, we were introduced with the terms Aya and Sura. Now, we study a little more about them. First, let us read some verses which use the terms Aya and Sura.

### The terms *Aya* and *Sura* in the Qur'an

There are many Qur'anic verses which have used the word *Aya* and its plural, *Ayaat*. Sometimes they refer to other signs and communications of God, and sometimes to Qur'anic verses. In verse 16:101 we come across the word *Aya*: **And We change an *Aya* for another *Aya*, and Allah knows best what He reveals.** God says He knows best why He changes one verse for another; however, all these verse are from Him. In 3:100, the term *Ayaat*, plural of *Aya*<sup>1</sup> is used: **How can you disbelieve, when Allah's *Ayaat* are read to you, and amongst you is His Apostle?** If people were to reflect with a clear mind they would see that the verses of the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet are clear signs of God; they would not then disbelieve.

As for the word *Sura* we quote 2:23: **And if you are in doubt concerning that which We have revealed to Our servant (Prophet Muhammad), then (O Disbelievers) produce a *Sura* like it.** Here, God challenges the disbelievers to come forward and produce one chapter that is similar to a *sura* of the Qur'an.

In 11:13, plural of *sura*, *Suwar*<sup>2</sup>, is used: **Or they say: He (Prophet Muhammad) has invented it (the Qur'an). Say (O, Our Apostle to them): Bring ten *Suwar* like it, and invite everyone you can (for assistance) besides Allah, if you are truthful.** This verse is similar to the previous one, except that in this the challenge is to produce ten *surats*. God initially challenged the disbelievers in Mecca to bring ten chapters like the *suwar* of the Qur'an, which they could not. The challenge then was reduced to only one *sura*, in Medina.<sup>3</sup>

### The *Aya*

There are 6,285 *ayaat* in the Qur'an. All *ayaat* are not same in length: They vary from being a single letter, *Sad* (38:1), a two-lettered word, *Yaseen* (36:1), a word only, *Mudhammatan* (55:64), to over half a page (2:282). This is the longest *aya*, made up of about thirty lines and it is almost eight times the size of *Suratut Tawhid*.

The term '*Aya*' means various things: a sign, miracle, wonder, marvel, model. All these meanings are true for this unit of the Qur'an. The word implies that each and every phrase or sentence of the Qur'an is a sign and mark towards the *Sirat al-Mustaqim*, the straight path (1:5), for which a Muslim always aims. The term further suggests that the phrases or sentences in the Qur'an are miracles and marvels of the Almighty God.

In Lesson 2, it was mentioned that the word 'verse' was an inappropriate translation of the Qur'anic *aya*. According to *The Oxford Dictionary* a 'verse' means: "one of the short numbered divisions of a chapter in the Bible." Verse also means a line in a poetry. None of these meanings convey what the word *aya* means. Also, as we saw above, an *aya* is not always the shortest division of the Qur'an<sup>4</sup>.

### The Sura

There are 114 surats in the Holy Qur'an. Like ayats, these are of unequal lengths. The shortest sura is *Al-Kawthar* (108) composed of three short ayats, all of which can be written in a single line. The longest sura is *Al-Baqarah* (2), which has 286 ayats and which covers one-twelfth of the entire Qur'an. All surats, except *Suratut Tawba* (9), begin with the phrase *Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem* (In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful). *Suratun Naml* (27) has two *Bismillahs*: at the beginning and in the aya number 30. This means that altogether there are 114 *Bismillahs* in the Qur'an.

The word 'chapter' means: "division of a book." In most cases this division is made on the basis of subject matter or length of material. In the Qur'an a sura can contain various subjects (e.g. in majority of the long surats), may repeat subjects already covered in other surats, or may emphasize repeatedly a concept already mentioned earlier. *Suratu Maryam* (19), for instance, talks about the miraculous birth of Nabi Yayha (John) already discussed in *Suratu Aali Imraan*(3). The verse *Fabi Ayyi A'laai Rabbikuma Tukadhdhiban* (Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you two deny?) in *Suratur Rahman* (55) is repeated 31 times. Thus, we can say that 'chapter' is also not an appropriate rendering of the word sura.<sup>5</sup>

As for how an aya and a sura are indicated in the Qur'an, we will cover that in the lesson: LOCATING AN AYA IN THE QUR'AN, *Insha Allah*.

### Notes:

1. Sometimes we will use 'Ayats' to indicate plural of Aya and sometimes the word 'Ayaat'.
2. Sometimes this word and sometimes 'Surats' will be used to show the plural of sura.
3. God willing, the discussion on the Qur'anic challenge will follow in future lessons.
4. Because of their popular use, we may sometimes use the words 'verse' & 'chapter' in our lessons.
5. Since many original words are used to describe various Qur'anic concepts, we suggest that the words Aya and Sura should be used without being translated into other languages. If the scholars were to abide by this practice a time would come when these words would find their place in foreign dictionaries also.

### QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between the primary and secondary divisions in the Qur'an?
2. What do the terms Aya and Sura mean?
3. Give two reasons why the Qur'an repeats itself in some instances.
4. The number of Surats and the number of *Bismillahs* in the Qur'an are the same. Explain.

### ASSIGNMENT

Apart from the Qur'an being divided into Ayats and Surats, which other divisions can you find in it?

## LESSON 6

## SECONDARY DIVISION OF THE QUR'AN

Many Muslims since the time of the Holy Prophet have given close attention to the Qur'an due to the veneration they felt for the word of God. Added to this, the Ma'sumin (a) repeatedly advised people to read and memorize the Qur'an. This made the Muslims read the passages from the Qur'an regularly. *Tilawah* (Qur'an reading) became a part of daily Islamic rituals. Some read it after the daily prayers, some before sleeping, while others fitted *Tilawah* into their daily schedules; all aiming to complete the reading of the entire Holy Book. To facilitate this, the Muslim scholars divided the Qur'an into various equal parts. This type of division is what we call the secondary division of the Qur'an.

The secondary division is mainly based on the time one may take to complete the recitation of the Qur'an. Thus, it is a division into parts of equal sizes. The subject matter, the length of surats, or the number of surats and ayats have nothing to do with this division. For instance, a new *sipara*, a unit of the secondary division, may begin at the beginning of a sura (e.g. 30th Sipara begins with the sura of 'Ammah), anywhere in the middle of a sura (e.g. the second sipara begins with verse 142 of *al-Baqara*), or right after the first aya as illustrated below. However, divisions into *Ruku's* (sometimes referred to as *Makrah*) is based on subject matter and the size of a sura.

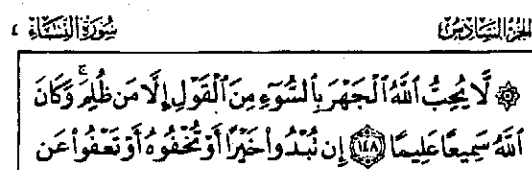
To illustrate the division into siparas, we present the following quotes from the text<sup>1</sup> of the Qur'an.

## Units of the Secondary Division

*Juz' or Sipara*<sup>2</sup> is the one thirtieth part of the Qur'an. Any Muslim wishing to complete the *tilawah* of the Holy Qur'an in one month (30 days) may do so by reading a *Juz'* or *Sipara* daily. Most prints of the Qur'an adapt one or all of the following three popular methods to indicate the beginning of a *Sipara*:

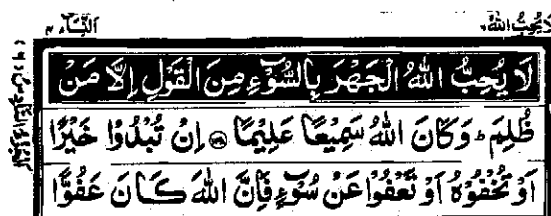
i) The "header" would read, for instance, *Juz'us Sadis* (i.e. the 6th *Juz'*)<sup>4</sup>. See Figure 1, on the right.

ii) The first line of a *sipara* is written on a black background<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 2, on next page).



iii) The first one or two words of the *Sipara* appears on the header of all the pages of that *Sipara* or *Juz'*. In the following quote the words *La Yuhibbullahu* followed by the

number 6 (٦) appears on the header, the first line is in black background, and the indication *Juz'us Sadis* is written on the top left corner.



Half of a Juz' or Sipara is *Nisf*. This unit is for those who aim at completing the Qur'an reading in two months. Half of *Nisf* is *Rub'*, i.e. quarter of a Sipara. This, of course, is to facilitate the entire reading in four months. One-fourth of a Juz' is also sometimes referred to as *Hizb* in some Qur'ans.

A *Manzil* is one seventh of the Qur'an. This is for those who achieve the reading of the whole Qur'an in a week.

As mentioned earlier many surats contain several subjects. Muslim scholars have divided each sura into a number of sections or paragraphs<sup>5</sup> known as *Ruku'*. This is indicated by the letter '*Ayn*' (ع) in the margin of the Qur'an. The letter carries with it three numbers specifying numbers of Ruku's and verses completed at that point in that sura and sipara<sup>6</sup>. However, its use is not that significant.

#### Notes:

1. Since the Qur'an in its original form is in Arabic language, references in Arabic will be considered as coming from the text of the Qur'an.
2. Juz' is an Arabic word and Sipara is in Persian (Farsi).
3. Our observations indicate that this method is found in Qur'ans printed outside the Middle Eastern countries, for e.g. in the Qur'ans from Pakistan and India.
4. In the Qur'ans printed in the Arab world, e.g. Damascus or Cairo, this is found, perhaps, because they can easily read and understand this indication.
5. For unknown reasons the Qur'an printed in the Middle East do not display this unit of division.
6. The '*Ayn*', indicating end of a Ruku', has three numbers: one on its top, one in its center and the one below it. The number on top indicates number of Ruku's completed in the current sura. The bottom number shows number of Ruku's completed in the sipara, and the number in the 'stomach' of '*Ayn*' stands for number of Ayaat in the Ruku' just completed.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Write the English translation of 4:148 which forms the first aya of the 6th sipara.
2. Which siparas begin with the beginning of a sura?
3. Find out the beginning of each of the Manzils.

#### ASSIGNMENT

We are told that the name of the Holy Prophet is only found in the following four verses: 3:144, 33:40, 47:2, & 48:29. See if you can find 'Muhammad' written in these ayats.



## LESSON 7

## HOW TO LOCATE AN AYA OF THE QUR'AN

In the last two lessons we learnt about primary and secondary divisions in the Qur'an. Division into Ayats and Surats is the primary division because these existed right from the time of the compilation of the Qur'an. The units of secondary division are Manzil, Juz' (Sipara), Nisf, Rub' (or Hizb), and Ruku' which were introduced into the Qur'an at a later stage, mainly to facilitate the reading of the Holy Book and sometimes to divide long surats in different subject matters.

Also covered in the last lesson was the identification of the secondary division, especially how one can know the beginning of a Sipara. Now we will look at the identification of the units of the primary division. We will study what indicates the beginning of a sura and an aya. This will help us in locating a particular aya of the Qur'an when an exact reference is given.

The original text of the Qur'an is in Arabic. Many such Qur'ans are printed in Arab countries like Syria, Hejaz (Saudi Arabia) and Egypt. We are also familiar with Qur'ans printed in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and India. This means that we have to familiarize with numbers in Arabic, Persian (Farsi) and Urdu<sup>1</sup>. Some English translations of the Qur'an use Roman numerals for sura numbers. Thus, this lesson will also cover learning of Roman numbers to 114-the total number of surats in the Qur'an.

## The Numerology in Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Roman

Numbers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	50	100	114
Arabic	١	٢	٣	٤	٥	٦	٧	٨	٩	١٠	٥٠	١٠٠	١١٤
Persian	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹	۱۰	۵۰	۱۰۰	۱۱۴
Urdu	۱	۲	۳	۴	۵	۶	۷	۸	۹	۱۰	۵۰	۱۰۰	۱۱۴
Roman	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	L	C	CIV

From the table above please take note of the following:

\* Although Arabic is written from right to left the numbers follow the convention similar to that of English, i.e. they are written from left to right. Hence 231 is written as ٢٣١ and not as ١٣٢.

\* Similar convention is used for Persian and Urdu numbers.

\* For Roman numerals take the larger number and what follows it is added to the value and what precedes it is subtracted. Thus, for e.g., L equals 50 and X is 10; LX means 60 and XL means 40. Similarly, XC means 90 and 110 is written as CX. However, 99 is written as XCIX.

### Identification of a Sura and Aya

All surats, except sura 9, *At-Tawba* (or *al-Baraat*), begin with a *Bismilah*. Its text is: As mentioned earlier the verse means: **In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**Merciful.** According to the school of the Ahlul Bayt (a) the *Bismilah* is an integral part of the sura where it is found. This is why when we read a sura in *Salat* (prayers) we must begin with the *Bismilah*. However, it is only counted as the first aya in *Suratul Fatiha* (or *al-Hamd*), and no number is assigned to it in other surats. Thus, the first aya of *Suratul Baqarah* is *Alif Lam Mim* despite the fact that *Bismilah* is a part of this sura.

Since the 9th sura does not begin with a *Bismilah*, a bold line is drawn at the end of sura 8 to indicate that it has ended. Such lines or other designed borders are also used by some prints of the Qur'an to show the beginning of a new sura. As mentioned in Lesson 5 aya 30 of *Suratun Naml* (27) consists of a *Bismilah* and hence it is NOT the beginning of the next sura.

We have learnt that many Qur'anic texts display the number of the sipara on the right-hand corner of a page. Similarly, many Qur'ans indicate the current sura on the left-hand corner of the page<sup>2</sup>.

In most Qur'anic texts an aya or verse of the Qur'an ends with a small circle, ○ containing an Arabic numeral indicating the number of that verse. In English translations, the aya number precedes the verse. The following aya and its translation clarify the above point.

SURAH LXXIX	Those Who Pull Out	الْمُزْمِعَاتُ	عَمْرَ ٣٠
41. Then surely the garden—that is the abode.		قَانَ الْجَنَّةِ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى ○	
42. They ask you about the hour, when it will come.		يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسُهَا ○	
43. About what! You are one to remind of it.		فَيَمُرَّ بَيْنَكَ وَيَمُرُّ مِّنْ ذِكْرِهَا ○	
44. To your Lord is the goal of it.		إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهَىٰ ○	

Having known the identification of the beginning of a sura, its name and number and the aya number, one can easily locate the required aya or verse.

#### Notes:

1. One should know up to number 286 in these 3 languages as it is the highest number of the aya in the Qur'an; it is the last verse of *al-Baqarah*.
2. See Figures 1 & 2 in Lesson 6 for this indication.

### QUESTIONS

1. Write the Arabic, Persian and Urdu equivalents for numbers: 12, 35, 67, 89, 146, 173 & 202.
2. Take an English translation of the Qur'an and write the following verses: XCIII:1, LXIX:2 and XV:99.
3. What are the names of Surah numbers: LXXXVIII, XLVI, 19, ٧٨, ١١٤, ٢٢.

### ASSIGNMENT

Get different prints of the Qur'an from friends and relatives. Do you have the same title appearing on all the prints?

## LESSON 8

### DIFFERENT NAMES OF THE QUR'AN

Qur'an, the last heavenly book, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (s) became immensely popular with the Muslims. Apart from receiving guidance through its contents, Muslims also read it to develop their spirituality. They kept it with them during their journeys hoping to have safety from God through it. Muslims also believed that in the Qur'an there are a cures for many physical, psychological and spiritual diseases.

Due to its numerous functions, the Qur'an got many different names. Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala*, Himself refers to the revealed text by different names. The Ma'sumin, *'alayhimus salaam*, also used different names and adjectives in describing the Qur'an<sup>1</sup>. All this resulted in about 55 different names and adjectives for the Qur'an. In this lesson we will cover a few of the common names and some adjectives in Arabic and their meanings in English.

Before we proceed let us also discuss the importance of learning some of the popular names. The following two reasons may justify knowing the different names of the Qur'an:

i) References in the Qur'an-when someone wishes to study as to what the Qur'an says about itself, he has to be aware of the different names of the Qur'an. This way he would understand the significance of the scripture<sup>2</sup> in the Qur'an.

ii) Various Functions of the Qur'an-by knowing different names of the Qur'an a person can realize the different ways in which the Qur'an is used. For instance, one of the names of the Qur'an is *Al-Muhaymin* (5:48), the protector. To benefit from this function many Muslims display Qur'anic verses and passages on stickers and wall hangers.

### Names appearing in the Text

The Qur'an refers to itself in many places. However, it does not always employ the

word 'Qur'an' when talking about itself. Some of the names appearing in the text are:  
 1) **Al<sup>3</sup>-Qur'an**. The most popular name of the holy text. It appears 58 times in the holy text. It means 'the reading' or 'the recitation' derived from the root word *Qara'a* (to read)<sup>4</sup>.

2) **Al-Kitab**. The name which appears most in the text. It means 'the book.' It is mentioned 230 times. However, the word does not always refer to the Qur'an. Sometimes it means other heavenly books<sup>5</sup>.

3) **Al-Furqan**. It means 'the distinction' since it differentiates between truth and falsehood.

4) **Adh-Dhikr**, meaning 'the reminder.' The Qur'an repeatedly reminds us, amongst other things, of the Greatness of the Almighty God, and His creations and favours, the temporary nature of the worldly life, and the life hereafter.

5) **At-Tanzil**, meaning 'the revelation.' Qur'an is a book revealed from Allah, the Creator, to His messenger, Muhammad bin 'Abdullah.

6) **Al-Huda**. It means 'the guidance,' as the Qur'an guides people to the right path.

In the following table we enlist different names of the Qur'an, their English equivalents and the Qur'anic references where the names appear. It should be noted that a name may appear several times in the Qur'an but we have given only one reference per name. Also, we have dropped the use of article 'al' before every name.

Name	Meaning	Ref	Name	Meaning	Ref
Bayan	Explanation	3:137	Kitab	Book	2:2
Burhan	Proof	4:175	Maw'idha	Admonition	10:57
Dhikr	Reminder	36:11	Nur	Light	4:174
Furqan	Distinction	2:185	Qur'an	Reading	2:185
Hadith	Speech	18:6	Rahmah	Mercy	10:57
Haq	Truth	10:94	Shifaa	Cure	10:57
Huda	Guidance	2:2	Tanzil	Revelation	36:5

### Adjectives of the Qur'an

The Qur'an has several names because of its wide popularity and the numerous benefits which Muslims have gained from it. The Qur'an has also earned many adjectives which Muslims like to add to any Qur'anic name, but particularly to the name 'Qur'an.' Thus we read, on the covers of Qur'an, titles such as *Qur'anul Hakim* (The Wise Qur'an), *Qur'anul Karim* (The Noble Qur'an), *Qur'anul Majid* (The Glorious Qur'an), and *Kitabul Mubin* (The Manifest Book). These adjectives describe the qualities of the Qur'an and are also used to show reverence for the scripture.

The following table gives the most popular titles, their meanings and the Qur'anic references.

Adjective	Meaning	Ref	Adjective	Meaning	Ref
'Ali	Sublime	43:4	Karim	Noble	56:77
'Aziz	Mighty	41:41	Majid	Glorious	50:1
Hakim	Wise	36:2	Mubin	Manifest	12:1

Before we end this lesson it should be known that the adjective 'holy' is used in English to indicate the Qur'an or other scriptures, such as the *Holy Book* or *Holy Qur'an*. Its exact Arabic equivalent is not found in the Qur'an.

#### Notes:

1. Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib when talking about the excellence of the Qur'an, refers to it by various names. He said: the Qur'an is *An-Nasih*, the adviser that never deceives; *Al-Hadi*, the leader that never misguides; and *Al-Muhaddith*, the narrator that never lies (*Nahjul Balagha*, Sermon 175).
2. It means heavenly revelation or Divine book.
3. *Al* in Arabic means 'the.' Many of the names of the Qur'an have this article attached, making it a definite noun, so as to indicate that it refers to the Qur'an.
4. Other scholars say that the word 'Qur'an' is derived from the root *qarana*, meaning 'to connect, to link together'. Thus, surats and ayahs are connected to each other into the Qur'an. There are also other interpretations, but 'Allama Tabatabai in *Al-Mizan* when commenting to aya 2:185 writes, "the Qur'an is the name of the book sent down to His Prophet Muhammad (s), because it is read and recited...This name is used for the whole book as well as for its parts"
5. The Jews and the Christians are sometimes referred to as *Ahlul Kitab*, i.e. people of the book.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Qur'an receive so many different names?
2. Write all the names of the Qur'an contained in ayats 2:185 and 10:57 in Arabic script and their meanings in English. What do these verses say about the Qur'an?
6. Translate the following into English: *Nurul Mubin*, *Kitabul Hakim*, *Burhanul 'Aziz*, *Qur'anul Karim*, and *Bayanul Majid*.

#### ASSIGNMENT

Study the names of the various surats of the Qur'an and try to find out how some of these have received their names.

## LESSON 9

## HOW THE SURATS DERIVE THEIR NAMES

Several times in previous lessons we learnt that there are 114 surats in the Glorious Qur'an. We also covered that the grouping of ayats into surats (or suwar) and their arrangements were done during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s). Also, whenever we referred to a sura we mentioned its number and its name. For instance, sura 36 is *Suratu Yasin*, and *Al-Baqara* is the second sura. A sura is thus identified either by its number<sup>1</sup>, by its name or by both name and number. In this lesson we plan to cover the bases of naming the surats.

Before we learn that, let us tackle a historical question: The surats were arranged in their present order during the lifetime of the Prophet. Were the names also given to the surats during the Prophet's time? The question can be rephrased as: Is the naming of surats as old as their arrangement or were they named later on for the convenience of identification. Muslim scholars have covered this issue very briefly without giving the time or events related with the naming of the Qur'anic surats. However, what we know is that some of the surats were already being referred to during the time of Holy Prophet by the very names they have today. Some of the Prophetic Hadiths have referred to surats *Al-Baqara*(2), *Ali Imran*(3), *Hud*(11) by their names<sup>2</sup>, showing that these names existed during the Prophet's time.

The following are the main bases which have been used to derive a name for a sura. In some cases more than one basis may have been used for the naming of a sura (e.g. *Al-Munafiqun*, 63). Also, some surats have more than one name.

1. **Position**-one sura derives its name from the position it occupies in the Qur'an. This is the first sura which is known as *Al-Fatihatul Kitab* (shortened as *Fatiha*), i.e. the Opening of the Book.
2. **From the first verse**-many surats have derived their names from a word<sup>3</sup> which appears in the first aya of the sura. E.g. include *Taha*(20), *Fatir* (35), & *Yasin*(36).
3. **Subject covered**-some surats take their names from a particular subject or an event which is covered in it. The sura may cover many other subject matters (e.g. *Al-Baqara*, 2, which talks about the event of the cow as well other subjects) or predominantly discuss what the name indicates (e.g. *Yusuf*, 12, in which the life of prophet Yusuf is narrated). Other examples: *Al-Jumu'ah* (62) talks about Friday prayers, *Al-Munafiqun*(63)<sup>4</sup> discusses the attitude of the hypocrites.
4. **A Peculiar word**-sometimes a peculiar or an uncommon word occurs in a sura and the sura is identified by this word. In 29:41 Allah likens false beliefs with the web of a spider (*ankabut* in Arabic). the sura is thus known as *Ankabut*. Other examples are *Ar-Ra'ad*, The Thunder(13); *Al-Hijr*, The Rock (15); *Az-Zumr*, The Troops (39); and *Az-Zukhruf*, The Ornaments of Gold (43).

**Surats which have more than one name**

Some surats are referred to by more than one name. This is either because of its popularity (e.g. *Al-Fatiha* which has several names ) or of a combination of bases.

Sura #	Popular Name	Other Names
1	Al-Fatiha (The Opening)	Al-Hamd(Praise), Ummul Qur'an (essence of the Qur'an)
9	At-Tawbah( Repentance)	Al-Baraat (the Immunity)
17	Bani-Israil	Al-Israa(the Night journey)
35	Fatir (Originator)	Al-Malaikah (the Angels)
40	Mu'min (Believer)	Ghafir-Forgiver
41	Fussilat (Expounded)	HaMim Sajdah (H M Prostrate)
76	Al-Insan (The Human)	Ad-Dahr (the Period)
96	Al-'Alaq (The Clot)	Iqra' (Read)
109	Al-Kafirun(The Disbelievers)	Al-Jahd (The Denial, Rejection)
111	Al-Masad (The Palm Fibre)	Al-Lahab (the Flame)

Before ending this lesson<sup>5</sup> it should be known that *Suratul Falaq* (113) and *Suratun Nas* (114) together are known as *Al-Mu'awwadhatayn* (the two pleas of seeking refuge) as both the surats begin with the phrase *Qul A'udhubi Rabbi...* (Say! I seek refuge in the Lord of...).

**Notes:**

1. The number by which we identify a sura is the number found in the Qur'an wherein the arrangement of surats is traditional. The chronological arrangement (i.e. the arrangement of surats in the order they were revealed) differs from the traditional arrangement.
2. Said the Holy Prophet (s): The Sura of Hud has made my hairs go grey because of the verse, 'Remain steadfast as you have been commanded.'
3. Sometimes a verb appears in the first aya so the sura would take the name from the noun of this verb. For instance in 17:1 the verb *asra* (to take on a night journey) occurs, but the name of the sura is *Al-Israa* (the night journey). The same is true for sura 66 (*At-Tahrim*).
4. The aya 63:1 contains the word *Al-Munafiqun* and the first eight ayats exhibit the deceptive nature of the hypocrites. A similar example is *Al-Zilzal* (99, the Earthquake). The first aya has the word 'zilzal' and the sura talks on the major earthquake to take place when the world ends.
5. See Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. He introduces every sura by mentioning the verse of that sura from which it derived its name.

## QUESTIONS

1. Take the last 10 surats of the Qur'an and find out:
  - a) from which verse in the sura have they derived their name?
  - b) Which of the four bases mentioned above apply in the naming of these surats?
2. Find 5 surats which have derived their names from the first word of the first verse.
3. Why do surats sometime have more than one name?

## ASSIGNMENT

You read the Qur'an regularly. What are some of the things you take into consideration before commencing the reading of the Qur'an.

## LESSON 10

## ETIQUETTE (ADAAB) OF RECITING THE HOLY QUR'AN

Recitation of the Qur'an should be done in a particular manner, as prescribed by the Qur'an itself and explained by the Ma'sumin (a). According to the Qur'an, its *Tilawah* or recitation has a right, and we should fulfill that right by using proper *Adaab* when reciting. Says Allah: **Those to whom We have given the book read it as it should be read; they believe in it. (2:121)**

Scholars have divided the Aadaab of recitation into two groups:

- 1) The External rules of physical conduct.
- 2) The Internal states of the mind of the recitor.

## EXTERNAL RULES

1. **Do Wudhu**- Says the Holy Qur'an, **None can touch it (the Qur'an) save the purified ones (56:79)**. It is haram to touch the writings of the Qur'an without wudhu. Even when just reciting without touching the writings, it is *mustahab* (recommended) to do wudhu since the act is an act of worship. Also, according to the Holy Prophet (s), one should clean the mouth before recitation. A hadith of the Prophet says, **Your mouths are the pathways of Qur'an, so make them pleasant by brushing.**
2. **Seek protection of Allah from the Shaytan**- Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an. **And when you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytan (16:98)**. Shaytan tries to mislead us and whispers evil thoughts to us, so when reciting Qur'an we seek refuge from this.
3. **Recite it with Tartil**- Says the Almighty, **and intone the Qur'an in a regulated tone (73:4)**. Qur'an must be recited in a good voice with rhythm rather than read plainly. A Hadith of the Holy Prophet (s) says, **Every thing has a decoration, and the decoration of the Qur'an is a beautiful voice.**
4. **Recite slowly**- Says Allah, **Do not move your tongue with it (Qur'an) to make haste with it. (75:16)** Qur'an should be recited in slow tones with each word being pronounced clearly. In explaining the verse of Tartil, the Prophet told his followers not to be concerned about finishing the sura when reciting Qur'an. The aim of recitation is



not to finish as many surahs as possible.

5. Do Sajdah where it is *wajib* (obligatory)- Says Allah regarding the disbelievers that **when the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not prostrate** (84:21). At four places (see the last part in this lesson on "About Wajib Sajda") in the Qur'an it is wajib to do sajdah and we must be aware of these places.

#### INTERNAL STATES OF THE MIND

1. Be Humble-Says the Almighty, **Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, you would certainly have seen it falling down (humbling itself), splitting asunder because of the awe of Allah** (59:21). The Prophet (s) has said that the best recitor of Qur'an is he who is humble when reciting and realizes his own insignificance.

2. Soften your heart with the remembrance of Allah-Says Allah, **and (the Qur'an) makes the flesh of those who fear their Lord, creep; then their flesh and hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah** (39:23). When reciting Qur'an, the heart should be full of the remembrance of Allah and empty of all other concerns. Only then would the reciting have the desired effect of increasing faith<sup>1</sup>.

3. Interact with the Qur'an-According to the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a), it is important to react to the verses of Qur'an when reciting. He tells us to ponder over the verses, take hope from the verses of reward and fear the descriptions of punishment. Take lessons from the stories narrated and take heed of His warnings. This interaction with the Qur'an makes the recitation a lively, progressive action and would serve as a reminder to guide the recitor.

#### About Wajib Sajda

In the entire Qur'an there are 15 places where reading or listening closely to the reading of these phrases would necessitate performing of a sajdah (prostration)<sup>2</sup>. According to *fiqh* (jurisprudence) as taught by the Ma'sumin (a), prostration is mustahab at eleven<sup>3</sup> places and wajib at four places .

A sura which contains a wajib sajdah is known as *Suratul 'Azeema* (sura with compulsory sajdah). Together, the four surats are known as *Suratul 'Azaim* (plural of 'Azeema). It is necessary that we know exactly where these phrases are situated in the Qur'an as many prints of the Qur'an do not differentiate between wajib and mustahab sajdahs<sup>4</sup>. The four places where sajdah is compulsory are:

Juz' #	Sura #	Sura Name	Ayat #
21	32	As-Sajda (The Prostration)	15
24	41	Ha Mim Sajda or Fussilat	37
27	53	An-Najm (The Star)	62
30	96	'Alaq or Iqra'	19

**Notes:**

1. Says Allah, when describing the believers, "and when the revelations of Allah are recited unto them they increase in faith" (8:2).
2. For detailed rules regarding this sajda refer to the books of Fiqh. Briefly: this sajda only requires *niyyat* (intention); there is no need of facing *Qibla* or being in *tahara* (purification of wudhu, ghusl or tayammum); reading of *Dhikr* is not wajib but one may read the dhikr which we read in the sajda of daily salat.
3. These are found in ayata: 7:206, 13:15, 16:50, 17:107, 19:58, 22:18, 22:77, 25:60, 27:26, 38:24 & 84:21. Note that sura 22 alone has 2 places of sajda.
4. This is because some Muslim sects believe that all 15 are wajib or all are mustahab.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Why should we read the Qur'an in a particular manner?
2. List five rules of physical conduct when doing the tilawah of the Qur'an.
3. What should be your internal states of mind when reading the Qur'an?

**ASSIGNMENT**

List at least 10 surats which begin with abbreviated letters such as *Alif Lam Mim, Ta Ha, Ha Mim & Ya Sin*.

**QUIZ 1**

*In His Name, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*

**QUESTIONS ON LESSONS 1 TO 5**

Question One: Choose the most correct answer by encircling either a, b, or c.

1. A Muslim's success in this world and the Hereafter lies in:  
a. Studying how to read the text of the Qur'an. b. Studying and following the Qur'an.  
c. Completing the recitation of the entire Qur'an.
2. "O my Lord! surely my people have treated this Qur'an as a forsaken thing." This Qur'anic quote:  
a. Refers to those Muslims who have ignored the Qur'an.  
b. Is Prophet's complain against non-Muslims who do not believe in the Qur'an as word of God. c. Reproaches enemies of Islam during the Prophet's time.
3. In verse 4:82 we read: "Will they not reflect upon the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found in it much discrepancies." We learn from it that:  
a. The whole Qur'an came to the Prophet as one book from God.  
b. Only by pondering over the contents of the Qur'an can one find irregularities in the Qur'an. c. The Qur'an is free from mistakes because it is from God.
4. The Holy Prophet (s) had appointed several scribes for:  
a. Writing all important events during Prophet's lifetime.

- b. Noting down the Qur'anic revelation received by him.
  - c. Writing everything said by the Prophet as the word of God.
5. If we understand the message of the Qur'an then we would:
- a. Go to Jannat (heaven).
  - b. Be able to appreciate it better.
  - c. Not need any other literature to practice Islam.
6. We read in 36:6 that the Prophet has been asked to "warn those people whose fathers were not warned." This type of verse is:
- a. Decisive, i.e. not requiring other verses to explain it.
  - b. That which has to be understood in line with other verses.
  - c. Incomplete in details, i.e. a Hadith would clarify it.
7. Several times the Qur'an declares Prophet Muhammad (s) as the:
- a. Greatest of all the Prophets.
  - b. Compiler of the Holy Qur'an.
  - c. Instructor of the Qur'an and wisdom.
8. In *Hadith ath-Thaqalayn* the Holy Prophet (a):
- a. Asked all Muslims to adhere to the Qur'an and his family.
  - b. Asked Shi'as only to take guidance from the Ahlul Bayt.
  - c. Appointed the Ahlul Bayt to interpret the Qur'an.
9. The Primary Division in the Qur'an refers to:
- a. Units which were there from the beginning.
  - b. Sipara & Juz'.
  - c. Small units such as Ayats.
10. There are 114 surats in the Holy Qur'an,
- a. But only 113 *Bismillahs*.
  - b. Each of which starts with a *Bismillah*.
  - c. All but one begin with a *Bismillah* and Sura 27 has two of it.

**Question Two: Match Numbers in Column A with letters in Column B.**  
(Number 11 is given as an example)

COLUMN A		No.-Let	COLUMN B
1. Division of a Book	1-	a.	A Sura
2. Saying from Ma'sumin	2-	b.	The Qur'an
3. An enclosure	3-	c.	Ayaat
4. A verse repeated 31 times	4-	d.	Nahjul Balagha
5. Book on collection of Hadith	5-	e.	A Chapter
6. Revealed to Nabi 'Isa	6-	f.	Ahlul Bayt
7. Plural of verses	7-	g.	Usule Kafi
8. A sign, miracle, marvel.	8-	h.	Hadith
9. Imam 'Ali's sayings	9-	i.	Suratur Rahman
10. Firmly Rooted in Knowledge	10-	j.	An Aya.

11. Imam as-Sakit

11-b

k.Injil

**Question Three: Say whether the following are TRUE or FALSE.**

1. An aya can never be longer than a sura.
2. The Qur'an is rich in providing the details on *'Ibadat*.
3. There are over six thousand verses in the Qur'an.
4. Only sura No. 9 does not begin with a *Bismillah*.
5. *'Alayhassalaam* is feminine for *'Alayhissalaam*.
6. All Muslims believe that the Ahlul Bayt are the best in interpreting the Qur'an.
7. The Holy Prophet's lifetime was from 570 to 632 C.E.
8. The Prophet advised Muslims to divide the Qur'an into *Siparas*.
9. When Meccans invented a sura they were asked by God to bring nine more surats to make ten surats like Qur'anic surats.
10. Whenever we read the word *Aya* or *Ayaat* in the Qur'an they refer to its verses.

**Question Four: Answer the following briefly (between 2 to 3 lines for each answer).**

1. Write any two benefits of studying the Qur'an as learnt in the Prophetic hadith to his companion, Ma'adh.
2. When you hear or say the Holy Prophet's name what phrase do you say? Write the arabic transliteration and its meaning in English.
3. Write a hadith from a Ma'sum to show that the Qur'an is from the Almighty God.
4. Write the meaning of *Suratut Tawhid* in English.
5. Write the translation of *Ayatut Taheer* (33:33).
6. When do you say *Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*, and what does it mean?
7. Give two reasons why the Qur'an repeats itself in some instances?

## QUIZ 2

*In His Name, the Exalted.*

### QUESTIONS FOR LESSONS 6,7 & 8.

**Question One: Choose the most correct answer by encircling a, b, c or d.**

1. Muslims have given close attention to the Qur'an because:
  - a. They have a special respect for the word of God
  - b. The Ma'sumin advised them to read and memorize the Qur'an
  - c. It is part of of their daily Islamic rituals
  - d. All of the above are correct.
2. The basis of the secondary division in the Qur'an are:
  - a. Their existence right from the time of compilation
  - b. Making long surats into short logical divisions and grouping short surats into siparas
  - c. Facilitating the reading and dividing long surats into different subject matters
  - d. None of the above are correct.

3. We should know different names of the Qur'an so that:
- One can know how often, and what the Qur'an says about itself
  - We can have a wider choice of referring to the divine revelation
  - We do not get confused when different prints of the Qur'an use different titles for the Qur'an
  - We can hang a poster consisting of different names to bring about God's blessings.
4. The word 'Qur'an' has different meanings but the most popular interpretation is :
- A book which connects ayat and surats of the Qur'an
  - Derived from the root word *qara'a* meaning 'to read'
  - A special name given to the scripture revealed to the Prophet
  - None of the above are correct.
5. *Bismilah...* is counted as the first verse in sura of:
- Al-Bara'at (#9),    b. Al-Fatiha (#1),    c. An-Naml (#27)
  - All surats except sura No.9 which begins without a Bismilah.

**Question Two:** Locate the following from the text of the Qur'an provided. (Please note that since there are limited number of Qur'ans you may proceed to Q.3 onwards and return to this question when the text is not being used by others.)

1. Manzil No.4 begins with which sura and ends with which?

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2. What is the name of sura No. 25? What does the name mean?

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3. How many surats are there in the 28th Sipara? What is the number and name of the first and last surats in this sipara?

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4. Write the word (name of some person) which is found in all the following four verses: 3:144, 33:40, 47:2, & 48:29. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The first word of 112:1 is *Qul*. Write the first word of the following verses: 55:1, 18:75, 32:29, XLVI:35, and CXIV:6.

---

**Question Three:** Assist the perplexed Br Karim by answering questions a, b & c.

Brother Karim visited an Islamic library in Istanbul, Turkey. On a shelf where different prints of the Qur'an were placed he selected five books. Although all the five books looked like the Qur'anic text, they had different titles on their covers. Karim was

puzzled and wrote down the titles for the selected books as follows:

1. Qur'anul Majid    2. Al-Bayan    3. Tanzilal 'Aziz
4. Kitabul Hakim    5. Dhikrur Rahman.

a) Why would the same text of the Qur'an have different names?

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b) What was Karim expecting to find written on all the covers of the selected books? \_\_\_\_\_

c) Translate for Karim the meanings of all the five titles.

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**Question Four:** Answer briefly (between 3 to 5 lines) the following on the back of page 1 of this question paper.

1. Write, at least, two ways how you would identify the beginning of a sipara in a Qur'anic text.
2. When reading the Qur'an how would you know that a new sura has begun? Is there any exception/s to this rule?
3. Which name of the Qur'an appears most in the text of the Qur'an? What does it mean? Does it always stand for the Qur'an whenever it appears in the text? If YES, why do you think it is mentioned over two hundred times in the text? If NO, what does it stand for apart from the Qur'an?

\* \* \*

## LESSON 11

## HURÛF AL-MUQATṬI'A

Many of us are familiar with the first verses of *Sûratul Baqara* (2) and *Sûratu Âli Imrân* (3) as they differ from other âyât. Both these verses are composed of independent Arabic letters *alif*, *lâm*, and *mîm*. These letters are found in the Holy Qur'ân at various places and are known as *Hurûf al-Muqatṭi'a*.

*Hurûf al-Muqatṭi'a* literally means 'cut off letters.' However, various books on the subject of the Qur'ân have translated *Hurûf al-Muqatṭi'a* as either 'independent letters', 'abbreviated letters' or 'symbolic letters'. All these translations are accepted as appropriate because of the various interpretations given by past Muslim scholars and commentators of the Qur'ân. In this lesson we will study some aspects of these abbreviated letters and see what their significance may be.

The following four points summarize many aspects of the *Hurûf al-Muqatṭi'a*:

- 1) They occur only in the Qur'ân and not in any other revealed books.
- 2) They always occur at the beginning of a sûra.
- 3) They form part of the Qur'ânic text and are always read along with other verses of the Qur'ân. In the '*Ilmut tajwîd*'<sup>2</sup> we find special rules of reading these with appropriate *madd* (lengthening).
- 4) Out of 114 sûrats only 29 sûrats begin with such letters. The following table shows the combinations of the *hurûf* and the sûra numbers where they occur:

Combination	Occurs in Sûra #	Combination	Occurs in Sûra #
آم	2,3,29,30,31,& 32	طس	27
المص	7	يس	36
الر	10,11,12,14,&15	م	38
المز	13	حم	40,41,43,44,45,& 46
كفيعص	19	حم عسق	42
طه	20	ان	50
طسم	26 and 28	ان	68

From the above table we observe the following:

- i) All together there are 14 different combinations of the symbolic letters;
- ii) The combinations are composed of either only one letter (e.g. *Qâf*), two letters (e.g. *Yâ-Sîn*), three letters (e.g. *Tâ-Sîn-Mîm*), four letters (e.g. *Alif-Lâm-Mîm-Râ*) or five letters (*Kâf-Hâ-Yâ-'ayn-Šâd*);
- iii) From 28 letters of Arabic alphabet only 14 have been employed in the making of these combinations.
- iv) Only in *Sûratush Shûrâ* (42) there are two combinations. All other sûrats have only one combination.

### Significance of Hurûf al-Muqattî'a

As pointed earlier scholars have given numerous interpretations of these symbolic letters. They ask and try to answer questions on the purpose and meaning of these letters. It is certain that, the Almighty Creator who is the Most Wise and All Knowing would never have revealed them to Prophet Muhammad (s) for no reason. Some of the interpretations are popular because it is believed that they originate from the Ma'sûmîn (a). We may derive the following significances:

a) The Qur'ân is a revealed message from Almighty Allâh. Various interpretations of these letters indicate that only the sender of the Qur'ân, Allâh *subhânahu wa ta'âlâ*, knows exactly what these letters mean and stand for<sup>3</sup>.

b) The Qur'ân remains unchanged and unaltered since the time of the Holy Prophet (s). The abbreviated letters which has baffled interpretation for centuries has not been removed from or changed in the Qur'ânic text.

c) People should not claim that they understand everything what is there in the Qur'ân. Only those who are selected by the Almighty are in a position to understand and interpret correctly the Qur'ânic message. These selected people are the Holy Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt (a)<sup>4</sup>.

Before we end this lesson, a brief explanation as to why we have avoided various interpretations and explanations of the hurûf provided by scholars of different Muslim sects. This has been done deliberately. Getting into interpretations would make the lesson lengthy and make it necessary to discuss a variety of interpretations which are, in many cases, based on peoples imaginations. However, it is said that there are some hadîths on these interpretations received on the authority of the Holy prophet and other Imâms<sup>5</sup>.

#### Notes:

1. Other translations are: 'mystic letter' and 'letter-symbols.'
2. This is: the science of the correct recitation of the Qur'an. Lengthening of many of these independent letters is more than normal. *Lâm*, for instance, is read with a madd twice that is applied to long vowels.
3. Some scholars believe that the hurûf provide a good example of *Al-Mutashâbihât* (allegorical verses) mentioned in 3:7. Please see the lesson, UNDERSTANDING THE QURÂN.
4. Refer to lesson, AHLUL BAYT AND THE QURÂN.
5. *Sûratu Maryam* (19) begins with the event of Hadrat Yahyâ (a). Since some birth and death events of Yahyâ (a) and Imâm Husayn (a) are similar some scholars say that the five hurûf in the sûra are understood to mean: Kâf=Kerbala, the place where the tragedy took place; Hâ=*Halaka*, i.e. annihilation of Imâm Husayn and his supporters; Yâ=Yazîd, the Umayyad leader who ordered the massacre; 'Ayn=*Afash*, the thirst faced by Husayn's army; Sâd=*Sabr*, patience faced by the Imâm and his helpers.

#### QUESTIONS

1. Which combination of hurûf is repeated most in the Qur'ânic text?
2. How many combinations, including those repeated, are there in the Qur'ân?
3. List the 14 letters used in the formation of Hurûf al-Muqattî'a.
4. What is the importance of Hurûf al-Muqattî'a in the text?

ASSIGNMENT Open the text of the Qur'ân and at the beginning of every sûra you will see either the word *makkiya* or *madaniya* written, indicating the place of revelation. Select tens sûrats each which were revealed in Mecca and in Medina.



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