

## Concerning the Extent of The Qur'an

Says the Shaykh Abu Ja'far: Our belief is that the Qur'an, which Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad, is (the same as) the one between the two boards (*daffattyn*).<sup>1</sup> And it is that which is in the hands of the people, and is not greater in extent than that.

The number of *suras* as generally accepted is one hundred and fourteen. And according to us, *ad-Duha* (The Morning, *Sura* 93) and *al-Inshira* (The Consolation, *Sura* 94) together form one *sura*; and *al-Fil* (The Elephant, *Sura* 105) and *Quraish* (*Sura* 106) together form one *sura*.

And he who asserts that we say that it is greater in extent than this (the present text) is a liar.

And that which is related (in tradition) concerning the reward for reciting every *sura* of the Qur'an, and the reward of him who completes the whole of the Qur'an, and the permissibility of reciting two *suras* in a *rak'a* (unit of prayer),<sup>2</sup> and the prohibition of reciting the Qur'an between the two *suras* in a *rak'a* of the *fard* prayer<sup>3</sup> is the verification of what we said concerning the Qur'an and that the extent of the Qur'an is (no more than) what is in the hands of the people.

And similarly what is related concerning the prohibition of reading the whole of the Qur'an in a single night, and that it is not permissible to complete the recitation of the Qur'an in less than three days is (also) a verification of what we have said.

On the contrary we say that so much of revelation has come down, which is not part of the Qur'an, that were it to be collected, its extent would undoubtedly be 17,000 verses. And this, for example, is like the saying of Gabriel to the Prophet: Allah says to thee, O Muhammad, act gently with My creatures, in the same manner as I do.

Or his (Gabriel's) saying: Be careful of the bitter hatred of the people and their enmity. Or his (Gabriel's) saying: Live as you desire, for verily you shall die. Love what you will, for verily you shall be separated. Act how you will, for verily you shall be faced with it.

The nobility of man is his prayer by night; his honor is refraining from injury to human beings. Or like the saying of the Prophet: Gabriel never ceased enjoining me (to use) the toothbrush (*siwak*) until I feared it

would chafe (my gums) or make me toothless.<sup>4</sup>

And he (Gabriel) never ceased enjoining me (to be good) to the neighbor until I thought he would make him my heir; and he never ceased enjoining me about the wife, to the extent that I thought it would be improper to divorce her; and he never ceased enjoining me about the slave, until I thought that he would fix a period within which he should be freed.

Or like the saying of Gabriel, when the battle of the Ditch (*Khandaq*) was over: O Muhammad, verily Allah, Exalted and Blessed is He above all, commands you not to say the 'asr (afternoon) prayer, except with the Banu Qurayza.<sup>5</sup> Or like his saying (the Prophet's): My Lord commanded me to deal gently with the people, in the same manner as he asked me to perform the obligatory acts.

Or like his saying: Verily we prophets were ordered not to speak to people except in accordance with their intelligence. Or like his saying: Verily Gabriel brought a command to me from my Lord, which cooled my eyes and brought joy to my breast. He (Gabriel) said: Verily Allah the Mighty and Glorious says that 'Ali is the Prince of Believers, and the leader of those having a whiteness on the forehead, wrists and ankles (from the effects of ablution and prayer).<sup>6</sup>

Or like his saying: Gabriel came to me and said: O Muhammad, verily Allah the Blessed and Exalted, has given Fatima in marriage to 'Ali in front of His Throne ('arsh), and made select angels bear witness to the marriage. So marry her to him in this world and make the select amongst your people bear witness to it.

There are many such (traditions), all of which are revelations, but do not form part of the Qur'an; if they did, they would surely have been included and not excluded from it. The Prince of Believers ('Ali), when he collected the Qur'an and brought it, said to them: This is the book of Allah, your Lord, as it was revealed to your Prophet; not a single word has been added to it or omitted from it. They said: we have no need of it; we have with us what you possess. So he ('Ali) returned saying:

***"But they flung it behind their backs and bought therewith a little gain. Verily evil is that which they have gained thereby" (Qur'an 3:187).***

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq has said: The Qur'an is one; it was revealed by One to one single Prophet. And the difference (in readings) is due only on account of different transmitters (*rawi*, plural *ruwat*).

Wherever there occurs in the Qur'an the like of the saying of Him Who is Exalted above all:

***"If thou ascribe a partner to Allah thy work will fail and thou indeed will be among the losers!" (Qur'an 39:65).***

Or the like of His saying: ***"That Allah may forgive thee (O Muhammad) of thy sin that which is past and that which is to come" (Qur'an 48:2).***<sup>7</sup>

Or like His saying:

***"And if We had not made thee wholly firm thou mightest almost have inclined unto them a little. Then had We made thee taste a double (punishment) of living and a double (punishment) of dying...." (Qur'an 17:74-75).***

And verses resembling these – our belief concerning them is that they were revealed within the meaning of (the well-known proverb) – “Thee do I mean (O beloved), but hear, O (thou) neighboring lady”.<sup>8</sup>

And wherever there occurs in the Qur'an the particle *aw*, that is, “or”, the person to whom the ordinance refers has an option. And wherever there occurs in the Qur'an the expression *ya ayyuha'l-ladhina amanu* “O you who believe”, this is in lieu of the expression in the Torah, *ya ayyuha'l-masakin*, “O you miserable ones”.

Every verse of the Qur'an, which begins with the expression *ya ayyuha'l-ladhina amanu* (“O you who believe”), refers necessarily to 'Ali bin Abi Talib as their leader (*qa'id*) and prince (*amir*) and the most noble and the first among them.

And every verse which directs the way to Paradise applies to the Prophet or the Imams, the blessings of Allah upon them all and their partisans and followers. And every verse which points the way to Hell refers to their enemies and opponents.

If the verses deal with the account of those mentioned earlier (i.e. Prophets and Imams) then whatever of good there is in them will be applicable to the righteous; and whatever of evil, to the evildoers. Among the prophets none is better than the Prophet Muhammad, the blessings of Allah upon him, and among the *awsiya'* (plenipotentiaries) none is better than his (the Prophet's) plenipotentiaries<sup>9</sup>, and among the communities none in reality is more excellent than this community – the partisans (*Shi'a*) of the People of his (Prophet's) House, and none else. And among the wicked, none is more wicked than those who are their enemies and opponents.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1.</sup> This expression implies that the text of the Qur'an, as is to be found in the *textus receptus* and which is in the hands of every one in the shape of a book, is the one accepted wholly by al-Qummi. Some of the Shi'a assert that a portion of the Qur'an is not included in the *textus receptus* and is with the Hidden Imam, cf. Browne's Literary History of Persia, iv. 388 – 389, citing Aqa 'idu 'sh-Shi'a of 'Ali Asghar b. 'Ali Akbar; Sell, Studies in Islam (Madras, 1928), 246, citing Dr. Mirza Kazembeg in Journal Asiatique, December 1843, pp. 373 – 430, and suggesting that the Sura of an- Nurayn (The Two Lights, that is, Muhammad and 'Ali) is omitted. This view is however erroneous, as is shown here and fully discussed by Muhammad Ali, The Holy Qur'an, text and translation (Woking, England, 1917), Preface pp.xc–xcii, citing Mulla Muhsini Fayd in his famous *tafsir*, as-Safi. See the Tehran ed., 1274 A.H, pp. 10 – 15 (6th mugaddima), and also F. Buhl, EI, ii. 1063 – 1076, esp. 1071.

<sup>2.</sup> The translator adds that this is the case in the sunna prayer.

<sup>3.</sup> This refers to the prohibition of reciting two suras of the Qur'an after al-Hamد in the fard prayer.

<sup>4.</sup> أَحْفَى أو أَدْرَد and بالسُّوَاكِ D جَبَرِيلٌ يُوصِينِي بِالسُّؤَالِ حَتَّى خَفَتْ أَنْ أَحْفَى أو أَدْرَد.

<sup>5.</sup> إِلَّا بَنِي قَرِيبَةَ D إِلَّا بَنِي فَرِيَضَةَ N

<sup>6.</sup> So Lane, s.v. حَجَلٌ. The expression الْفَرَّ الْمُحَاجَلُونَ is taken from the description of noble horses, and later applied to the

most pious among human beings. The Urdu translator renders it loosely: that is ". . . the leader of (all) commanders".

7. The Urdu translator says: Mufaddal b. `Umar said that some one asked the meaning of this verse of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. The Imam said: I swear by God, the Prophet never committed any sin. The real meaning is that on account of his intercession, the sins both past and future, of the partisans of 'Ali will be forgiven. ( Majma `u l -Bayan).

The translator gives a graphic illustration of the "vicarious liability" for the sins of others, and how it can be got over. A king appoints a friend of his as the governor of a province, and tells him "You are responsible for the good behaviour of these people". Some of these subjects break the law, and are brought forward for punishment. The governor intercedes and the king says: "Their wrongdoing would not have been forgiven but for your intercession. And this can only be done on the assumption that these wrongs were committed by you personally". Similarly there are many verses of the Qur'an addressed to the Prophet, but intended in reality for the community. The translator further states that according to one authority (probably MB), *di'l* in this context means punishment, torment ('adhab). All these fanciful explanations are of great interest from the dogmatic point of view.

8. Freytag, Arab. Prov. i. 72-75 (No. 187); MB, s.v. جاره. The proverb is explained by the translator as follows: This is a proverb among the Arabs. Sahl b. Malik al-Fazari is the originator. He fell in love with a beautiful young girl and, desiring to marry her, wrote some verses addressed to another lady, two of which were:

يَا أَخْتَ خَيْرِ الْبَدْوِ وَالْحَضَارَةِ كَفَ تَرْنُ فِي فَتَى فَزَارَةَ  
أَصْبَحَ يَهْوِي حُرَّةً مُعْطَارَةً إِيَّاكِ أَعْنِي وَأَسْمَعِي يَا جَارَه

1)) "O sister of one who is best among the dwellers of the desert and the town. What do you think (about marrying) a young man of the tribe of Fazara.

(2) He is greatly desirous of a free woman well-perfumed; Thee (O beloved) do I mean, but hear, O thou neighbouring lady!  
" This proverb is employed when a certain person is addressed and another is intended.

9. The twelve Imams of the Shi'a.

10. Although it begins with the Qur'an, this section contains a number of well-known Shi'itic beliefs.

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