

## 31. On the Revelation of the Qur'an (Nuzulu 'l-Qur'an)

Ash-Shaykh Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, says that: "The Qur'an was sent down in one lot, in the month of Ramadan, on the Night of Power (laylatu 'l-qadr), (first) to al-Baytu 'l-Ma'mur (the ever-prosperous house). And then it was revealed in the space of twenty years . . ."

ash-Shaykh al-Mufid says that: What Abu Ja'far, may Allah have mercy upon him, maintains in this respect, originally derives from an ahad tradition which is not a fit basis, either for doctrine or for practice.

Moreover, the revelation of the Qur'an piecemeal, as need arose, bears witness to the contrary, since it includes the description of what had happened and the narration of what was past, and this indeed indicates that it was only revealed as need arose. Do you not realize the speech of Allah, the Exalted: And for their saying,

***"Our hearts are uncircumcised", nay, but Allah sealed them for their unbelief [4: 155].***

And His saying:

***They say, "Had the All-merciful so willed, we would not have served them", They have no knowledge of that [43:20].***

This involves information about the past which requires that the narrator should not precede it, since this involves giving information about something past, which has not yet happened— indeed, is still in the future. There are many such instances in the Qur'an, one of which is the narration of zihar<sup>1</sup>, and the reason for it; when a woman complained to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his progeny, about the judgment on it, Allah, the Exalted, revealed:

***Allah has heard the words of her that disputes with thee [58:1].***

Now this is an incident that happened at Medina; then how can we say that Allah, the Exalted, revealed it at Mecca before the emigration took place and thus state that it happened when in fact it had not.

Moreover, if we look at the accounts reported in the Qur'an, then we would come across many instances similar to that which we have mentioned, and which will take us beyond the scope of our discussion. Thus, what we have mentioned is sufficient for men of perception. In fact, the tradition resembles the doctrine of the anthropomorphist, who claim that the Qur'an is the eternal words of Allah, the Praised, the Exalted, and that it relates the future as if it were the past; their teaching has been refuted by the adherents of Allah's Unity (by the assertors of the Unity of Allah – ahlu 't-tawhid) in the manner demonstrated above.

The tradition that the Qur'an was revealed 'all of a piece' on the Night of Power, may bear another interpretation, that 'a piece of it' (jumlatun minhu) was revealed on the Night of Power, then the rest of what has been revealed until the death of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his progeny, followed this. But that it has been revealed as a whole and altogether on the Night of Power is a notion which is far from what the plain meaning of the Qur'an teaches, and is in contrast to the mutawatir traditions and the consensus of the learned divines, irrespective of their different inferences.

Chapter: As for the meaning of the speech of the Almighty Allah:

***And hasten not (O Muhammad) with the Qur'an ere its revelation is accomplished unto thee [20: 114],***

there are two proper interpretations for it other than that mentioned by Abu Ja'far, which he derived from a shadhhdh tradition.

The first is that Allah, the Exalted, forbids him (Muhammad) to be hasty in the interpretation of what has been revealed to him in accordance with the rules of the language of the Arabs, though it may be permissible, and the second is that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his progeny, used to follow Jibril in his recitation, word by word, hence, Allah, the Exalted, commanded him not to do so, but to hearken to what was brought to him by Jibril, or to what was sent down to him without intermediary till it came to an end: and when the revelation was completed, to recite it and give it utterance and declare it.

Thus, the interpretation put forward by him who relies on the tradition (mentioned above) is far from the truth, since there is no reason to maintain that Allah, the Exalted, has commanded him not to be hasty with the Qur'an which is in the fourth heaven until it is revealed to him wholly, since he possesses no knowledge about what there is in the fourth heaven before it is revealed to him.

It is also meaningless to restrain him from what is beyond his powers, except if one claims that he possessed full knowledge of the Qur'an which is in the fourth heaven; then, by assuming this, his argument and position collapses, because he has maintained that the Qur'an is originally in the (fourth) heaven; and since what is in the breast of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and his progeny, and in its preservation on the earth, then it is absurd that it should be confined to the heavens.

Moreover, if what is in the preservation (i.e., memory) of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him

and his progeny, is described as being in the fourth heaven, then what is in the preservation of others should be described the same way; then it cannot be ascribed to the fourth heaven, nor, still less, to the first, in preference to the fourth. Thus, he who considers what we have said would realize that the interpretation of the verse by him who relied on the tradition is far from the truth.

1. Zihar: Putting away the wife by saying: "Thou art to me as the back of my mother." This concerned Khawlah bint Malik ibn Tha'labah, who was divorced by her husband. Aws ibn Samit, with this form of words, current among the Arabs of the jahiliyyah but forbidden in Islam by this verse, The penance for it is the freeing of a slave, the feeding of sixty poor or two months successive fast. For a detailed discussion, see Ibnu '1-'Arabi, Ahkamu 'l-Qur'an, vol.4, p.1734; al-Qasimi, Mahasinu 't-ta'wi1, vol.16, p.5706.

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