

Studying the Quran

When I first started reading the Quran, I was very blessed that I had not been told that I could not read it when I had my menstrual period. Otherwise, it is quite likely that I would never have bothered to try and read it at all. To be forbidden from reading the scripture for about one quarter of the time because my body was doing what it was designed to do would have made me furious. This “bull of inequity” would simply have been too much for me.

Fortunately, by the time I heard that I was not supposed to touch the book when I was menstruating, I was already hooked on the Quran.

Again this restriction is based on the same verse we have been discussing in the past several chapters (Quran 2:222), which restricts intimate relations between spouses during the wife’s period. However, in this case an additional verse is used.

God tells us first that the Quran is in a well-guarded or protected book. Then comes the following verse, as translated by Yusuf Ali, is:

*Which none shall touch
But those who are clean:
(The Holy Quran LVI:79 [56:79])*

This verse has usually been taken to mean that people who have not made ablution (the ritual wash described in Chapter 14 on the Contact Prayer) and those who are otherwise “im-pure” (like menstruating women) are not allowed to handle the Quran.

However, this makes no sense when one realizes that anyone who is not already Muslim would never be allowed to read the Quran. They would not know to wash first, and even if they did know, most would not bother.

Believe me, if I had not read the Quran there is no way I would have ever become interested in Islam! What I “knew” about it was simply too scary.

Surely God would not make the Quran so inaccessible to non-Muslims. Otherwise how would anyone learn enough to decide to be Muslim?

Rashad Khalifa translates this verse in a way that makes a great deal more sense to me. Rather than saying that one cannot physically touch the book, he translates it as:

*None can grasp it except the sincere.
(Quran: The Final Testament 56:79)*

Thus, if someone is not pure in his or her intentions, in other words they are insincere, they will not get anything out of the Quran. In that way they will not be able to touch it. This makes more sense to me, because clearly anyone who walks into a bookstore can physically pick up a Quran. Whether or not they get anything out of it depends on their sincerity.

For Muslims, the Quran is the source of their religion. As such, it must be read, not just wrapped up and placed in the most honored place in the home, as many Muslims have traditionally done.

The first revelation of the Quran begins “*Read, in the name of your Lord, who created.*” Although this was originally directed to Muhammad, I believe that God is addressing us all in this verse. Reading the Quran is a critical part of any Muslim’s spiritual practice.

In fact, the entire first revelation focuses on studying the scripture:

*Read, in the name of your Lord, who created.
He created man from an embryo.*

*Read, and your Lord, Most Exalted.
Teaches by means of the pen.
He teaches man what he never knew.
(Quran: The Final Testament 96:1-5)*

Here God tells us that He teaches us what we never knew. Yet, Muslims are often told that the Quran is too difficult to understand; that only the scholars can interpret it, and that the *Hadith* are required to explain it. Women are additionally handicapped because they are taught that they cannot even touch the book for a good part of their adult lives.

These are the teachings of men, not of God. God describes Himself as the teacher of the Quran. If God is your teacher, you do not need scholars or *Hadith* to teach you:

*The Most Gracious. Teacher of the Quran.
(Quran: The Final Testament 55:1-2)*

In this next section of verses, He also lets us know that if we are sincere, the meaning of the Quran will be made clear for us. To me the last verse of this passage indicates that Muhammad was not to explain the Quran, but to leave things to God.

*Move not thy tongue
Concerning the (Qur-an)
To make haste therewith.
It is for Us to collect it
And to promulgate it:
But when We have
Promulgated it, follow thou
its recital (as promulgated):
Nay more, it is
For us to explain it
(And make it clear):
(The Holy Quran LXXV:16-19 [75:16-19])*

From the above two sets of verses it is clear that it was not for Muhammad to explain the Quran. God is the one who teach-

es us and explains what we don't understand in the Quran. However, this does not just magically happen. We must do our part.

In fact, God tells us all to read the Quran in the morning ("at dawn" is the exact Arabic, though Yusuf Ali translates it as "in the morning"):

*Establish regular prayers –
At the sun's decline
Till the darkness of the night,
And the morning prayer
And reading: for the prayer
And reading in the morning
Carry their testimony.
(The Holy Quran XVII:78 [17:78])*

What a nice way to begin the day, reading the Quran at dawn. Indeed, that is a good quiet time to read without interruptions or distractions.

One can read the Quran in several manners. It is nice to just open at random and read. However it is also important to read the entire Quran (73:4). To be able to accept the entire Quran, we must know what it says, so we must have read the whole book.

Here is a passage that to me makes it clear that both men and women should read the Quran, and indicates that it is part of our righteous works. Satan will always try to discourage us from doing righteous works. I believe that is why the Quran tells us to take refuge from him before we read.

*Anyone who works righteousness, male or female,
while believing, we will surely grant them a happy life
in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense
(on the Day of Judgment) for their righteous works.
When you read the Quran, you shall seek refuge
in God from Satan the rejected.*

*He has no power over those who believe and trust in their Lord.
(Quran: The Final Testament 16:97-99)*

These verses make it very clear that we all, male and female, should read the Quran, and we should seek refuge in God before doing so.

In this next verse, God makes it very clear that we should not only read the Quran, but also study it carefully.

*Why do they not study the Quran carefully?
Do they have locks on their minds?
(Quran: The Final Testament 47:24)*

Note that this is for all Muslims, not just the men. Another verse (4:82) tells us that if we study the Quran carefully we will see that it has no contradictions. If it were not from God, that would not be the case, especially given the manner in which it was revealed over about twenty-three years.

The following verse also is not addressed just to men, but to “the believers,” which includes men and women and indicates that studying the Quran can be one way of mobilizing for God.

*When the believers mobilize, not all of them shall do so.
A few from each group shall mobilize
by devoting their time to studying the religion....
(Quran: The Final Testament 9:122)*

Thus, studying the religion is a very important role in the society. And of course, from previous chapters we know that the source of our religion is the Quran.

Studying the Quran is not only very important it can be extremely enjoyable. In an earlier chapter I mentioned that I love Fridays because that is the day for both the congregational prayer and our community’s Quran study.

In our community, the brothers rotate giving the Friday Prayer (known as the *Jumu’ah* Prayer). Then on Friday nights the sisters rotate giving the Quranic study, as we read through

the Quran "from cover to cover" (Quran 73:4). Thus we are blessed to hear the wisdom of everyone in the community. Even the older children often share their thoughts and questions during our study.

This active participation by both men and women in the critical activities of the community strengthens the community and gives each individual the chance to grow spiritually. Preparing for and giving the Friday Prayer or the Quranic study are different from listening to others giving them.

When my turn to lead the study comes, I find that preparing for it gives me the opportunity to really delve deeply into the verses that we are reading that week. I am always amazed at how much more there is in the section I am studying than I first noticed.

That is one of the real joys of the Quran. You can read it over and over and always gain more from each reading. When you are studying with other congenial people, it is even better because they add insights from their different viewpoints and life experiences.

The Quran is interesting in another way, it moves from subject to subject very much like our minds do. It is not like the Torah and the Bible, which have a more linear nature to them. The Quran is much more like our own stream of consciousness. Perhaps that is why I have found it to be so satisfying to read and study. I believe that it speaks to a deeper level than normal books. Maybe it reaches this deeper level because it is in tune with the way our minds work.

There is one more thing that I would like to cover regarding reading the Quran. Often I have heard that the Quran cannot be translated, and must be read in Arabic. I do not accept this premise.

Yes, the Quran was revealed in Arabic, and Arabic has many shades of meaning in one phrase. However, if you are not a native speaker of Arabic, I believe that God will teach you the Quran through a good translation.

The Quran is the critical teaching of Islam. If it were true that the Quran could only be read in Arabic, how would any non-Arabic speaking person become a Muslim? Yes, someone can tell you what the Quran says, but nothing has the awesome splendor and power of God's words themselves in your own language.

In fact, the following verses indicate that translating the Quran is necessary:

*If we revealed this to people who do not know Arabic.
And had him recite it (in Arabic), they could not possibly
believe in it. We thus render it (like a foreign language)
in the hearts of the guilty.
(Quran: The Final Testament 26:198-200)*

From this it seems clear that the language you speak is not important. If you speak the most impeccable Arabic, but are not open to guidance, the Quran will be as if it were written in a foreign language. The next verse shows that whether or not the Quran was revealed in Arabic, it is a guide and a healing for the believers, and will mean nothing to the disbelievers.

*If we made it a non-Arabic Quran they would have said,
"Why did it come down in that language?"
Whether it is Arabic or non-Arabic, say, "For those who believe,
it is a guide and healing. As for those who disbelieve, they will be
deaf and blind to it, as if they are being addressed from faraway."
(Quran: The Final Testament 41:44)*

The Quran was revealed in Arabic. But no matter what language is your native tongue, if it is meant to be your scripture it will speak to your heart whatever translation you are reading.

For those of you who have not read the Quran, or have not read all of it, let me encourage you to do so. I know several people who really were not particularly interested in it or Islam, but began reading it for one reason or another, and became fascinated. As a matter of fact, I'm one of those people!

Even if it does not speak to you as it has to me, reading the Quran will give you a much better understanding of the Muslim world, and of yourself. Such an understanding is crucial in this time of great change.

What translation should you read?

As I said earlier in this chapter, I believe that God will teach you through any translation. However, if you are a native English speaker I do recommend that you try Rashad Khalifa's translation. It has made a world of difference in my understanding. The English is modern and easy to read. Also, it was the first translation made by someone whose native tongue was Arabic. Many consider Yusuf Ali's translation one of the best, but his native tongue was neither Arabic nor English but Urdu. I believe that the difference shows.

There is one other thing I would like to mention about Rashad Khalifa's translation. As he was translating, he discovered a very fascinating numerical code imbedded in the Arabic of the Quran.

In truth, this code was the answer to my last doubt about Islam. I had studied the Bible, and its history. There was no question in my mind that in all of the years of oral transmission and then multiple translations of the Bible, some human error had been introduced into this document. How did I know that the same thing had not happened to the Quran?

The numerical code that Rashad Khalifa discovered in the Quran was my answer. After careful study of this code, I believe that it is so intricate and all encompassing that the Arabic language had to be created around it in order for the Quran to make such wonderful sense and also conform to the mathematical code. Only God could do such a thing. The Quran has to have come to us intact.

This numerical code is based on the number 19. It is quite amazing the way it permeates the fabric of the Quran. For example, the Quran begins with "In the Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." Each of the Arabic words in this

phrase occurs in the Quran in multiples of 19, and the phrase itself occurs a multiple of 19 times.

The total number of chapters (*suras*) is 114 or 19 times 6. The total number of verses is also a multiple of 19.

The total occurrences of the word “Allah,” the Arabic word for “God”, is a multiple of 19. And if you add the verse and chapter numbers for those verses, the total is also a multiple of 19.

If you take each unique number that occurs in the Quran and add them together, the total is also a multiple of 19.

The list goes on and on.

I have provided Appendix 3 explaining the very basic aspects of this code. Please review it and decide for yourself what this code means to you. At the end of that appendix I give references for further study if you are interested. I think you will find the numerical code worth further investigation.

Indeed, God describes the believers as being those who do investigate everything:

*They are the ones who examine all words, then follow the best.
These are the ones whom God has guided;
these are the ones who possess intelligence.
(Quran: The Final Testament 39:18)*

Being open to the truth, no matter where it comes from is one of the qualities of Islam that I treasure most. Islam is not an exclusive club, but an all-inclusive invitation. It is an invitation for every human being—regardless of gender, race, creed or nationality—to make God their true Lord and Master, their true priority.

I believe that the Quran is one of our most powerful tools in making God our priority. Studying it is a reward in itself.



For many Muslims, Islam was very difficult until they began reading and understanding the Quran for themselves. For many, reading the Quran has been the key to finding their true selves, and discovering their own relationship with God. I know of no more beautiful example of this than the following story.

Quranic Reward

In The Name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

I was very young, maybe seven or eight years of age when I fell in love with God and had an immense yearning to observe God's religion. For years I observed God's commands, by God's Grace, without even knowing that they had been corrupted. However, my heart was never completely content and I always felt somewhat of a void. I would study the Quran a lot, but they had scared us so much about asking any questions that unfortunately, the laws of "*hadith*" had become a substitute for the Quran and we had gotten used to it.

I didn't listen to music, although I loved it, for the books of "*hadith*" prohibited it. I even obeyed the so-called dress code for women (covering my hair) for twenty-two years, until one day, one of my relatives showed me the verse in the Quran regarding the dress code for women. It was then that I decided to stop covering my hair; yet, I was afraid that I might have been wrong.

In school, I had many classmates of different religions, and I always wondered, since God is One, then why were there so many different religions. To make matters worse, when we learned of the many contradictions in Islamic laws, I became more surprised and confused – especially when the people would say that they were followers of the Quran and the prophet Mohammed and yet they each followed different laws and teachings (sectism)! Yet, asking questions was taboo and I would have been known as a sacrilegious person if I dared to ask them. I could feel a storm brewing inside me and I found refuge in writing poetry to express my feelings:

*I am bursting inside and I have no where to go but to God
O God, have compassion on me and show me the way to You
O God, forbid for me other than the path to You
For I do not possess the wisdom, so please guide me to You
So that I would be dedicated to You in Your path
And I would dedicate my life to You as a friend would*

Shortly thereafter, God showered me with His mercy and with the key and the knowledge of the hidden secret of the Quran [numerical code of the Quran] – discovered by Dr. Rashad Khalifa, Ph.D. All doors opened to me and all the questions that I had were finally answered through the Quran, not “*hadith*.” The more my questions were answered by the Quran, the more I trusted God, that maybe God had sent Dr. Khalifa in order to guide us out of the darkness into the light. Today, by God’s Grace, it has been sixteen years since I have wiped out all traces of doubt in my mind regarding the guidance in the Quran. How sweet my life has become and how easy it is to carry out God’s commands.

One of my memories since this knowledge of the Quran has come to me, is when I went to see one of one of the greatest “Islamic scholars” in Iran, for whom I, among many other Muslims, had great respect. I had many conversations with him, but whenever I would ask him a question, he would answer me with baseless “*hadith*,” and it would greatly upset him whenever I would challenge that “*hadith*” with verses from the Quran. My very last conversation with him was the day he told me: “Sister, our conversations/arguments are a waste of time for me. No matter what I tell you, you read me verses from the Quran!”

And I said to him: “Thank you, this has been the best compliment I’ve received all day!” Then I told him good-bye and I said: “I do not worship what you worship. To you is your religion, and to me is my religion.”

Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe.

– Parsa, Iran

