



Ramadan Daily Quran Study, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2023

Adapted and edited from *The Religion of Islam* by Maulana Muhammad Ali
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Fast 4: The Quran — its collection in writing and rules of interpretation

Fast 1

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- At the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Holy Quran existed in a complete and ordered form in the memories of people. But there was no complete written copy of it.
- Soon after his death, in the caliphate of Hazrat Abu Bakr, the first Caliph of Islam, who ruled from 632 to 634 C.E., there was a battle in which many of the reciters of the Quran were killed. It was at that time that Hazrat Umar (who later became the second Caliph, from 634 to 644 C.E.) urged upon Hazrat Abu Bakr the need to compile a standard written copy of the Quran, so that no portion of the Quran should be lost even if all the reciters were to die.

Fast 4

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- As a result, a search was made for the manuscripts which had been written under the direction of the Holy Prophet himself whenever he had received a new revelation. This work began six months after the Holy Prophet's death. Hazrat Umar announced that whoever possessed any portion of the Quran, which he had directly received from the Holy Prophet, should bring it. Something was only accepted if there were two witnesses to the fact that the manuscript had been written in the Holy Prophet's presence.



- A copy was compiled from the manuscripts written under the direction of the Holy Prophet himself. It was arranged in the order of the oral recitation as followed in his time. This standard, written copy of the Quran was kept in the custody of Hazrat Abu Bakr and after his death it was in the custody of Hazrat Umar. After Hazrat Umar's death the copy was given over to his daughter Hazrat Hafsa, who was also a wife of the Holy Prophet.



- Still no arrangement had been made for ensuring the accuracy of the numerous copies that were in circulation. This was done by Hazrat Uthman, the third Caliph, who ruled from 644 to 656 C.E. He ordered several copies to be made of the copy prepared in the time of the first Caliph, and these were then sent to the different Islamic centres so that all copies made by individuals should be compared with the standard copy at each centre.
- Through all the centuries since the Quran was revealed, among all the Muslims from East to West, among their numerous sects arguing with each other, and among all Muslim groups, even who are each other's enemies, **there is only one Quran in Arabic.**



- The rule about the interpretation of the Quran is given in the Quran itself:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٣٧﴾

“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. Then those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it [their own] interpretation. And none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those firmly rooted in knowledge. They say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord. And none are mindful except those who have understanding.” — 3:7



- On the basis of this verse, the rules for interpreting the Quran are:
 - The **principles** of Islam are stated and declared in clear words in the Holy Quran. Therefore, **a principle** should not be derived from a passage which is using figurative language.
 - The explanation of the Quran should in the first place be looked for in the Quran itself. Whatever is stated in the Quran briefly in one place, will often be found expanded and fully explained elsewhere in it.



- The Holy Quran contains symbolic language and metaphor along with what is plain and clear. Such passages must be interpreted to fall in line with what is laid down in clear and decisive words. They cannot be given a meaning which overrides or conflicts with the clear teachings of the Quran.

For example, it says in the Quran about Allah: “Both His hands are spread out” (5:64), and Allah says about the creation of human beings that: “I have created them with both My hands” (38:75). This does not mean that Allah has two hands like a human being, since the Quran says as **a matter of principle** that nothing is like Allah. “Hands of Allah” is a symbolic expression, not meant literally.