

How Do I Contemplate the Quran?

Allah the Most High said: { أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا }

{Do they not contemplate the Quran or do their hearts have locks on them?}

And He, the Most High said: { أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ ۚ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا }

{Do they not contemplate the Quran? And if it was from other than Allah, they would have found in it a great amount of differing }

▲ So, if someone asks: What is this contemplation?

▲ Al-Tabari¹ (رحمه الله) said: (these verses from Allah mean) “Do these Munaafiqeen not contemplate the speech of their Lord and what it has in it from Allah’s reminders that they may benefit from, from this Quran that was sent down upon His Prophet (عليه الصلاة والسلام) and that they may think about its proofs and evidences, that Allah clarified to them, from what He sent down. And so that they may know about what they are upon from error. And the statement of Allah: { أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا } “Or do they have locks upon their hearts”, Allah said what means “or has Allah locked their hearts, so they do not comprehend what Allah sent down in his book from reminders and benefits.”

▲ Al-Baghawi² (رحمه الله) said that this means: “Do they not think about what is in the Quran?”

▲ Al-Sa’di³ (رحمه الله) said: “It is to think about its meanings and focusing on what is in the meanings from foundational principles and what they necessitate.”

¹ scholar of tafseer and other Islamic sciences; died 310h

² scholar of tafseer and other Islamic sciences; died 516h

³ scholar of tafseer and other Islamic sciences; died 1376h

▲ Al-Shanqeeti⁴ (رحمه الله) said: “it means that the people should contemplate the Quran’s verses, so that they may understand them and they may comprehend them, and that they should spend a lot of time looking into its meanings, so that they may understand what it has in it from correct guidance, and that the people who have understanding can be reminded. Meaning that the people of intellect can be reminded from that which goes against what is correct”.

▲ Al-Shanqeeti also said: “And what is known that whoever does not busy themselves with contemplating the verses of this tremendous Quran, meaning that they don’t look at its pages and understand its meanings, and comprehend what is in its meanings and acting upon its meanings, then indeed, he is somebody that is turning away from it. He’s not someone who contemplates it and due to that he deserves to be reminded of that mistake, as mentioned in the Quran about anyone who has the ability to do so. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) complained to his Lord about the rejection of his people for the Quran, as Allah said: { وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا } {The Messenger said: Oh my Lord, indeed my people have rejected this Quran}.

▲ Contemplating the Quran, then this is from the fruits and the results of having the correct understanding of what Allah the Most High intended in his speech. And it is the clarification and explanation of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) that the companions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) were upon in their understanding of the Quran.

▲ So, contemplation of the Quran correctly, does not happen except with having correct understanding of what Allah intended in his revelation as Allah said:

⁴ scholar of tafseer and other Islamic sciences; died 1405h

{ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ } { We have sent down to you the reminder⁵, so that you may clarify to the people what has been sent down to them, so they may comprehend it and think about its meanings }. So the explanation and the clarification, was from the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) to his companions and they are the carriers of the Quran and the Sunnah.

▲ And the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) they are the ones that have preserved this clarification of the Quran from the Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم). They are the trustworthy ones of this Ummah, whom Allah chose to accompany His Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم). They did not speak about the explanation of the Quran except what they learned from the clarification and explanation of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم), about what Allah the Most High intended. And if one of them did not know about the explanation of a verse, they would stop themselves and withhold from speaking about the verse without knowledge.

▲ Some of the examples and proofs that we have that clarify the methodology of the companions (رضي الله عنهم) and how they would withhold from speaking about the explanation of the Speech of Allah, if they didn't have knowledge of a specific verse, then they would not speak from their own opinions:

▲ The great Siddeeq, Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), he was asked about the meaning of a verse, and he said: “Which sky would shade me, and which earth would hold me, if I said something about the Book of Allah without knowledge!?”

▲ And in another narration that Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (رضي الله عنه) was asked about a verse from the book of Allah (عز وجل) and he said “Which earth would hold me and which sky would shade

⁵ Tafseer Al-Baghawi: “The meaning of “The Reminder” is the revelation and the Prophet ﷺ clarified the revelation. The explanation of the Quran is looked for in the Sunnah.”

me and where would I go and what would I do, if I spoke about a verse from the Book of Allah upon other than what Allah intended by it?!”.

▲ And in yet another narration from Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) that he said, “Which earth would hold me and which sky would shade me if I spoke about the Book of Allah with my opinion!?”

▲ The source for the person that seeks the truth in understanding the correct contemplation of the Quran and the Sunnah, is in following what the Companions of The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و سلم) were upon, in how they explained the speech of Allah. Jabir Ibn Abdullah, the noble companion of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم), (رضي الله عنه), said that which means: “The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه و سلم) was among us, and upon him was the Quran sent down to, and he knew the explanation, and as the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) acted upon the Quran, then we likewise acted how the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) acted”.

▲ The contemplation of the speech of Allah should only be with the correct understanding and explanation based upon what Allah intended from his speech. If it’s not based upon what Allah intended, then it would be distortion and deviation, and in that would be destruction of the Muslim Ummah. The Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم), said what means: ((The destruction of my Ummah is in the book and the milk)). So the Companions said: “ Oh Messenger of Allah, what is the book and what is the milk?”, so he explained (صلى الله عليه و سلم) : ((The Muslims would learn the Quran and they would explain it upon other than what Allah intended when he sent it down, and they would love milk and they would leave off praying in the congregations, and in coming to the Juma’ah prayer and they would remain out in the countryside))⁶

⁶ They would shift to a more relaxed life of just staying off by themselves and abandoning those obligations while enjoying their livestock’s milk

▲ And we should pay attention to the statement of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) in which he said: ((There will be in my Ummah great differing and splitting, there will be people who have beautiful speech, but their actions will be incorrect. They will recite the Quran but it will not go beyond their collar bones.⁷)).

▲ So this contemplation of the Quran, is the result of the correct explanation and the correct understanding that the companions the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم) were upon. And Allah ordered us to contemplate His Speech as He said:

{ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ } and He said: { كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ }

He said which means: {It is a book that we have sent down to you that is blessed so that they may contemplate its verses } and Allah said {Did they not contemplate His statement?!}.

▲ Ibn Al-Qayyim (رحمه الله) said: “If the people knew the benefits of reciting the Quran with contemplation, they would busy themselves with that instead of being busy with anything else. So, if he recited, while thinking about it and were to pass by verses that would be a cure for his heart, he would repeat the recitation, even if it were up to a hundred times. Or even repeat the verse through the whole night. So, reciting a verse from the Quran while contemplating it and understanding it, is better than reciting the whole Quran without contemplating and understanding it. It’s more beneficial to the heart to think about and understand a verse and it brings you more close to achieving a higher state of imaan, and tasting the sweetness of the Quran. This was the way of the righteous predecessors, that they would repeat a verse in their recitation all the way up until the morning. It is authentic that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و سلم), spent the night in prayer reciting a single verse all the way up until morning: { إِنَّ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَلِئِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ }⁷

⁷ meaning they would not act upon the Quran correctly

{ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ } which means: { If You were to punish them, indeed they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, then indeed You are the All Mighty All Wise }

▲ It's narrated from Abu Tharr (رضي الله عنه) that he said: “The Messenger (صلى الله عليه و سلم) recited this verse all the way up until morning: { If You were to punish them, indeed they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, then indeed You are the All Mighty All Wise }”

▲ And Sa'eed ibn Ubaid At-Ta-ee said: “I heard Sa'eed Ibn Jubair repeat this verse when he was leading them in prayer in the month of Ramadan { وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ }, { And fear the day that you will return to Allah}.”

▲ And Al-Qaasim Ibn Ayuob said: “I heard Sa'eed Ibn Jubair repeat this verse in the prayer more than twenty times, { وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ تُوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ } { And fear the day, that you will return back to Allah and then each person will be given that which they have earned, and they will not be oppressed}.”

▲ Ibn Khuzaymah (رحمه الله), named a chapter in his book of Ahadeeth: “The chapter of the permissibility of repeating a single verse of the Quran in the prayer a number of times, so that the Quran may contemplated and thought about deeply.”

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