

1.10 History of The Qur'anic Compilation

Main Topics Covered

- **The First Memorization of the Quran** (0:00 to 2:25)
- **How Was The Quran Compiled?** (2:25 to 3:29)
- **The Order of the Chapters** (3:29 to 5:42)
- **The Compilation of the Quran** (5:42 to 6:42)
- **What is the Copy of Uthman?** (6:42 to 8:49)
- **Why Are There Different Ways of Reading the Quran?** (8:49 to 10:00)

Welcome back to this final episode of this module of welcoming you to the introduction of the Quran, in which we will speak about the history of the compilation of the Quran in a basic way.

The First Memorization of the Quran

It's a long history, but the highlights of it is that when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received the revelation, he would call upon the companion (scribes) to write what he tells them.

Ubay ibn Ka'b, Ali ibn Abi Taleb and others who were actually writers of the Quran, and also, he would teach his companions by heart.

Arabs had this fantastic ability to memorize texts in their language. You find poems from the pre-Islamic era, and you find people memorize poems of thousands of verses because they have this connection with the language.

Language, especially the language of the Quran, has a connection with your mind, your brain and your heart, and you memorize it easily.

The Quran is saying to the mothers of the believers:

And remember what is recited in your houses of the verses of Allah and wisdom. Indeed, Allah is ever Subtle and Acquainted [with all things]. ([33:34](#))

One of the wisdoms behind the marriage of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) after Khadijah to Aisha, Umm Salamah, Hafsa... is actually the memorization of the Quran. They were all scholars of the Quran and they narrated the Quran to the companions and their students; and they were part of the process of the compilation of the Quran.

How Was the Quran Compiled?

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had given the companions these bits and pieces, which they wrote at that time on whatever means that were available: leather, some of the leaves of the trees, some wooden surfaces, bones... So, they wrote the Quran bits and

pieces in different parts and many of them memorized parts and a lot of the Quran depending on how scholarly they were in their hearts.

So, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), before he died, for two years he actually had all of the Quran, except the last few verses, compiled; he would revise them, especially in the last year, with Angel Jibreel. Allah would send Jibreel to revise the Quran in order with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) before the end of his life.

The Order of the Chapters

That's how we know the order. Because the order before that was bits and pieces and some of the surahs were not finished in terms of revelation. Then towards the end, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had it from cover to cover revealed and organized this way.

We know that from the hadith narrated by Uthman when he read "Al Baqarah, Al Imran, and An Nisa"; "Al Anfal and At Tawbah" they were ordered this way with no "Bismillah Ar Rahman Ar Raheem" between them; Al Isra', Al Kahf, Marayam, and Ta Ha; a number of the surahs that start with "Ha Meem" one after the other memorized by the companions as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered them.

And of course the companions had the order of the verses within the surahs. So, the companions who were interested in the last compilation of the Quran, which is the last time Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) revised the Quran with Jibreel, knew the order very well.

One of the companions, Ibn Mas'ud, was a major compiler of the Quran, he kept the order as he learnt from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and he insisted on his copy to be in the order of the revelation rather than the order of the compilation towards the end of his life. That's why they say in the history of the Quran that Ibn Mas'ud had a different ordering, this is the order of the revelation, which is first Al Alaq, Al Muddathir, Al Muzzammil, ad Duha... he had this copy and he insisted on that copy for himself.

But all the companions actually compiled the copy as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered it at the end of his life and as he gave it to the companions.

The companions understood the Quran, not as a book but as an oral message, it was not like a book in everybody's home.

The Compilation of the Quran

Until the companions who memorized the Quran started to die off in the battles and of old age. Umar went to Abu Bakr, after Prophet Muhammad's death, and said that:

"The memorizers are dying off, let's compile that book."

Abu Bakr said:

“How can I do something that Prophet Muhammad didn’t do?”

He refused at the beginning, but Umar insisted that this is good. Yes he did not do that, but that’s something that we should do for the common good.

That is historically part of the development of the fiqh, or the understanding of Islamic jurisprudence into things that are for the common good. Not only things that Prophet Muhammad did literally, but things that he would have loved or would have accepted to do had he lived long enough to see these days when the companions were dying off.

What is the Copy of Uthman?

So they compiled the first copy and gave it to Hafsa. They compiled it from different means of writing until Uthman had been the leader of Muslims.

The highlight of his leadership was actually the compilation of the Quran. He gave a lot of attention, a lot of time and resources to that. He formed a committee that did a superb job by compiling everything and making the companions have some sort of a consensus over that compilation. And whenever they had something that the companions disagree about, they read it in different ways, they’d go out and bring people and see who of them made an error in the reading...

So that is the compilation of dozens of the companions that were involved in that process, and then all of the companions who knew anything about the Quran or heard Prophet Muhammad read in anyway, who actually saw the six copies that Uthman eventually did, he burned all the other copies so that people don’t differ anymore and don’t put bits and pieces in the wrong order anymore.

And he took the companions’ consensus over that and he sent all of these copies. And there is no opinion ever in Islam and no sect, no school of thought, law or philosophy, or language that has any other than that Quran.

Every Muslim in any school of thought has actually the same Quran that is “Mushaf Uthman” that Uthman compiled, that is the mother Mushaf.

Why Are There Different Ways of Reading Quran?

There are different readings for three reasons:

– **Different accents.** Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked Allah to give him seven ways of reading the Quran. Why?

Because he was so merciful to his ummah and he knows that the ummah has different accents and dialects.

– **Different dialects.** Sometimes a word is said in a particular dialect, but it’s the same word. Therefore that is also authenticated and compiled.

– **Parallel meanings of the same words** to clarify or to seek a proof is parallel meanings that all are narrated after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This is not for all that anybody could read in this writing of the Arabic language without the dots or different vowels. These are narrated after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and they were all compiled.

When we read the Quran in any of the accents or the dialects that we have in the history of narrations they are all authentically narrated after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

We ask Allah to teach us and to forgive us.