

Notes on the Quran

The Quran (“recitation”) is the word of God (Allah) transmitted to the Prophet Muhammed by the Angel Gabriel over a period of approximately 23 years, beginning on 22 December 609 CE, when Muhammad was 40, and concluding in 632, the year of his death. It was transmitted in segments that became the Surah (chapters) of the text we have today. Muhammed did not know how to write, so he shared the text with his Companions through recitation. The definitive text was established not long after his death.

There are 144 Surahs, each divided into verses (Ayah), generally arranged according to length, from short to long. Each Surah has both a number and name, based on a key word or subject. Unlike the great majority of the Hebrew Bible or Christian scriptures, the Quran is a chronological narrative. As the Quran was given to Muhammed in Arabic, and since it is the divine word of God, it is only the true Quranic text in the original Arabic.

The text is allusive and poetic. It is often challenging to discern exactly what the Qu’ran “says” about a particular episode or topic. The art/science of Quranic exegesis (interpretation) is called Tafsir.

The Qu’ran features many narratives of prophets who also appear in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, referred to by their Arabic names (Abraham/Ibrahim, Moses/Musa, Jesus/Isa). To Muslims, they are also prophets of Islam. The Quranic stories often differ from the stories of the same characters in the Jewish and Christian texts

Memorization and recitation of the Quran is central to Muslim worship and personal devotion. In public, it is recited in a melodic chant (Tajwid). Many Muslims memorize all or part of the Qu’ran; someone who has memorized the whole text is known as a Hafiz. There is no set lectionary (particular reading assigned to a particular date) although there is a schedule of 30 readings for the month of Ramadan, to enable a reading of the complete Qu’ran during the holy month.

A non-Muslim who wishes to read the Quran is often advised to start with shorter passages, out of a translation with introduction and notes, such as “The Study Quran,” edited by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. There are many recitations on YouTube, and apps that allow you to read along in English as the text is recited in Arabic.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ١

Bismillāhi r-rahmāni r-rahīm

1:1 In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy!

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ٢

Al ḥamdu lillāhi rabbi l-'ālamīn

1: 2Praise belongs to God ,Lord of the Worlds,

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ٣

Ar rahmāni r-rahīm

1: 3the Lord of Mercy ,the Giver of Mercy,

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ٤

Māliki yawmi d-dīn

1: 4Master of the Day of Judgement.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ٥

Iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in

1: 5It is You we worship ;it is You we ask for help.

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ٦

Ihdinā ṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm

1: 6Guide us to the straight path:

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا

الضَّالِّينَ ٧

Ṣirāṭ al-laḍīna an'amta 'alayhim ḡayril maḡḍūbi 'alayhim walāḍ ḍāllīn

1: 7the path of those You have blessed ,those who incur no anger and who have not gone astray.

Glossary and Resources for Study of Islam

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Qu'ranic Study

Ayah – A verse of the Qur'an
Hadith – Reports of the life and teachings of Muhammed
Qu'ran – The holy scripture of Islam
Surah – A chapter of the Qur'an
Tafsir - The science of interpreting the Quran
Tajwid - The formal chanting of the Quran

Clergy

Imam - Linguistically means “leader,” but refers to those who lead a congregation or community.
Sheik - Linguistically means “elderly person,” and can be used interchangeably with Imam, though typically not used for young Imams.

Prayer and Observance

Allah – God
Bismillah -- “In the Name of Allah” (Bi Ism Allah)
Companion – A follower of Muhammed during his lifetime
Dua – Personal supplication
Eid - Best translated as “festival” but refers more specifically to the two major holidays
Halal – “Mutar,” according to Muslim law
Haram – Unclean, forbidden
Hafiz - Someone who has memorized the entire Quran in Arabic
Iftar – The end-of-day meal during Ramadan, breaking the day's fast
Ism -- “Name” in Arabic (“Shem” Hebrew)
Jumma – Literally translates to “Day of Gathering; refers to Friday and/or Friday prayers
Khutbah - The teaching or sermon at Jumma services
Masjid – Mosque or Muslim prayer space
Mosque – The English equivalent of “Masjid.” In the United States, the physical space is not necessarily a stand-alone building. It can be a room.
Nabi - Prophet
Ramadan – The month of fasting and prayer. This year May 16 to June 14
Rasul - Messenger
Salah – Formal prayer, worship
Sunna – The way of Mohammed
Wudu – Ritual ablutions (washing) before prayer
Ya (Ya Allah) – Interjection, “O, God”

Prayer times

Fajr (dawn)

Dhuhr (morning)

Asr (afternoon)

Maghrib (evening)

Isha (night)

Expressions and Interjections

Alhamdulillah - "All praise and thanks be to God"

Inshallah - "If Allah wills it"

Mashallah - "God has willed" or "It has been willed by God." Usually recited after something positive happens

Allahu Akbar - God is Great. Also recited after something positive happens, though generally reserved for more spontaneous, serendipitous, or "miraculous" events

Pilgrimage

Dhu al-Hijjah – the Islamic month of pilgrimage

Hajji/hajja – Someone who has made a the pilgrimage (m/f)

Kaaba – The black cube in Mecca; considered to have been built by Abraham

Mecca – The holiest city of Islam, the end-point of pilgrimage

Mount Marwah - A mountain where Hagar ran from to seek help for her son after Abraham left them in the desert

Mount Safa - A mountain where Hagar ran from to seek help for her son after Abraham left them in the desert (She ran between Safa and Marwah)

Ramee - Stoning the Devil in Mina

Sa'yee - Traveling seven times between Mount Safa and Mount Marwah

Tawaf - Circumambulating around the Kaaba

Umrah – Pilgrimage at a time other than the Hajj; known as "minor pilgrimage"

Five Pillars of Islam

Shahada (Faith)

Salah (Prayer)

Sawn (Fasting)

Zakat (Charity)

Hajj (Pilgrimage to Mecca)

The Prophets and Messengers of Islam (Chronological)

Adam	Adam
Idris	Enoch
Nuh	Noah
Hud	Eber
Saleh	Salah
Abraham	Abraham
Lut	Lot
Ismail	Ishmael
Ishaq	Isaac
Yaqub	Jacob
Yusuf	Joseph
Ayub	Job
Shoaib	Jethro
Musa	Moses
Harun	Aaron
Dhul-Kifl	Ezekiel
Dawud	David
Sulayman	Solomon
Ilyas	Elijah
Al-Yasa	Elisha
Yunus	Jonah
Zakariya	Zechariah
Yahya	John the Baptist

Miryam	Mary, mother of Jesus
Isa	Jesus
Muhammad	
Gabril	Gabriel

Books

- "How to Read the Qur'an" by Mona Siddiqui
- "How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations" by Carl Ernst
- "Moving the Mountain: Beyond Ground Zero to a New Vision of Islam in America" by Feisal Abdul Rauf
- "Muhammad: A Prophet for Our Time" by Karen Armstrong
- "What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam" by John L. Esposito
- What the Qur'an Meant: And Why It Matters, Gary Wills

Videos

YouTube, search "Quran Recitation"

YouTube, search "How to Perform Salah"

Apps

"Quran"

"Prayspace"