

HAVE WE ABANDONED THE QURAN?

An important consideration as we enter the Holy Month of Ramadaan

Jumuah khutbah delivered at the Ahlul Bait (a.s) Islamic Centre on 12 June 2015

Our weekly compulsory reminder during the Jumuah Khutbah to observe the Taqwa of Almighty Allah takes on an added significance this week as we stand on the eve of the Holy month of Ramadaan which commences next week when the observation of fasting becomes compulsory on every Muslim capable of fasting and whose minimum expected outcome is the development of this very attribute of Taqwa or Consciousness of Allah. The repeated reminder of Taqwa each week and the creation of a special environment in the Holy Month of Ramadaan to further develop Taqwa and the continued reference to Taqwa in various places in the Quran and in various ways indicates to us that Taqwa has various levels and one's continuous striving to develop Taqwa is actually everyone's individual attempt to take one's personal Taqwa to the next level.

From a quick glance at the reference to Taqwa in Quran, I just want to refer to 3 levels (of the many levels) that are alluded to in the Quran for us to ponder upon:

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1. In Surah Taghabun Verse 16 it says: "So be conscious of Allah (have Taqwa) as much as you can."

This verse basically recognizes that everyone has a different developed capability to have Taqwa and that we are encouraged to at least live up to our individual developed level of Taqwa.

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2. In Surah Maa-idah Verse 27 it says: "Allah only accepts from those who are God Conscious (who have Taqwa)."

This verse briefly indicates to us that the condition for the mere basic acceptability of our A'maal or Actions is that it must be combined with Taqwa, otherwise our Good Actions have little value and might not even be considered for acceptance at all if the motivation accompanying our action is not driven by Taqwa of Allah.

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3. In Surah Aali-Imraan Verse 102 it says: "Have Consciousness of Allah (Taqwa) which reaches the Haq/Truth/Reality of the Consciousness which is due to Him."

This verse speaks about a very different level of Taqwa where one actually reaches the ultimate level of Consciousness of Allah where our Taqwa is on a level of True Consciousness of Almighty Allah.

So these different levels of Taqwa should make it clear to us that we should never consider ourselves as having "arrived" at our destination and that we are on a continuous journey of spiritual development and wayfaring to Allah.

The intended outcome of fasting is to develop Taqwa at the very least. If in this Holy month we go through nothing more than a ritual of abstaining from food and drink, then Ramadaan will be nothing more than a drag and a type of hunger strike and burden on us. We will never enjoy it if that is our approach. Our mood will change to being miserable instead of being excited as our stomachs will be growling.

On the other hand we find that the achievements of those who take this opportunity of truly developing themselves in Ramadaan is actually much higher than developing Taqwa, they actually focus on fasting to develop sincerity (ikhlaas) which is an attribute that takes our A'maal beyond mere acceptability to Almighty Allah, but to a point of being considered "the best of actions" or "Ahsanu amalan" as referred to in Surah Mulk.

But our reminder for the development of Taqwa in this Holy Month at the very least is due to its link to the second very important significance of the Holy Month of Ramadaan which is the Quran itself which was revealed in this month. And thus Ramadaan is the "Month of the Quran."

While the Quran indicates that it was revealed as

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a "Guidance to mankind" (Surah Baqarah Verse 185), which is a type of Guidance for all humanity in a general sense in that it teaches us where we come from and why we are here, but for the one who goes beyond the general guidance and achieves Taqwa, the Quran has something more special reserved for such people and that is that the whole Quran becomes their guide in each and every aspect of their life and the Quran thus declares close to the very beginning in Surah Baqarah Verse 2:

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"This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a Guidance to the Muttaqeen (People of Taqwa)."

Now having said that and before we become over excited in being confident that we are those "muttaqeen" which is referred to in this verse, let us examine another verse in the Quran in relation to the Quran itself which should make us think twice.

My people have abandoned this Quran

We are entering this month of the Quran and will want to consider ourselves to be among those who are linked to the Quran, but the Quran states something very disconcerting that will occur on the Day of Judgement in relation to itself. It says in Surah Furqaan Verse 30:

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“And the Messenger cried out: 'Oh My Lord! Surely my people have abandoned this Quran.’”

Notice that the Quran is making reference to something that the Prophet Muhammad (sawa) will say in the future, but speaks about it in the past tense. This adds emphasis to the fact that this will definitely happen which should thus add to our concern regarding what this verse means.

So the natural question is “who is he referring to?” And why does the Quran make reference to the tone of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) being one of anguish?

When we analyse this verse of the Quran then we suddenly see that even though we may be 1.7 billion Muslims in the world today, that this one single verse of the Quran might well be an evidence against us on the Day of Judgement and should thus be sufficient to instil a level of humility within us and break our sense of entitlement that we seem to have in believing that only we, or more particularly our sect or school of thought, are going to jannah to the exclusion of everyone else. This arrogance that one witnesses on a daily basis of people believing and expressing that only they are on haq and will go to jannah is an arrogance that could be crushed by just this one verse of the Quran.

Polytheists abandoned the Quran

Off course at the very first level, the people who abandoned the Quran were the very extended family of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) in the form of certain of his uncles like Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl, etc. who from the onset disbelieved and were enemies of Islam and would not abandon idol worship.

And they did not only disbelieve in the Quran, their disbelief took on a destructive nature. They would forbid others from the Quraish from listening to the Quran when it was recited or taught by Prophet Muhammad (sawa).

And besides forbidding people from listening to the Quran, they would cause disruptions when the Quran was being recited by making loud noises of different kinds so that the listener could not concentrate on what was being recited.

And Quran makes reference to these incidents. In an example in Surah Fussilat Verse 26 it says:

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“And those who disbelieve say, ‘Do not listen to this Qur’an and speak noisily during [the recitation of it] that perhaps you will overcome”.

These were the very close family of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) and people of Quraish whom are considered to be his very own people and Prophet Muhammad (sawa) will thus complain against them.

Humanity at large abandoned the Quran

But Prophet Muhammad (sawa)'s complaint will not be limited to his extended family or people of Quraish. He was sent as a "Mercy unto all the Worlds" and this Quran is "a guidance to the whole of mankind." Even though mankind at large, in this day and age have ease of access to information, the majority is still not interested in the Quran.

And even though the negative image that the media as well as terrorists have portrayed about the Quran are contributing factors to humanity at large abandoning the Quran, the reasons why many will prefer to live an atheistic lifestyle is the very same as Abu Lahab's reason and that is that they are not willing to sacrifice the extreme comforts of this world and live up to the Islamic responsibilities that the Quran commands of being on an equal footing like another human being and wanting to share one's wealth.

And thus the broader mankind are considered to have abandoned the Quran and Prophet Muhammad (sawa)' complaint will thus include them.

Muslims also abandoned the Quran

So we may sit here and think that the categories of people that I have mentioned who abandoned the Quran does not relate to us. But in actual fact it relates to us as well i.e. Muslims in general too might be considered to have abandoned the Quran no matter which sect you come from.

And this really occurs in various ways.

Let us ask ourselves the question in a very honest manner....what role does the Quran play in our practical life on a daily basis?

Do we have a beautiful Quran packed away on a shelf at home or perhaps these days simply as an App on our smart phones that merely collects dust and suddenly next week during Ramadaan we will take it out a bit and recite from it?

Do we really read Quran on a daily basis?

Do we listen to the recital of the Quran on a daily basis?

Do we care to memorise some portions of the Quran on a daily or weekly basis?

Do we reflect on the meanings of what we recite on a daily basis?

Do we allocate time to study the tafseer of the Quran on a regular basis?

Or is our relationship with the Quran a superficial one that is reserved for certain occasions like weddings and funerals?

How to test our level of relationship with Quran

If we only look at the very basic level of reciting the Quran then you find that it is part and parcel of the daily routine of every spiritual person.

In the life of Imam Khomeini (r.a) we find that in his early years he would do a complete recital of the whole Quran once in every ten days. And during the Holy month of Ramadaan he would complete a recital of the Quran once in every three days. And that recital was not in the form of speed reading like we hear people do in taraweeh salaah, it is a recital in a slow, measured manner in line with the Quranic guide of how tilaawat of Quran should occur.

But that's the life of truly spiritual people. How about our life? Do we at the very least observe basic compliance when it comes to reading Quran?

Prophet Muhammad (sawa) is reported to have said that if you recite ten verses of the Quran each day, then you will be counted from among those who were not "Ghafileen" or "oblivious" ones. This hadith is recorded in both Sunni and Shia resources.

So if we do not recite at least ten verses of Quran everyday, not just in Ramadaan but everyday, then we are considered to be oblivious in relation to the Quran.

And immediately we find a huge number of us Muslims in general falling into this category and thus being of those who abandoned the Quran even though we claim to love Quran.

But the good news is that if one reads more verses than that on a consistent basis each day then one quite easily achieves higher levels of spirituality.

Thus the ahadith say that if we read fifty verses each day then we will be counted from among the “Thaakireen” or those who “Remembered Allah.”

And if we recite one hundred verses of Quran each day consistently then we will be counted from among those who are considered to be the “Qaaniteen” or those who were “Obedient to Allah.” And various other levels are mentioned.

And all of this is only at the very basic level of reciting Quran each day.

Abandoning Quran in sphere of Understanding Quran

So one may still sit here and think that we do listen to Quran and read Quran and memorise Quran and even practise Quran and thus think “How have Muslims then abandoned the Quran?”

Well the answer at this level is that in our understanding of Quran many Muslims have definitely abandoned Quran as we have wholesale chosen to ignore the instruction in Quran itself when it comes to who to follow when it comes to understanding Quran.

When Prophet Muhammad (sawa) makes this cry on the Day of Judgement

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“Oh my Lord! Certainly my people have abandoned this Quran”, a reply will come from Allah which is contained in the Quran itself when it says:

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“And most certainly We have made this Quran easy to Remember, so is there anyone who will mind.” (Surah Qamar Verse 40). And this verse appears a few times in this Surah.

Why is its remembrance easy, and I am not just referring to memorisation? Its remembrance is easy as Allah has placed people among the followers of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) who would be given the special title of “Ahlul Thikr” i.e. “The People of Remembrance” and the easy task that we have when we do not know something is to follow the simple instruction of Quran:

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“Ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know.”(Surah Anbiyaa Verse 7).

Don't just ask anybody, rather ask the People of Remembrance if you do not know something. And this instruction appears more than once in the Quran.

Ahlul Bait (a.s) are "Ahlul Thikr" or "People of Remembrance". They are the ones that we supposed to approach when we want to understand Quran. They are the ones who are the "Gates to the City of knowledge".

Imam Ali (a.s) is the one who says that "Prophet (sawa) taught me one thousand chapters of knowledge and from each chapter I opened another one thousand chapters."

And it is the Ahlul Bait (a.s) who are the second of the Thaqalyn that we should hold onto to avoid going astray. Quran and Ahlul Bait (a.s) which is Thaqalyn will never separate until the Day of Judgement.

And Muslims will so proudly and even emotionally respond by saying we love Ahlul Bait (a.s) 100% and we politely then ask "So please show us how the understanding of Quran in the view of Ahlul Bait (a.s) (who are Ahlul Thikr) is incorporated into your daily life."

And this is a rhetorical question as the reality is that the practises of Muslims in their daily lives is not fully informed by the Quran and Sunnah as Understood by Ahlul Bait (a.s). Yes it is primarily informed by the Quran and Sunnah as understood and reported by “other than the Ahlul Bait a.s.”

And that is why from performing Wudu, to Athaan to leaving out “Bismillah” in the recitation of Surah Fatiha, to Jamaat Salaah for nafl salaah, to Khums, to the Laws of Divorce to Haj, to Fasting when travelling to virtually every aspect of Sharia, it is not based on the understanding of Quran and Sunnah primarily from the view of Ahlul Bait (a.s), but rather from the view of others.

And while a mere twenty odd ahadith are recorded in certain of the major Books of Ahadith from the most knowledgeable man after Prophet Muhammad (sawa), i.e. Imam Ali (a.s), who called himself the “Speaking Quran”, extraordinary effort it given to recognising the views and status of the one who would place a “spear” through the Quran at Siffin.

Spiritual loss from Abandoning the “Ahlul Thikr”

The practical impact of this abandoning of the authentic Understanding of Quran and the Ahlul Thikr or People of Remembrance is that it restricts our spiritual development.

People of Tasawwuf recognise that in spiritual development, Imam Ali (a.s) is the Spiritual Master and one should appreciate this real commonality that we share.

But as we enter this Holy Month of Ramadaan, how much access do Muslims have to the spiritual teachings of Ahlul Bait (a.s) which is meant to assist one in maximising on one's spiritual development during this month?

It has become a fashion that all effort goes into reciting the whole Quran in Taraweeh. And in Makkah it will be redone in Tahajjud which they make in jamaat which is not the way the Ahlul Bait (a.s) or Ahlul Thikr taught us in any case.

And while they are totally pre-occupied with that, extremely limited attention is paid to the institution of dua in general and particularly in Ramadaan.

People ask us what is your program at your centre for the nights of Ramadaan and when we answer that we do reciting of Quran, Dua Iftitah and then Lectures on Quran, they look at us

confused and ask “what about taraweeh?” We answer no we do not perform that is done jamaat and the response we get is that we are lazy. Yet Ahlul Bait (a.s) taught us that for those who are really keen, there is a one thousand rakaat salaah recommended which is completed over the month of Ramadaan, but because it is done individually, it goes unnoticed.

And this aloofness shown toward dua is not necessarily due to not being interested in making dua, it is simply due to not even being aware of and accessing the Treasure of Duas of the Ahlul Bait (a.s).

We find the largest number of duas from Ahlul Bait (a.s) being recommended during this Holy month of Ramadaan.

From short duas that we read after each salaah, to the longer ones and very long intimate duas that are recommended during the quiet time after midnight.

Dua Abu Hamza Thumali which was taught by Imam Zainul Abideen (a.s) which is made in the period before Sehr in the morning and takes at least one and a half hours to read, used to be read by people like Ayatullah Behjat in the Qunoot of Tahajjud.

“And most certainly We have made this Quran easy to Remember, so is there anyone who will mind.”

By not minding and abandoning the Ahlul Bait (a.s), we have abandoned the authentic Understanding of the Quran and consequently suffer spiritual loss in that our spiritual growth is stunted.

Abandoning “Ahlul Thikr” results in the disastrous extremism we see today

Historically and to this very day certain groups, while abandoning the Ahlul Bait (a.s), they went the route of even abandoning the Sunnah as narrated by the Sahabah and considered the Quran to be the only criterion. They brought slogans of “There is no rule except the rule of Allah.” These were the khawaarij. And while they prayed whole night and fasted whole day and memorised Quran, they had abandoned the Quran in the worst way in that they did not only leave the Ahlul Bait (a.s) who are the Ahlul Thikr, but they fought and killed the one who was the speaking Quran and that is Imam Ali (a.s).

And these are the worst of people who abandoned the Quran. Their slogans are verses of Quran which is haq, but their intentions are baatil.

ISIS which is modern day khawaarij give you a good glimpse into the khawaarij at the time of Imam Ali (a.s), the ones who fought against the Quran with the Quran.

In the many videos of the slaughtering of innocent people by ISIS, there was one wherein I saw them pulling 3 truck drivers out of their trucks and asking them "What are you? Sunni or Shia?" They looked confused and replied "We are Sunni." Then this ISIS murderer says to them "how can you prove to me that you Sunni?" So he asks them some questions about how they make athaan and the number of rakaats in Salaah. Since these drivers came from Syria, he somehow concluded "Oh....you people are Nusayris."

So what does that mean? It means you are mushrik. And the Quran says:

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"And fight the Mushrikeen altogether" and thus you must be killed. And they get lined up and are shot dead in full view of a video recording which is then placed on Youtube.

Yes the Quran says “And fight the Mushrikeen or polytheists altogether” but in their perverted understanding and baatil intentions, they don't read the verse further which gives a condition when something like that must be done:

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“like they fight you altogether.”

What did these three truck drivers do and thousands of other people innocently killed in the name of Islam and are killed by quoting the Quran? They did nothing.

If you recall it was the first of Ramadaan last year that this cancer of ISIS declared their so-called Khilafate and we have only witnessed horror ever since.

And so Prophet Muhammad (sawa) will cry out on the Day of Judgement “Oh my Lord! Surely my people have abandoned this Quran.” As their horrific actions have nothing to do with the Quran.

AFOSA wishes you well for the Month of Ramadaan

As we enter this Holy Month of Ramadaan, which Prophet (sawa) says is the month of his Ummah, the Ahlul Bait Foundation of South Africa (AFOSA) wishes all Muslims around the world well in this month and especially Muslims in South Africa and we say an early Ramadaan Kareem to all of you.

This is a month in which we participate in the very same act of worship of fasting. Let it be a time when show compassion to each other, when families unite, when we share the blessings of Ramadaan beyond our personal households, when we share iftaar and consider the plight of the less fortunate who are not sure where their iftaar or suhoor is coming from.

Let it be a month wherein we get closer to the Quran, and get closer to those who are considered the vanguards of the Quran, the Ahlul Thikr which is the Ahlul Bait (a.s).

Let it be a month in which we fast with our tongues and not utter falsehood about other Muslims and extend our hand of Unity and Brotherhood.

Let our consciousness for the plight of Muslims throughout the world be increased, from Burma to Pakistan, to Saudi Arabia and Yemen and the land of the Ahlul Bait (a.s) in Iraq. We have a brother in our jumuah today who is a doctor from Qateef where the bomb blast went off recently in jumuah. We ask him to convey our best wishes to that part of the world where followers of Ahlul Bait (a.s) are under extreme pressure.

And may we complete this month having achieved the Mercy, Forgiveness and Protection of Almighty Allah against the torment of the next world and build our spiritual capital that will sustain us for the rest of the year, Inshallah.

