

***The Qur'an***  
***the final revelation***

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Second Impression

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## **Authenticity of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an consists of the rhythmic verses, phrases, sentences, and chapters relayed by the Prophet as they were revealed to him by God over a 23-year period, and which he proclaimed as the everlasting miracle of his Prophethood. He challenged the Arabs of his time who doubted its Divine origin, as well as all unbelieving Arabs and non-Arabs who would come later.

God revealed His books, among them the Pages of Abraham, the Torah, the Psalms, and the Bible in their original forms, to all earlier Prophets in exactly the same way. We do not know the names of the books given to other Prophets, and thus cannot say with certainty whether they were originally revealed books or not.

These earlier Divine books were sent down in now-dead languages that only a few people today claim to understand. Given this, it would be virtually impossible to understand these books correctly, or to interpret and implement their injunctions, even if they had been retained in their original and unadulterated forms. Furthermore, as the original texts of most earlier Divine books have been lost over time, today only their translations exist. Obviously a translation can never be the same as the original. Therefore, even if they had not been corrupted, we could not say that we have these texts in their original form. The Qur'an, on the other hand, exists in its original Arabic, which is spoken and understood by millions of people.

However, the Qur'an was veiled by the neglect and un-

faithfulness of its “friends” and the pitiless hostility of its “enemies.” As a result, the rapacious appetite of modern Prometheus of scientific materialism has engulfed the globe like a poisonous octopus. After a few centuries of misery in its clutches, the Muslim world felt a collective need to return to the Qur’an. Once it started to do so, it found that this Word of God is as fresh as when it was first revealed and is “growing younger as time gets older.”

### Defining the Qur’an

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***The Qur’an is “growing younger as time gets older.”***

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According to most scholars, the word *Qur’an* is an infinitive form of the verb *qa-ra-e* (reading or reciting) and so literally means something recited by adding letters and words to one another. Others say it comes from another infinitive, *qar’u* (to collect), and so means “that which collects.” ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas narrates that *qur’an* in: *It is for Us to collect it and promulgate it (75:17)* means “being collected and established in the heart.” For this reason, some assert that this Divine Book is called the Qur’an because it collects and contains the “fruit” of all previous Scriptures and knowledge.

According to Abu Musa al-Ash‘ari and his followers, Qur’an is derived from the verb *qa-ra-ne* (adding and attaching one thing to another) and, since it consists of chapters and verses arranged together, was called the Qur’an. Other scholars, among them Imam Shafi‘i, affirm that *qur’an* was not derived from any word, but is the proper name of the Book revealed by God to His Last Messenger. The Qur’an as God’s Word is therefore eternal (having no beginning in time) and uncreated. But as the book conveyed by Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet, a book composed of letters and words, recited, touched, and listened to, it is not eternal.

The general definition of the Qur’an is as follows: The Qur’an is God’s miraculous Word revealed to Prophet Mu-

hammad, written down and transmitted to succeeding generations via many reliable channels, and the recitation of which is an act of worship and obligatory in daily prayers.

The Qur'an describes some of its features as follows:

The month of Ramadan, in which the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for humanity and clear proofs of the Guidance and the Criterion. (2:185)

This Qur'an cannot be forged by (any one) but (is a revelation from) God confirming (the Divine origin of the Scriptures) that went before it and (the clearest) explanation of the Book, wherein is no doubt, from the Lord of all the worlds. (10:37)

We have sent it as an Arabic Qur'an, that you may understand and use your reason. (12:2)

This Qur'an guides to that which is most right, and gives good tidings to the believers who do deeds of righteousness, that theirs will be a great reward. (17:9)

And in truth We have made the Qur'an easy to reflect and take lesson, but will any take heed? (54:17)

That this is a noble Qur'an, in a hidden, guarded Book. (56:77-78)

The Qur'an has other titles, each of which describes an aspect of it and therefore can be considered as one of its attributes, such as: the Book, the Criterion, the Remembrance, the Advice, the Light, the Guidance, the Healer, the Noble, the Book in Pairs, the Mother of the Book, the Truth, the Admonishment, the Good Tiding, the Book Gradually Revealed, the Knowledge, and the Clear.

The Prophet declares: "The Qur'an is more lovable to God than the heavens and Earth and those in them" and "The Qur'an's superiority over all other words and speeches is like God's superiority over His creatures."

The Qur'an distinguishes between truth and falsehood. As it has not been revealed for entertainment, those who reject it will be punished. It contains the history of previous

peoples, news of those who will come later, and resolves disagreements. Those who look elsewhere for guidance are led astray by God, for the Qur'an is God's strong rope, wise instruction, and Straight Path. No desire can cause it to deviate, no tongue can confuse it, and its repetition does not bore or tire scholars, for this book has uncountable admirable aspects. All who hear it say: "We heard a wonderful Qur'anic guidance to righteousness, and so believe in it." Those who base their words on it speak truly. Whoever judges by it judges justly, and whoever calls to it calls to truth.

We close with Said Nursi's definition:

The Qur'an is an eternal translation of the great book of the universe and the everlasting translator of the various "languages" in which Divine laws of the creation and operation of the universe are "inscribed"; the interpreter of the books of the visible, material world and the world of the Unseen; the discoverer of the immaterial treasures of the Divine Names hidden on Earth and in the heavens; the key to the truths which lie beneath the lines of events; the tongue of the Unseen world in the visible, material one; the treasury of the favors of the All-Merciful One and the eternal addresses of the All-Glorified One coming from the world of the Unseen beyond the veil of this visible world; the sun of the spiritual and intellectual world of Islam and its foundation and plan; the sacred map of the worlds of the Hereafter; the expounder, the lucid interpreter, articulate proof, and clear translator of the Divine "Essence," Attributes, Names and acts; the educator and trainer of the world of humanity and the water and light of Islam, which is the true and greatest humanity; the true wisdom of humanity and their true guide leading them to happiness; and for human beings it is both a book of law, a

book of prayer, a book of wisdom, a book of worship and servanthood to God, and a book of commands and invitation, a book of invocation, and a book of reflection, a holy book containing books for all the spiritual needs of humanity, and a heavenly book which, like a sacred library, contains numerous booklets from which all the saints and the eminently truthful, and all the purified and discerning scholars have derived their ways peculiar to each, and which illuminates each of these ways and answers the needs of all those with different tastes and temperaments who follow them.

Having come from the Supreme Throne of God, and originated in His Greatest Name, and having issued forth from the most comprehensive rank of each Name, the Qur'an is both the word of God as regards His being the Lord of the worlds, and His decree in respect of His having the title of the Deity of all creatures, and a discourse in the name of the Creator of all the heavens and Earth, and a speech from the perspective of the absolute Divine Lordship, and an eternal sermon on behalf of the universal Sovereignty of the All-Glorified One, and a register of the favors of the All-Merciful One from the viewpoint of the all-embracing Mercy, and a collection of messages, some of which begin with a cipher, and a holy book which, having descended from the surrounding circle of the Divine Greatest Name, looks over and surveys the circle surrounded by the Supreme Throne of God.

Because of this, the title "Word of God" has been, and will always be, most deservedly given to the Qur'an. After the Qur'an come the Scriptures and Pages which were sent to some other Prophets. As for the other countless Divine words, some of them are conversations in the form of inspirations coming as the

particular manifestations of a particular aspect of Divine Mercy, Sovereignty, and Lordship under a particular title with particular regard. The inspirations coming to angels, human beings and animals vary greatly with regard to their universality or particularity.

The Qur'an is a heavenly book which contains, in brief, the Scriptures revealed to previous Prophets in different ages, the content of the treatises of all the saints with different temperaments, and the works of all the purified scholars who each followed a way particular to himself; the six sides of which are bright and absolutely free of the darkness of doubts and whimsical thoughts; whose point of support is definitely Divine Revelation and the Divine eternal Word, whose aim is manifestly eternal happiness, and whose content is manifestly pure guidance.

And it is surrounded and supported: from above by the lights of faith, from below by proof and evidence, from the right by the submission of the heart and the conscience, and from the left by the admission of reason and other intellectual faculties. Its fruit is with absolute certainty the mercy of the Most Merciful One, and Paradise; it has been accepted and promoted by angels and innumerable people and jinn through the centuries. (*The Words*, 2:2-4)

### **Approaching the Qur'an**

The Qur'an was conveyed by Prophet Muhammad to humanity as God's Word and testifies to his Prophethood. Being his greatest miracle, it challenges the Arabs of that time and all people to come until the Last Day to produce one chapter like it. It is unparalleled among Divine Scriptures, as regards its preservation and transmittal, for all copies of the Qur'an that have circulated since its first revelation are exactly the same.

As the Qur'an deals with all important theological issues and surpasses all scriptural records of pre- or post-Islamic

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***The Qur'an links varieties together with a specific rhythm to display God's Unity.***

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ages in the abundant variety of its contents, its approach, presentation, and solutions are unique. Rather than dealing with a topic in the usual systematic method of theologians or apostolic writers, it expressly states that it has its own manifold method: *tasrif*. This style shows variety, changes topics, shifts between subjects, reverts to the previous one, and deliberately and purposefully repeats the same subject in unique rhythmic and recitative forms in order to facilitate understanding, learning, and memorization:

See how We display the revelations and signs so that they may understand and discern. (6:65)

The Qur'an demonstrates the order of the universe. As almost all types or varieties of existing things present themselves to us side by side or in combinations, the Qur'an links varieties together with a specific rhythm to display God's Unity. It acknowledges that such a style will cause some to doubt its Divine authorship (6:106), but says that such a style encourages people to reflect upon unity in variety and harmony in diversity. In fact, each chapter deals with many topics in various ways, a characteristic that adds to its unique beauty and matchless eloquence.

The Qur'an's verses and chapters are not arranged chronologically. Some verses that were revealed and placed together are preceded or followed by other verses. Some chapters and verses are long; others are short. This "inconsistent" arrangement is an aspect of its miraculousness and one of the main reasons why many Orientalists and their Muslim imitators criticize it.

The Qur'an exhibits the order of the universe. Just as its contents have both a whole-part and holistic-partial (or universal-particular) relation, so does the Qur'an itself. In other words, a body (the whole) consists of various limbs and organs (the parts). A single part cannot wholly represent the body, although each part is a whole in itself, because the whole body cannot be found in any of its parts. Humanity and all species are holistic or universal, for each species is composed of members, each of which contains all of the species' features and so represents the species. Each person is an exact specimen of humanity in structure.

In the same way, each Qur'anic verse is a whole in itself and has an independent existence. It can be located anywhere in the Qur'an without harming the composition or the meaning. In addition, an intrinsic relation exists among all verses or between one verse and all others. Said Nursi writes that:

The verses of the Qur'an are like stars in a sky among which there are visible and invisible ropes and relationships. It is as if each Qur'anic verse has an eye that sees most of the verses and a face that looks towards them, so that it extends to them the immaterial threads of relationship to weave a fabric of miraculousness. A single sura can contain the whole "ocean" of the Qur'an, in which the whole universe is contained. A single verse can comprehend the treasury of that sura. It is as if most verses are small suras, and most suras a little Qur'an. In fact, the whole Qur'an is contained in Surat al-Fatiha, which itself is contained in the *basmala*. (*The Words*, 2:10-11, 44.)

At first glance, this unique *tasrifi* style sometimes seems to produce contradictory verses. But this is not the case, for the Qur'an is like an organism that consists of interlinking parts. As a result of this whole-part arrangement and the holistic-partial relationship among verses, a

correct understanding of a verse often depends upon a complete understanding of the Qur'an. This is another unique characteristic, another aspect of its miraculousness, and another sign of its Divine authorship.

This characteristic is crucial to Qur'anic interpretation, for the Qur'an is the written counterpart of the universe and humanity. Moreover, the Qur'an, the universe, and humanity are three "copies" of the same book—the first being the "revealed and written universe and humanity" and the second and third each being a "created Qur'an." Given this, the Qur'an teaches us how to view humanity and the universe. Thus, any apparent contradiction among its verses is due to the misunderstandings on the part of the reader. One whose being is unified with the Qur'an sees no contradiction, as he or she is free of all contradictions. If people view the Qur'an in light of their particular contradiction-filled worlds, of course they will see contradictions. This is why those approaching the Qur'an for the first time have to be free of all contradictions.

Arabic, the language of Revelation, is the outer body of the Qur'an. Religion, a method of unifying all of the dimensions of our being, is far more

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***The Qur'an, the universe, and humanity are three "copies" of the same book.***

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than philosophy or theology. Therefore Arabic, an essential and inseparable element of the Qur'an, was chosen so that the Arabs of that time would understand it and because a universal religion requires a universal language.

The Qur'an views the Earth as the cradle of human unity. It seeks to unite all races, colors, and beliefs as brothers and sisters and worshipers of the One God. Its language is a basic factor that helps people ponder religious realities and unite all dimensions of their being according to Divine standards. Translations cannot be recited in prescribed prayers, for they cannot be identical to the original language.

Without Arabic, one can be a good Muslim but cannot understand very much of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is the source of all religious, spiritual, social, scientific, moral, legal, philosophical, and other knowledge in Islam. As the guide to all truth, it has four main purposes: 1) demonstrating God's Existence and Unity, 2) establishing Prophethood, 3) announcing the afterlife, and 4) promulgating the worship of God and setting forth the essentials of justice. Its verses, which mainly dwell on these purposes, contain creedal principles, rules for human life, detailed information on the resurrection and the afterlife, how to worship God, morality, various scientific facts, principles of civilizational formation and decay, historical outlines of previous civilizations, and so on.

The Qur'an also is a source of healing, for applying it in daily life cures almost all psychological and social illnesses, as well as a cosmology, epistemology, ontology, sociology, psychology, and law revealed to regulate human life regardless of time or place.

## **Matchless Eloquence and Profound Meaning**

Everything wet or dry is in a Manifest Book (itself). (6:59)

A Prophetic saying states that the Qur'an contains the history of previous peoples, news of those to come after its revelation, and solutions to disagreements. It addresses and satisfies all levels of understanding and knowledge, regardless of time and place.

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***“Everything wet or dry is in a Manifest Book (itself).”***

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Hundreds of interpreters have written commentaries on it during the 14 centuries of its existence, and none has claimed to understand all of its aspects

and meanings. Thousands of jurists have inferred laws from it and based their reasoning upon it, but none has claimed to

infer all of the laws contained therein or understand all reasons behind its injunctions and prohibitions. All pure and exacting scholars who “marry” mind and heart follow it, all revivers (the great saintly scholars who come when needed to revive and restore Islam) find their ways in it, all saints derive their sources of inspiration and ways of purification from it, and all authentic Sufi paths depend upon it. And yet, like a source of water that increases as it flows, it remains as if untouched.

The Qur’an’s miraculous eloquence gives it this depth and richness of meaning. Its creative and artistically rich style is only one element on

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***The Qur’an’s creative and artistically rich style is only one element on which its eloquence is based.***

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which its eloquence is based. It frequently speaks in parables and adopts a figurative, symbolic rhetoric consisting of metaphors and similes. This is natural, for the Qur’an contains knowledge of all things and addresses all levels of understanding and knowledge.

Its verses, linked with rhythm and symmetry of form to display Divine Unity, stir our emotions and intellect to reflect upon unity in variety and harmony in diversity. Each chapter has a particular rhythm and presents topics in various ways. Such a style discloses a unique beauty with matchless eloquence. Attentive reciters and intelligent listeners experience what the Qur’an describes:

God has sent down the fairest discourse as a Book,  
some parts of which confirm and resemble others,  
whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their  
Lord; then their skins and hearts soften to God’s  
remembrance. That is God’s guidance. (39:23)

Although the Arabs of the Prophet’s time were highly intelligent and well-versed in poetry and eloquence, they

could not produce anything like the Qur'an. Likewise, none of the countless literary figures who have lived since have been able to duplicate it. In fact, the Prophet challenged his contemporaries and humanity at large, regardless of time or place, to create even one chapter like those of the Qur'an. That all attempts failed proves the Qur'an's Divine origin.

If you doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant (Muhammad), bring a chapter like it, and call your witnesses, apart from God, if you are truthful. (2:23)

This Qur'an cannot be forged by (any one) but (is a revelation from) God confirming (the Scriptures) that went before it and (the clearest) explanation of the Book, wherein is no doubt, from the Lord of all being. Or do they say: "He (Muhammad) has forged it." Say: "Then bring a chapter like it and call on whomsoever you can (to help you), apart from God (for He has sent it down), if you are truthful." (10:37-38)

Say: "(Even) if humanity and jinn united to produce the like of this Qur'an, they will never be able to do so, even though some of them help the others." (17:88)

No human composition has ever equaled even the smallest chapter of the Qur'an (*Surat al-Kawthar*), and no one will ever be able to do so. Opponents have always taken up arms. As one Muslim scholar points out, if people could defeat the Qur'an or Islam through argument, science, or eloquence, they would not have to resort to arms. The Qur'an becomes younger and fresher as time passes, for this process allows its unlimited hidden treasures to be disclosed one by one. Today, Islam is the only way of life that offers humanity any hope.

At the same time as almost every verse has an independent existence, it also has intrinsic relations with every other verse and with the Qur'an as a whole. Given this,

understanding and interpreting a verse requires a complete and holistic knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an. This is why Muslims say that the Qur'an's main interpreter is the Qur'an itself.

Said Nursi frequently draws our attention to the miraculous depths of meaning of the wording of the Qur'an. For example, the definite particle *al*

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adds inclusiveness to the word, and so he interprets *Surat al-Fatiha*'s initial *al-hamdu* (the praise) as: "All praise and thanks that everyone has given and will give until the Last Day to others since the beginning of human life on Earth, for any reason and on any occasion, are for God."

Also, from the characteristics of the words used and their order in: *Out of what We have provided for them they give as livelihood* (2:3) he infers the following rules or conditions of giving alms:

In order to make their alms-giving acceptable to God, believers must give out of their livelihood a certain amount that will not make it necessary for them to receive alms. *Out of* in *out of what* expresses this condition.

Believers must not transfer another person's goods to the needy, but must give from their own belongings. The phrase *what We have provided for them* points to this condition. The meaning is: They give (to maintain life) out of what We have provided for you (to maintain your life).

Believers must not remind those who receive their alms of the kindness they have received. *We* in *We have provided* indicates this condition, for it means: "I have provided for you the livelihood out of which you give to the poor. Therefore, you can-

not put any of My servants under obligation, for you are giving out of My property.”

Believers must not fear that they may become poor through giving to others. *We* in *We have provided* points to this. Since God provides for us and commands us to give others, He will not cause us to become poor by giving to others.

Believers must give to those who will spend it for their livelihood, and not to those who will waste it. The phrase *They give as livelihood* points to this condition.

Believers must give for God’s sake. *We have provided for them* states this condition. It means: “Essentially, you give out of My property and so you must give in My Name.”

*What in out of what* signifies that whatever God provides for a person is included in the meaning of provision. Therefore, believers must give out of their goods and also out of whatever they have, such as a good word, an act of help, a piece of advice, and teaching. All of these are included in the meaning of *rizq* (provision) and giving others as livelihood.

Along with these conditions, the meaning of the original three-word expression becomes: “Out of whatever We have provided for them as goods, money, power, knowledge, and intelligence, and so on, believing that it is We Who provide and therefore without feeling any fear that they may become poor because of giving and putting under obligation those to whom they give, they give to the needy who are sensible enough not to waste what is given to them, such amount that they themselves will not be reduced to needing to receive alms themselves.” (*The Words*, 2:8-9)

This is just one of the thousands of examples of the miraculous profundity and meaning of the Qur’anic expressions.

## Understanding the Qur'an

To understand the Qur'an correctly, one must first understand Arabic, for language has the same meaning for a text as bodily features have for a person. A text's essential existence lies in its meaning, just as a person's essential existence lies in his or her spirit. Bodily features are the externalized form assumed by the spirit, and therefore serve as a mirror in which to see one's character. In the same way, the Qur'an's language and styles are the form of its meaning and cannot be separated from it.

The second step is to penetrate its meaning, which requires living it. Although Arabic constitutes its outer form and structure, and therefore is

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***The Qur'an is "like a rose that continuously grows petals in the womb of time."***

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very important in penetrating its meaning, reducing it to an understanding based solely upon linguistics restricts readers to form (formalism). One can penetrate the Qur'an's meaning, in which its essential existence lies, through purifying the "heart" (the spirit's seat) by avoiding sin and evil, performing the necessary acts of worship, and living a pious life.

The Qur'an is "like a rose that continuously grows petals in the womb of time." As science develops and helps people penetrate its depths of meaning, the Qur'an blooms to an even greater extent and grows younger and fresher. Thus, having sufficient knowledge of various topics (e.g., abrogating laws; laws and principles dependent upon certain conditions; unconditioned, general, and particular rules; and the occasions on which the verses were revealed) is not enough; the general principles of natural science also must be known. Since Prophet Muhammad received the Qur'an, taught, and practiced it in his daily life as an infallible authority, knowledge of his *Sunna* is indispensable to understanding the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is not a book of science, history, or morality. It is not even a book in the literal sense of the word, for it is to be practiced because it came to guide people to truth, to educate them intellectually and spiritually, and to govern their individual and social life. Thus it can be understood only through daily practice. Remember that the Qur'an was revealed over a 23-year period on many diverse occasions. Separating it from practical life reduces it to the status of an ordinary book to be read. It does not unfold itself to any significant degree to those who consider it to be no more than this.

### **Is A Full Translation Possible?**

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***The Qur'an is not a book  
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morality.***

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This question has engendered heated debate in the Muslim world for almost a century. First, language is not a set of molds made

up of letters and words. Just as one's style of speech or writing gives him or her away, a nation's language mirrors its national culture, which has been molded by its culture, history, religion, and even the land. It is almost impossible for one word in a language to have an exact counterpart in meaning in another language. That word, which has different connotations and associations particular to each people using it, also makes different impressions on each. For example, most Muslim scholars say that the Qur'an is derived from *qira'a* ("reading" or "reciting") and thus means recitation. Although *qur'an* is the proper name of the book sent to the Prophet, even as a common noun in the infinitive form it is not the exact counterpart of "reading" or "recitation" in English or in other languages. A language is a living entity that changes forms and adapts as long as people use it.

Second, Arabic has strict grammatical rules and is the world's richest language as regards conjugation and derivation. For example, it has three types of infinitives and one verb has 35 infinitive forms, each of which has different

connotations and implications. Furthermore, tenses do not always have the same meaning and usage in every language. For instance, the Qur'an describes the events of the Judgment Day in the past tense, although it will come in the future, for one of its purposes is to indicate that a future event will occur.

The present tense also has different usages in Arabic and English. Arabic nouns have two genders (masculine and feminine), while English has three (masculine, feminine, and neutral). English nouns are either singular or plural, while adjectives and verbs are always singular; Arabic nouns, adjectives, and verbs have three forms (singular, dual, and plural). In addition, Arabic nouns have many plural forms, each of which has different implications.

Another important factor making an exact translation impossible is that many of its words have become concepts: *Rabb* (Lord), *Ilah* (deity), *Malik* (Sovereign), *Kitab* (Book), *Wahy* (Revela-

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tion), *din* (religion), *millah* (nation, way), *Shari'a* (religious law), *'ibada* (worship, adoration), *taqwa* (piety), *ihsan* (perfect goodness), *waliy* (friend, saint), *nur* (light), *Nabi* (Prophet), *Rasul* (Messenger), *Islam*, *iman* (faith, belief), *dhikr* (remembrance, mentioning, Divine Book, Message), as well as the words that engendered the Qur'anic sciences and its branches: *muhkam* (established), *mutashabih* (parabohical), *tafsir* (interpretation), *ta'wil* (exegesis), *nasikh* (abrogator), and *mansukh* (abrogated). This latter category of words can be translated only via explanation.

For these and many other reasons, no translation can act as a substitute for the original or be used in the daily-prescribed prayers.

## Recording and Preserving the Qur'an

God Almighty has sent more than 124,000 Prophets to humanity. Islam defines prophets as those who came with important news (religion) about belief in God's Existence and Unity, angels, the mission of the Prophethood and prophets, revelation and Divine Scriptures, the resurrection and afterlife, and Divine Destiny (including human free will). These tidings also include offering a life based on belief as well as promises or warnings related to accepting or rejecting belief.

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***“Without doubt, We sent down the Message and will preserve it.”***

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The frequent corruption of religion by various communities has caused Prophets to be sent to revive and restore it, and

also to amend some rules or bring new laws concerning daily life. Such Prophets usually were given a Book and are known as Messengers. The greatest of them are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (42:13).

The name of the religion revealed through all Messengers is Islam. Just as the laws ordering and operating the universe remain the same and constant, and just as all people have the same basic characteristics, essential needs, and final destination regardless of when and where they live, it is natural for religion to be based on the same essentials of belief, worship, and morality. As this religion gradually was corrupted, altered, or contaminated with borrowings from false creeds, God sent numerous Messengers.

Muhammad was sent as the last Messenger and with the perfected form of the Divine religion (Islam). God protects Islam by promising to preserve the Qur'an and telling the Prophet to live his life as He directs (the Sunna):

Without doubt, We sent down the Message and will preserve it. (15:9)

Followers of Moses and Jesus later called their religions Judaism and Christianity, respectively, whereas Islam retains its original and God-given name.

God acts in this world behind natural or material causes and uses them to preserve the Qur'an. One of these is having the Qur'an written down under the Prophet's direct supervision so that nothing could be deleted, added, or changed. All copies of the Qur'an, from the Prophet's time to our own, are exactly the same. Unlike other earlier Scriptures, the Qur'an's original form, text, and language of revelation have been preserved and are with us today. Thus the following points are of considerable significance:

- The Qur'an was revealed in parts, and God undertook its preservation, due recitation, and arrangement of its parts. He revealed to His Messenger where each verse and chapter was to be placed:

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***God acts in this world behind natural or material causes and uses them to preserve the Qur'an.***

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Do not move your tongue (with the revelation) so that you may hasten (committing) it (to memory). It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it. But when We have promulgated it, follow its recital (as promulgated). Then it is also for us to explain it. (75:16-19)

High above all (considerations) is God, the Sovereign, the Truth. Do not show haste to receive and recite the Qur'an before its revelation to you is completed; but rather say: "Lord, increase me in knowledge." (20:114)

- The Almighty states that no falsehood can touch the Qur'an or cast doubt on its authenticity:

These are the people who rejected the Message when it came to them. But the fact is that this is a noble, mighty Book. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind. It is a Revelation being sent down from One All-Wise, All-Praised. (41:41-42)

- Once a year, the Messenger reviewed what had been revealed with Archangel Gabriel. In his last year, after the revelation was completed, Gabriel came twice for this purpose. The Messenger concluded from this that he would die soon.

From the very beginning, the Companions tried their best to understand, memorize, and learn the Qur'an. In fact, the Qur'an ordered them to do so:

When the Qur'an is recited, give ear to it and pay heed, that you may obtain mercy. (7:204)

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***“When the Qur'an is recited, give ear to it and pay heed, that you may obtain mercy.”***

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Only a few people could read and write when the Revelation began. After the Battle of Badr (624), the first military encounter between

the Muslims and the Makkan polytheists, Makkan prisoners of war had to teach ten Madinan Muslims how to read and write before being released. The newly literate Muslims tried to memorize the Qur'an for several reasons: reciting some verses is obligatory during the prescribed prayers; the Qur'an was very new to them; it purified their minds of prejudice and wrong assertions, their hearts of sins, and illuminated them; and it built a society out of illuminated minds and purified hearts.

As a result of their efforts, 70 Companions who had memorized the Qur'an were martyred at Bi'r al-Ma'una (625), as were another 70 or so during the Prophet's lifetime. When the Prophet died, such Companions as 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, 'Ab-

dullah ibn Mas‘ud, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr, Hudayfa ibn al-Yaman, Salim, Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, Abu al-Darda, Ubayy ibn Ka‘b, and ‘A‘isha and Umm Salama (two of the Prophet’s wives) and others knew the entire Qur’an by heart. New converts or immigrants to Madina were sent to Companions to learn the Qur’an. As the subsequent reciting raised a humming noise, the Prophet asked them to lower their voices to avoid confusing each other.

Whenever a verse, chapter, or group of verses was revealed, it was memorized by many Companions and recorded by scribes chosen by the Prophet for that purpose. The Messenger also told them where to place it in the Qur’an. Known as the “Scribes of the Revelation,” these 40 or so Companions also copied and preserved the copies for themselves.

Before the Prophet’s death, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, Mu‘adh ibn Jabal, Abu al-Darda, Ubayy ibn al-Ka‘b, and other Companions had assembled these portions in book form. ‘Ali arranged them chronologically. After the Battle of Yamama (633), during which around 700 memorizers were martyred, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab asked Caliph Abu Bakr about compiling an “official” version. Zayd ibn Thabit, a leading scholar and memorizer, was chosen for the task and eventually prepared the official collection (*mushaf*).

The Almighty declares:

It is for Us to collect and promulgate it. (75:17)

The verses and chapters of the Qur’an were arranged and collected according to the Prophet’s instructions [while he was still alive], which were guided by the Revelation. The official version was formed after the Battle of Yamama. When there was disagreement about the pronunciation of certain words, the formal version was copied and sent to important centers during Caliph ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan’s (644-56) reign.

One of the foremost reasons for the Qur’an’s continued incorruptibility is its preservation in its original Arabic. No one in the Muslim world has ever thought to supersede it

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***“It is for Us to collect and promulgate it.”***

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with a translation, and so it was never exposed to imprecise or mistaken translations, or to additions or deletions.

In conclusion, the Qur’an that we hold in our hands today is the same Qur’an that the Prophet received from God. Its authenticity and genuineness cannot be contested. No reputable Muslim scholar has ever doubted this, and none has ever questioned that the Prophet spoke every word contained in the Qur’an.