



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

FACULTY OF ARTS

COURSE CODE: ISL415

COURSE TITLE: ADVANCED STUDIES ON THE QUR'ĀN

**COURSE
GUIDE**

ISL415: ADVANCED STUDIES ON THE QURA'N

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Published By:

National Open University of Nigeria
First Printed: 2015

Date Reviewed: 2022

ISBN: 978-978-058-616-7

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Printed by

For

National Open University of Nigeria

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Introduction

ISL 415: Advanced Studies on the Qur'ān is a one-semester fourteen credit unit course. It is available for all final year students as a course in the B.A. Islamic Studies programme. The course is also suitable for anyone who is interested in the study of the Glorious Qur'ān as holy Book. There are no pre-requisites for the course. This course guide briefs you what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for tutor-marked assignments. Detailed information on tutor-marked assignments is found in the separate file, which will be provided for you in due course. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

Course Aims

ISL 415: Advanced Studies on the Qur'ān comprises of 14 units. Its overall aim is to acquaint you with a comprehensive understanding of the characteristic features of the Qur'ān, its form and contents and its significance as a Scripture. This among other issues will be achieved by:

- i. introducing you to the revelation as source of the Qur'ān and the development of science of *qirā'at*;
- ii. leading you forward to gaining in-depth understanding of the characteristics, features and suitability of the Qur'ān to human nature;
- iii. helping you to explain the Qur'ān as a basic source of the *Shari'ah*; and
- iv. highlighting the uniqueness of the Holy Qur'ān and its role in the establishment of a good society.

Course Objectives

In achieving the aims set out above, there are overall set objectives. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at its beginning. You should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check your progress. You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. This way you can confirm whether you have done what was required of you by the unit.

Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- explain the methods of studying the Qur'ān, and the development of science of *qirā'at*;
- give in-depth explanation of the characteristics, features and suitability of the Qur'ān to human nature;
- highlight the significance of the Qur'ān as a basic source of the *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law); and
- provide detail descriptions of guidelines of the Holy Qur'ān on the establishment of a good society.

Working through this course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units in the Course Material, the recommended books and other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units in the Course Material
3. References and Further Reading
4. Assessments

The Study Units

Module 1: Characteristics and Features of the Qur'ān

- Unit 1 Names of the Qur'ān
- Unit 2 Revelation and Preservation of the Qur'ān
- Unit 3 Unification of the Qur'ānic Versions
- Unit 4 The Manuscripts of the Qur'ān.

Module 2 : Form and Contents of the Qur'ān

- Unit 1 The Makkan and Madinan Suwar
- Unit 2 Divisions of the Qur'ān
- Unit 3 Literary Forms and Style of the Qur'ān
- Unit 4 Variant Readings of the Qur'ān
- Unit 5 The development of science of *qirā'ah*

Module 3: The Significance of the Qur'ān

- Unit 1 Qur'ān as the primary source of Sharī'ah
- Unit 2 The Essence and Message of the Qur'ān.
- Unit 3 Views of non Muslims about the Qur'ān
- Unit 4 The Authenticity of the Qur'ān
- Unit 5 Qur'ānic Principles on Unity, Equality and Co-existence of Mankind

References

In addition to the Course Material, you are required to purchase any of the underlisted textbooks. You need them for this and some other Islamic studies courses.

AbulA'laMawdudi (1989), *Towards Understanding Islam*, United Kingdom, The Islamic Foundation.

Abdalati Hammudah (1976), *Islam in Focus*, Indiana, U.S.A.,.

Abdulah Yusuf Ali (1999), *The Qur'ān: Translation and Commentary*, United Kingdom, ICPCI, Islamic Vision.

M.O.A Abdul (1981), *Gateway to Islam*, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.

Muhammad Ahmad (1992) *Misinterpretations of the Qur'ān*, Ibadan, Nigeria, Islamic Education Trust

Denffer (1986), *'Ulum al Qur'ān (An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān)*

Sayyid Qutb, (1979), *In the shade of the Qur'ān*, London, M.W.H London Publishers.

H. Haykal Husayn Haykal, (1982), *The Life of Muhammad*, Lagos, Academic Press Limited.

Marmaduke Pickthall, *Qur'ānic Advices*, Lagos, Nigeria, Islamic Publications Bureau.

Assessments

Your assessment will be based on self-assessment exercises, tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and a final examination which you will write at the end of the course.

The self-assessment exercises are to assist you in measuring your understanding of the topics you read in the Course. Take them seriously.

Tutor - Marked Assignments (TMA)

Every unit contains at least one or two Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs). You will be asked to answer four of them on-line and submit them for assessment. The four will be Multiple Choice based and constitute 30% of your final grade. The tutor-marked assignments may be presented to you at four separate intervals. It is important you do them as they constitute your continuous assessment.

Final Examination and Grading

At the end of the course, you will write a final examination, which will constitute 70% of your final grade. The examination, which shall be on-line and last for two hours, shall consist of Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and Fill in The Blank Questions (FBQ).

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments	Four assignments, best three marks of the four counts at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Presentation Schedule

The Presentation Schedule included in the academic calendar on the University web-site gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor-marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against falling behind in your work.

SUMMARY

This Course Guide has been able to familiarize you with an overview of what you should expect in ISL415 Advanced Studies on the Qur'ān. Upon completing the course, the questions relating to various studies on the Qur'ān which you will be able to answer will be unlimited. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

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Module 2: Form and Contents of the Qur'ān

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Module 3: The Significance of the Qur'ān

- Unit 1 Qur'ān as the primary source of Sharī'ah.....
- Unit 2 The Essence and Message of the Qur'ān
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Unit 1 Names of the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Meaning of the Qur'ān
- 1.4 Different names of the Qur'an
 - 1.4.1 Al-Kitāb (The Book)
 - 1.4.2 Al-Furqān (The Separator)
 - 1.4.3 Al-Hudah (The Guidance)
 - 1.4.4 Al-Tanzil (The Revelation)
 - 1.4.5 Al-Hukm (The Judgement)
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6. References/Further Readings
- 1.7 Possible Answers to Self- Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Qur'ān is known by many names. These names are of importance to the book as they depict the use of the text and its content among Muslims. Interestingly, the Qur'ān itself contains many other names by which it is called. In this unit, you will learn about names of the Qur'ān, their meanings and significance.

1.2. Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify other names by which the Qur'ān is known;
- explain meanings of these names; and
- discuss the spiritual significance of these names to Muslims.

1.3 Meaning of Qur'ān

Qur'ān is from the Arabic word *qara'a*, i.e. 'to read'. The word Qur'ān means what is to be read. In other words, by its meaning, the book we are studying in this unit is the one meant to be read either individually or collectively from time to time. No wonder, therefore that the Qur'ān has become a source of competition among the young and the old who are always eager to out-do each other in the art of reading the Qur'ān.

The angel Jibril as mentioned in unit 2 began the revelation of the Qur'ān with a command "Read". This is very significant because right from inception, the book was to be often repeated verse by verse.

But we should know that reading the Qur'ān is an effort that requires certain

etiquettes or decorum. Those to read the book, the place, the manner and comportment all must follow certain guidelines. The proper reading of the Qur'ān requires a special skill known as *'Ilm Tajwīd*, i.e. The science of recitation. This skill provides a proper pronunciation of some letters, the mode of recitation as well as observance of some rules in the book.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the meaning of Qur'ān.

1.4 Different names of the Qur'an

1.4.1 *Al-Kitāb* (The Book)

The Qur'ān has as another name, the book. This is contained in Qur'ān 2:2 thus:

“That is the book, in which there is no doubt, it is a guide for those who fear Allah.”

Although, the Qur'ān is described as a book, it is not like any other book. The term book is only in the textual nature of the compilation, we should not look at the Qur'ān as a book from the same way we perceive other books we use in our day-to-day activities.

For example, most of the books we use in our daily activities have human beings as their authors; the author of the Qur'ān is Allah Himself. Again, ordinary books undergo several editions, assessments, modifications and corrections. The Qur'ān as we have in the days of Prophet remains the same even today. It has not and will never go through any revisions.

Even in other holy books recognized by Islam, man mixed his words with God's, but in the case of Qur'ān, we find only the words of God, and in their original form. In addition, the original texts of most of the known divine books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist today. In the case of Qur'ān, it is exactly intact today as it was revealed to the Prophet. Not a word, not even a syllable has been changed.

Some holy books were sent in languages which died long ago. No nation or community now speaks those languages and there are only a few people who claim to understand them. Thus, to even interpret those books and put them into practice becomes a difficult task. On the other hand, the language of the Qur'ān is a living language; millions of people speak it, and millions know and understand it. Arabic is being taught and learnt in many universities of the world. Thus, it is easy to interpret the Arabic Qur'ān and then follow the injunctions therein.

1.4.2 *Al-Furqān* (The Separator)

Another name by which Qur'ān is known is The Separator, i.e. the one that distinguishes the truth from falsehood. This perfectly refers to the emergence of the book at a time when the Makkans were grossly involved in all forms of falsehood both in terms of worship and social life. The idolaters of Makkah thrive in falsehood by worshipping manmade gods and goddesses, and so the Qur'ān came as a separator between these and worship of the only one God, Allah.

True Prophet is raised by God Himself. It is He who has sent him to mankind to convey His message to His people. It is His command that one should put one's faith in the Prophet and follow him. Thus, one who refuses to believe in God's messenger refuses to follow God's commandment and becomes a rebel. The evidence of those who are on the wrong path and those on the straight path are contained in the Qur'ān, a distinguisher.

Perhaps, the position of Islam would not have been better appreciated if Muhammad was only to come out and call the people to the one only one true God, without evidence that he was actually sent by Him. To separate the false and feeble kind of God (which the Makkans were worshipping) from the strong and all-encompassing, all-powerful Allah, the Qur'ān provides all these through its contents.

Whatever notions the pre-Islamic Arabs had of morals, culture and civilizations were primitive in the extreme. They could hardly discriminate or distinguish between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful. Their lives were barbaric. They take pleasures in adultery, gambling and drinking. Looting and murder were part of their everyday existence. They would stand stark naked before each other without any shame or conscience. It is the Qur'ān that now came to separate between these horrible lives in which the Arabs were living and the purified, neat and wholesome one, which is Islam.

1.4.3. *Al-Hudah* (The Guidance)

The Qur'ān is a guidance from darkness to the light of Islam. The Qur'ān chapter 2 verse 185 states:

“Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'ān, as a guide to mankind, also clear signs for guidance and judgement (Between Right and Wrong) ...

The guidance imparted through the Prophets of the past was not complete. Every Prophet was followed by another who effected alterations and additions in the teachings and injunctions of his predecessors, and in this way, the chain of reform and progress continued. That is why the teaching of the earlier Prophets, after the lapse of time, were lost. Obviously, there was no need to preserve their teachings when amended and improved guidance had taken place. At the last, the most perfect code of guidance was imparted to mankind through Muhammad. By this, all the previous codes were automatically replaced.

It is futile to follow an incomplete code when the complete code exists. That complete code is the Qur'ān. It guides the mind towards a perfect life and teaching which never existed in the books of the earlier Prophets who had come before Muhammad. The guidance of the Qur'ān is to provide for man an entry point to the eternal pleasure of the Almighty Allah. Whoever follows it, will have an everlasting peace of mind, and whoever rejects will suffer perdition in the end.

Like the wandering shepherds in the wilderness, the Arabs before Islam needed a true guidance for their life to be secured, and for mankind in general to be provided with a complete code of life, which is Islam. This is what the Qur'ān has come to do for the Arab idolaters and by extension the entire world. Thus, it is found in the Qur'ān a guide to one's economic, social, political, matrimonial and indeed every facet of life. No wonder therefore that in *Suratul Fatihah*, the only prayer is "Guide us on the right path". Whoever has been guided will never go astray in terms of worship and complete peace of mind.

The Qur'ān guides us on how to behave among ourselves, how to respect our parents, how to transact businesses, how to administer inheritances, how to pilot affairs of a group or nation, how to treat the orphans, and so on.

1.4.4 *Al-Tanzīl* (The Revelation)

The Qur'ān is not just a book written by someone, somewhere, somehow. It is a revealed message, a compendium brought together as a reference material for believers. God had revealed His Books to His Prophets before Muhammad and these books were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'ān. It is part of faith in Islam to believe in the previous revelations such as Torah (revealed to Prophet Mūsa), Injīl (to Prophet 'Īsa) and Zabūr (to Prophet Dāud).

A Muslim should believe that whatever books were sent down by God are all true. While the original texts of most of the former divine books were lost altogether, and only their translation exists today, the Qur'ān, exists exactly as it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Not a word is changed or even added to it. Thus, Qur'ān is available in its original text as a revealed and preserved book of all times. If the Qur'ān had been a man-made work, several mistakes, additions and errors would have been discovered in it. The Qur'ān 26:192 states:

"Verily, this is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds".

That the Qur'ān is a revelation from Allah should be of the nature that it is purely and absolutely God's own words, that it is perfectly true, that every word of it is preserved, that everything mentioned therein is right, that it is duty bound on

every man and woman to carry out in his life and every community every command of it and that whatever be against it must be rejected.

The Qur'ān within its texts also confirms the status of being a revelation from the Supreme Being, the wise. This is why several passages in the book directs the mind to reflect on certain phenomena around man, and how these have impacted on the life of man. Prophet Muhammad was not known to be a scientist. But the message is full of scientific discoveries. This can only testify to it as being a revelation from the Almighty, the all-knowing Allah.

1.4.5 *Al-Hukm* (The Judgment)

The Qur'ān has the name *al-hukm*, i.e. the judgement which truly represents the supremacy of the book over the affairs of man on earth. The Qur'ān 13:37 states:

“Thus have We revealed it to be a judgement of authority in Arabic ...”

Among the features of the Qur'ān is that it contains injunctions, verdicts and rulings on the various aspects of human life. These judgments are of divine origin and this is why in over one thousand years when the Qur'ān was revealed, no one has come up to fault the judgments. This is because Allah Himself is just, and will never be unjust to His creatures.

In view of the complexity of man, he needs divine judgement of the activities which he embarks upon and which require divine blessings. Thus, the Qur'ān provides judgements on the distribution of estate of a deceased Muslim in such a manner that everyone in the family is taken care of. Similarly, in the case of divorce between man and woman, the judgement of the Qur'ān provides a balanced resolution, when properly executed.

The Qur'ān judgement on criminal matters has been found to be the best, and in the best interest of the larger society even by non-Muslim jurists of the world. Today, several codified laws borrow from the Qur'ānic provisions (although without stating so) in view of the fairness of the Qur'ānic provisions. And this makes a Muslim appreciate the blessing of the Qur'ān on man, as against the man-made laws that require updating, amendments and reviews from time to time.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2 (SAEs)

2. Mention five other names of the Qur'ān and discuss their meanings in brief.
3. Explain with examples how the Qur'ān can be described as 'The Separator'.
4. Explain how the Qur'ān is a guide to the believers.
5. Enumerate on four points to confirm the divine revelation of the Qur'ān.
6. Examine the name of Qur'ān as the separator.

1.5 SUMMARY

1. The Qur'ān is meant to be read and so has become a source of competition among the young and the old who are eager read it fluently.
2. Those to read the book, the place, the manner and comportment all must follow certain guidelines.
3. The proper reading of the Qur'ān requires a special skill known as '*Ilm Tajwīd*', i.e. The science of recitation.
4. The names by which we call the Qur'ān are attributes of this holy book of Islam. The names indeed represent its use, place and position in the life of a true believer.

1.6 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Abdalati, Hammudah(1976), *Islam in Focus*, Indiana, U.S.A, p.37-42.

Abdul, M.O.A, (1981), *Gateway to Islam*, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria,

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Haykal, H. *The life of Muhammad* (1982), Lagos, Academic Press Limited.

Pickthall, Marmaduke, *Qur'ānic Advices*, Lagos, Nigeria, Islamic Publications.

1.7. Possible Answers to SAEs

Answers to SAEs 1

Qur'ān is from the Arabic word *qara'a*, which means 'to read'. It is meant to be read individually and collectively from time to time. Reading the Qur'ān is an effort that requires certain etiquettes or decorum. Those to read the book, the place, the manner and comportment all must follow certain guidelines. The proper reading of the Qur'ān requires a special skill known as '*Ilm Tajwīd*, i.e. The science of recitation.

Answer to SAE 2

2. Al-Kitāb (The Book)
 - Al-Furqān (The Separator)
 - Al-Hudah (The Guidance)
 - Al-Tanzil (The Revelation)
 - Al-Hukm (The Judgement)

Al-Kitāb (The Book)

The Qur'ān is described as a book, but not like any other book. The author of the Qur'ān is Allah Himself. Unlike other books authored by human being, it has not undergone any edition, assessment, modification, revision and correction. It remains the same Qur'an as it was in the days of Prophet. Unlike other holy books which have a mixture of human and God's words, the Qur'an has only the words of God. It retains its originality. Not a word, not even a syllable has been changed. The language of the Qur'ān is a living language; millions of people speak it, and millions know and understand it.

Al-Furqān (The Separator)

This means the Qur'an distinguishes the truth from falsehood. The Qur'ān came as a separator between idol worship and worship of the only one God, Allah. To separate the false and feeble kind of God (which the Makkans were worshipping) from the strong and all-encompassing, all-powerful Allah, the Qur'ān provides all these through its contents. The Qur'ān came to separate between horrible system of living in which the Arabs were living and the purified, neat and wholesome one, which is Islam.

Al-Hudah (The Guidance)

The Qur'ān is a guidance from darkness to the light of Islam. The most perfect code of guidance was imparted to mankind through Muhammad. By this, all the previous codes were automatically replaced. The Qur'an guides the mind towards a perfect life and teaching which never existed in the books of the earlier Prophets who had come before Muhammad.

The guidance of the Qur'ān is to provide for man an entry point to the eternal pleasure of the Almighty Allah. Whoever follows it, will have an everlasting peace of mind, and whoever rejects will suffer perdition in the end. The Arabs before Islam needed a true guidance for their life to be secured, and for mankind in general to be provided with a complete code of life, which is Islam. This is what the Qur'ān has come to do for the Arab idolaters and by extension the entire world. The Qur'ān

provides a guide to one's economic, social, political, matrimonial and indeed every facet of life.

Al-Tanzīl (The Revelation)

The Qur'ān is a revealed message not just a book written by someone, somewhere, somehow. God had revealed His Books to His Prophets before Muhammad and these books were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'ān. It is part of faith in Islam to believe in the previous revelations such as Torah (revealed to Prophet Mūsa), Injīl (to Prophet 'Īsa) and Zabūr (to Prophet Dāud).

That the Qur'ān is a revelation from Allah implies that every word of it is preserved, that everything mentioned therein is right, that it is duty bound on every man and woman to carry out in his life and every community every command of it and that whatever be against it must be rejected. To testify that the Qur'an is a revelation from Allah is appreciated in the scientific message and discoveries whereas Prophet Muhammad was not known to be a scientist.

Al-Hukm (The Judgment)

The Qur'ān has the name *al-hukm*, i.e. the judgement which truly represents the supremacy of the book over the affairs of man on earth. The Qur'ān contains injunctions, verdicts and rulings on the various aspects of human life. These judgments are of divine origin and this is why in over one thousand years when the Qur'ān was revealed, no one has come up to fault the judgments. This is because Allah Himself is just, and will never be unjust to His creatures.

The Qur'ān provides judgements on various aspects of human life like:

- i. distribution of estate of a deceased Muslim in such a manner that everyone in the family is taken care of.
- ii. case of divorce between man and woman,
- iii. criminal matters etc

3. The Qur'an is described as *Al-Furqān (The Separator)*. It distinguishes the truth from falsehood. It separates between idol worship and worship of the only one God, Allah. It separates the false and feeble kind of God which the Makkans were worshipping from the strong and all-encompassing. The Qur'ān came to separate between horrible system of living in which the Arabs were living and the purified, neat and wholesome one, which is Islam.

4. The Qur'ān is a guidance from darkness to the light of Islam. It guides the mind towards a perfect life and teaching which never existed in the books of the earlier Prophets who had come before Muhammad. The guidance provides for man an entry point to the eternal pleasure of the Almighty Allah. It provides guidance for life to be secured, and for mankind to be provided with a complete code of life. The Qur'ān provides a guide to one's economic, social, political, matrimonial and indeed every facet of life.

5.
 - i. While the original texts of most of the former divine books were lost altogether, and only their translation exists today, the Qur'ān, exists exactly as it was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.
 - ii. The Qur'ān is available in its original text as a revealed and preserved book of all times.
 - iii. It is free of errors, mistakes, additions
 - iv. Prophet Muhammad was not known to be a scientist, but the message is full of scientific discoveries.

6. The Qur'ān is known as the Separator, i.e. the one that distinguishes the truth from falsehood. It came as a separator between demi-gods being worshipped by the Arabs before Islam and worship of the only one God, Allah.
Whatever notions the pre-Islamic Arabs had of morals, culture and civilizations were primitive that they could hardly discriminate or distinguish between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful. They took pleasures in adultery, gambling, drinking, looting and murder. They would stand stark naked before each other without any shame or conscience. The Qur'ān thereafter came to separate between these horrible lives in which the Arabs were living and the purified, neat and wholesome one, which is Islam.

Unit 2: Revelation and Preservation of the Glorious Qur’ān

Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The first revelations and their importance
- 2.4 The Preservation of the Qur’ān
 - 2.4.1 During the Prophet’s lifetime
 - 2.4.2 The period of the companions
- 2.5 Objects of the Preservation
- 2.6 Memorization of the Qur’ān
- 2.7 Recording of the Qur’ān
- 2.8 Summary
- 2.9 References/Further Readings
- 2.10 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this course, you will be exposed to the mode and material used in the preservation of this holy book from the time of Muhammad to the present day. This is very important because the Qur’ān, as we have it today was not in the present form during the Prophet’s lifetime.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the significance of the first revelation to the Muslims;
- discuss the importance of the Qur’ān to Muslims;
- identify the mode and materials with which Qur’ān was initially preserved;
- explain the roles played by the companions of the Prophet Muhammad in the preservation of the Qur’ān.

2.3 The First Revelations and their Importance

The revelation of the Qur’ān began in the holy month of Ramadan, specifically on the night of *Laylatu’l-Qadir*. This is, according to Qur’ān chapter 2:185 and 97:1. The revelation of the entire book which were piece by piece took a period of twenty- three years. It was revealed in Arabic language which is the mother tongue of Prophet Muhammad. The First Revelation came to him while he was in the cave of Hirā. The content of the first revelation has been:

*“Read in the name of your Lord, the creator;
who created man from a clot of blood.*

Read! For your Lord is most gracious.

He taught man by the pen that which he does not know. ”

Prophet Muhammad reported that Angel Jibril squeezed him to the extent that he was exhausted and he repeated the passage to him thrice. He recited these verses repeating them after the angel who later withdrew after they were permanently stored in his memory. This was the beginning of the revelation of the Qur’ān. This first experience was very hard for the Prophet that he rushed home feverish and asked his wife to cover him up.

The Prophet later got the command from Allah to go out and preach the message as contained in the Qur’ān 74 (*Suratul Al Mudathir*):

O thou wrapped up (in a mantle). Arise and deliver warning. And thy Lord do though magnify. And thy garments keep free from stain..... ”

After the first revelation, there was a break in communication with Prophet. This short period is called *Fatra*. The second portion of the Qur’ān revealed to the Prophet was the beginning of chapter 74:1-5. This second revelation was therefore aimed at preparing the Prophet both spiritually and politically.

Other early subsequent revelation were *Suratul Fatihah* which was the third and followed by Surah 111, Surah 81, Surah 92, Surah 99, etc. The revelation continued talking about paradise and hell, the day and the night, the good and evil deeds etc.

The last revelation according to many scholars was Q2:281:

*And fear the day when ye shall be brought back to God
Then shall every soul be paid what it earned and none shall be
dealt with unjustly.*

Some scholars however said it was Q2:282 or 2: 278. It has also been suggested that all the three verses were revealed on one occasion. The Prophet died nine nights after the last revelation. Other scholars held that the last revelation was Q5:4, which reads:

*This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed my
favour upon you, and I have chosen for you Islam as a religion.*

The first revelation of the Qur'ān to Muhammad was *Suratul 'Alaq* (Chapter 96 verses 1-5). The remainder of this *Surah*, which now has 19 *ayat* were revealed on some later occasion.

The first importance of the verses is that it shows Allah as the creator of man, and other creatures. Again, it underscores the importance of knowledge to mankind. By this science and its importance to man is emphasized.

The first revelation shows that man can only know what is unknown to him by the permission of Allah, and that all knowledge belongs to Him alone. It also shows the importance of pen and its vital role in the dissemination of knowledge, and that Allah is the grand teacher of man.

The first revelation of the Qur'ān signifies the appointment of Muhammad as a Prophet of Allah and that whatever Allah wants shall be done. Also, that Allah is most Glorious who wants man to be out of darkness of *Jahiliyyah* into the light of Islam.

This chapter of the Qur'ān shows that teaching can lead to learning or knowledge to prepare one for the big task ahead. The Prophet was being given direct instruction to go out and boldly deliver his message. His heart had always been purified by Allah, but now all his outward appearance must be dedicated to Allah.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the significance of first, second and subsequent early revelations to the mission of Prophet Muhammed.

2.4 The Preservation of the Qur'ān

Right from the beginning, the Qur'ān was protected and guarded through the heart and minds of the early recipients. Since it was the word from Allah, they jealously kept the verses in their memory and used them in the five canonical prayers. The fact that these messages are meant not only for the Arabs, but indeed the entire mankind makes its preservation necessary.

Apart from daily recitation of the Qur'ān, the Prophet sent teachers to communities in other places around the Arabian provinces to teach people the Qur'ān. For example, Musa b. 'Umar and Muadh b. Jabal were sent as teachers of Qur'ān to other areas to disseminate the message. In view of this, there was the need to have a standard copy of the Qur'ān so that only one version was in circulation.

Furthermore, the Prophet knew that the Qur'ān was meant for his generation and the generation yet unborn, he encouraged the preservation of the book right from the beginning of revelation so that those coming after would have the opportunity of reading the message of Allah sent through him. For these reasons, there were needs for the preservation of the holy book.

2.4.1 During the Prophet's Lifetime

Prophet Muhammad did not present to his followers the revelation collected and arranged in a single volume. Rather, he was transmitting them to his followers as they come to him in stages, batches, and verses. One major reason for this was that the revelation of the Qur'ān did not come down in one piece, but at interval, and this continued until the end of the Prophet's lifetime.

Another reason was that even during the period of revelation, some verses were abrogated and so, the Prophet needed to explain the abrogation and the abrogated verses. Most of these verses were not revealed in their final order, but were later arranged. It was therefore during the lifetime of the Prophet that the verses were arranged and so preserved.

Since the Prophet was unlettered (Q 8:157), there were companions who were doing the writing on his behalf and were keeping the revelations in safe place. All the revealed verses and chapters were in written form during the lifetime of the Prophet. For instance, when 'Umar set out to kill the Prophet Muhammad, he was informed that Islam had already spread to his own family. On getting to his home, he met his brother-in-law, his nephew and his sisters who had embraced Islam reciting *Sūratul Tāhā*. Umar requested for the sheet on which the *surah* was written. He was refused on the ground that he was not pure and so could not touch the Qur'ān. He later took the ritual bath, and accepted Islam.

2.4.2 The Period of the Companions

According to Denffer, more than twenty well known companions of the Prophet memorized the Qur'ān, even before the Prophet's death. Among them were Abubakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, 'Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, 'Abdullah bn Amr bn al- 'Ās, 'Āishah, Hafsa, and Ummu Salamah to mention but few.

Unfortunately, most of those who memorized the Qur'ān died in the battles fought with enemies of Islam. This made the Muslims consider the preservation of the book very necessary so that its message is not lost. Some of these companions were contacted to submit the materials in which they had the Qur'ān written.

The Qur'ān was not only written down by those companions who did so on their own initiative. Indeed, the Prophet when he received a revelation, usually called for the scribes and dictated to him. Also, while in Medina, the Prophet had many scribes, the prominent among whom was Zaid bn Thabit. Another form of preservation by the followers of the Prophet were new converts who came to Madina to see the Prophet and learn about Islam. They were provided with copies of the chapters of the Qur'ān, to read and learn them by heart.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

2. Enumerate the reasons for the preservation of the Qur'ān.
3. Explain the mode of preservation of Qur'ān during the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime.
4. Discuss how the companions of the prophet helped in the preservation of the Qur'ān.

2.5 Objects of Preservation

Three main objects, according to popular traditions of the Prophet were used as recording materials of the Qur'ān during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. These are:

- (i) Dry leaves (ii) Bones and skins of animals (iii) Stones

According to 'Uthmān bn Affan, the third Caliph, when portions of different chapters were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, he used to call one of those persons who used to write down revelations and say: "write the verse or verses in the chapter where such and such verse occurs."

Among the early scribes of the Qur'ān were Zaid bn Thābit, Abubakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Ali and Zubayr.

As the revelation grew in volume, these objects were kept in the room of Hafsa, wife of the Prophet Muhammad. This was why when the Prophet died, copies with Hafsa were among those collected and compiled into what is today known as Qur'ān.

Dry leaves, bones and animal skins were the only available and durable objects during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad to preserve writings. With ink and pen, literary activities during this time was limited as a compliment to the human memory.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE 3)

5. Enumerate the objects in which the Qur'ān was preserved during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad.

2.6 Memorization of the Qur'ān

One of the major ways by which the Qur'ān was preserved and transmitted orally was by memorization known as *Hifzu 'l-Qur'ān*. Prophet Muhammed was the first to commit the book into memory after the Angel Jibril had brought it to him. Thereafter he would declare the revelation and instruct his companions to memorize it. A good example was Ibn Masud who was the first to publicly recite the Qur'ān in the city of Makka. It is also on record that Abubakr used to recite the Qur'ān publicly in front of his house in Makkah.

The significance of this is that right from the inception, Qur'ān has been kept in the memory of the Prophet first, and then his companions. Whatever is in the memory is likely to be preserved longer and also eliminate variations. The Prophet himself encouraged memorization of the Qur'ān. For example, one of his hadiths narrated by Ibn Abbas says:

“The most superior among you (Muslims) are those who learn the Qur'ān and teach it.”

During the five canonical prayers, recitation of the Qur'ān is required, hence the need for memorization of verses of the Qur'ān in order to use them in Prayers. The Prophet also listened to Qur'ān been recited by his followers. In view of its spiritual significance, memorized verses of the Qur'ān help in developing the mind spiritually.

The tradition of memorization continued after the death of the Prophet by his companions and later among the generation that followed, that is, the *tabi'ūn*, until today.

Thus, public recitation of the Qur'ān was common in the days of the Prophet as we have Qur'ān competition recitation today at both national and international levels.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE 4)

6. Assess the impact of memorization of the *Qur'ān* among Muslims.

2.7 The Recording of the Qur'ān

Every stage, every step and every instruction on the verses received the highest regard and record during the life time of the Prophet. Every care was therefore taken to ensure that no part of the revealed verses was unrecorded. At intervals, the objects on which the *Qur'an* was written as mentioned above were brought out, read through to ensure that what was been written down agreed with what had been kept in the memory of the Companions. This was all done to ensure the objects are intact and in good condition. This happens during the month of Ramadan when the recitation of the *Qur'an* was more frequent.

Further, the Prophet encouraged the art of writing. For example, it was related that some of the Quraysh who were taken prisoners at the battle of Badr regained their freedom after they had taught some of the Muslims the art of writing. By this, many Companions became literate, thus increasing the number of the Prophet's scribes.

Self-Assessment Exercise (SAE 5)

7. How accurate are the recorders of the <i>Qur'an</i> at the early stage of Islam?

2.8 Summary

We have discussed in this Unit the events which led to the first revelation of *Qur'an*. We have also discussed the content of the first revelation and its significance in the life of a Muslim.

We have learnt the various attempt made by the Prophet and his companions in the preservation of the *Qur'an*. The efforts of the Companions and later generations of Muslims have also been discussed to broaden your knowledge on the steps taken to preserve the *Qur'an* till the present day.

The revelation of the *Qur'an* began with *Suratu 'l-'Alaq*. This *Surah* is significant in many ways. For a Muslim, it is the reference point for the birth of a religion which Allah Himself has named and directed a Prophet to proclaim to the world.

The *Qur'an* was carefully preserved right from the first day it started coming down to the Prophet Muhammad from Allah and the companions assisted in ensuring that the preserved materials are kept intact till his death.

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2.10. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. The First Revelation to the Prophet shows Allah as the creator of man, and other creatures. It signifies the importance of knowledge in the task of prophethood and to mankind generally. The first revelation shows that man can only know what is unknown to him by the permission of Allah, and that all knowledge belongs to Him alone. It also shows the importance of pen and its vital role in the dissemination of knowledge, and that Allah is the grand teacher of man.

The first revelation of the Qur'ān signifies the appointment of Muhammad as a Prophet of Allah and that whatever Allah wants shall be done. Also, that Allah is most Glorious who wants man to be out of darkness of *Jahiliyyah* into the light of Islam.

The Prophet later got the command from Allah to go out and preach the message as contained in the Qur'ān 74 and the significance of cleanliness in Islam. The second portion of the Qur'ān revealed to the Prophet was the beginning of chapter 74:1-5. This second revelation was therefore aimed at preparing the Prophet both spiritually and politically.

Other early subsequent revelations were *Suratul Fatihah* which was the third and followed by Surah 111, Surah 81, Surah 92, Surah 99, etc. The revelation continued talking about paradise and hell, the day and the night, the good and evil deeds etc.

2.
 - i. The Qur'an is the word from Allah used in the five canonical prayers, hence the need to be preserved in the memory of the believers.
 - ii. The messages of the Qur'an are meant not only for the Arabs, but indeed the entire mankind makes its preservation necessary.
 - iii. It has to be preserved as a standard copy to ensure only one version was in circulation.
 - iv. The Prophet knew that the Qur'an was meant for his generation and the generation yet unborn, he encouraged the preservation of the book so that those coming after would have the opportunity of reading the message of Allah sent through him.

3. Since the Prophet was unlettered, there were companions who were doing the writing on his behalf and were keeping the revelations in safe place. Also, the Prophet encouraged the memorization of the Qur'an that a couple of his companions memorized it.

4. More than twenty well known companions of the Prophet memorized the Qur'an, even before the Prophet's death. Consequent upon the death of many of those who memorized the Qur'an, the need to have the Qur'an in a book form became necessary. Some of these companions were contacted to submit the materials in which they had the Qur'an written.

Another form of preservation by the followers of the Prophet were new converts who came to Madina to see the Prophet and learn about Islam. They were provided with copies of the chapters of the Qur'an, to read and learn them by heart.

5. Three main objects were used as recording materials of the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. These are:

- (i) Dry leaves (ii) Bones and skins of animals (iii) Stones

6. The significance of memorization of the Qur'an is that right from the inception, Qur'an has been kept in the memory of the Prophet first, and then his companions. Whatever is in the memory is likely to be preserved longer and also eliminate variations. During the five canonical prayers, recitation of the Qur'an is required, hence the need for memorization of verses of the Qur'an in order to use them in Prayers. Memorized verses of the Qur'an help in developing the mind spiritually. Thus, public recitation of the Qur'an was common in the days of the Prophet as we have Qur'an competition recitation today at both national and international levels.

7. Every stage, every step and every instruction on the verses received the highest regard and record during the life time of the Prophet. Every care was taken to ensure that no part of the revealed verses was unrecorded.

At intervals, the objects on which the *Qur'an* was written were brought out, read through to ensure that what was been written down agreed with what had been kept in the memory of the Companions.

Further, the Prophet encouraged the art of writing. By this, many Companions became literate, thus increasing the number of the Prophet's scribes who wrote down the *Qur'an* for him.

Unit 3 Compilation of the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcome
- 3.3 Collection of the Qur'an
 - 3.3.1 The first attempt of compilation by Abubakar
 - 3.3.2 The Uthmanic collection
 - 3.3.3 The Harmonization of the version
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings
- 3.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about various efforts aimed at compilation of the *Qur'ān* into one volume as it is today. Since the writings were done in objects during the period of Muhammad, the later generation felt the need to preserve the holy book future generations, hence this attempt of compilation.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the various stages of compilation of the *Qur'ān*;
- identify the initial problems faced by the companions of the Prophet in this effort; and
- appreciate the care and concern of the successors of Muhammad to preserve the *Qur'ān* till the present day.

3.3 Collection of the Qur'an

You may wonder how the *Qur'an* has been preserved till today. It took a great sacrifice and efforts of the companions to collect, and compile the *Qur'an* as you shall see soon.

3.3.1 The First Attempt at Compiling the Qur'ān

The last revelation of the *Qur'ān* was received few days before the death of the Prophet. These verses were also recorded, memorized, revised and added to others as document in the objects. Thus, we have a complete *Qur'ān* left behind by the Prophet both in the memories of various companions as well as on writing materials.

The first attempt to compile the Qur’ān was made by the first caliph, Abubakr who instructed Zaid b. Thābit to prepare a single copy of the complete revelation. His reason was that many companions who had memorized the Qur’ān were killed at the battle of Yamamah in the year 633. There was therefore the fear that unless something urgent was done, many people who learnt the Qur’ān by heart may no longer be available to confirm the written down verses.

Consequently, Zaid b. Thābit, on the authority of the first caliph brought together all the revealed verses into the *suhuf* (sheets) from both oral as well as written sources. In order to confirm their genuine submissions, the caliph demanded for two witnesses for each piece. This document remained with Abubakr.

The result of this first attempt was that during the first and second year immediately after the death of the Prophet, the entire revelation was copied onto sheets (*suhuf*).

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the circumstances that led to the compilation of the Qur’ān.

3.3.2 The Uthman’s Collection

‘Uthman b. Affan was the third caliph of Prophet Muhammad. He came into the Caliphal position after ‘Umar b. Khattab, who after the death of the first caliph was holding the *Suhuf* of the Qur’ān in custody. About this time, Islam was spreading to outside the Arabian Peninsula.

By the year 653, there were noticeable differences which arose among Muslims about the correct recitation of the Qur’ān. Caliph ‘Uthmān then instructed Zaid b. Thābit together with three other companions of Prophet Muhammad to prepare copies from the *Suhuf* kept with one of the wives of the Prophet, Hafsat. Thus, the fresh copies from the original *Suhuf* were reproduced and sent to various Muslim regions where differences were noticed to replace other material in circulation. The original *suhuf* was returned to Hafsat while caliph Uthman also kept one copy (*Mushaf*).

This attempt by ‘Uthmān was very significant as it brought about uniformity of the copy of Qur’ān in an all the Muslim region, thereby providing an ample opportunity to confirm the original of the holy book. It also allows more copies to be available in case there was dispute over other copies. Thus, from the loose sheets collected by Abubakr, ‘Uthmān came up with re-production of the first compilation and allowed for uniformity in the production of copies.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

2. Highlight the significance of the Uthmanic edition of the Qur’an

3.3.3 Harmonization of the Verses

It would be recalled that Abubakr made one single copy from the various verbal and written materials. This copy was later kept by ‘Umar’s daughter and wife of the Prophet, Hafsa. It was from this single copy that ‘Uthmān re-produced copies and sent to various regions of the Muslim world, while the original remained with Hafsa until her death. The original copy with ‘Uthmān was known as *Mushaf Uthmānī* (Uthmanic edition) and it was in fact known as the complete Qur’ān by all the companions of the Prophet, who agreed that it contained what Allah had revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Every year, ‘Uthmān ensured that all the regions recite the copies of the Qur’ān with them, while he, with the original, listened to confirm that there were no variations or interpretations. This he did in the presence of the memorizers that were still alive.

By this effort, ‘Uthmān was able to harmonize the many copies and confirm that they contain the same verses. This could be confirmed from the report on the battle of Siffin (A.H 37) 27 years after the death of the prophet, and five years after the ‘Uthmān’s copies were distributed where Mu’awiyah troops fixed sheets from the Qur’ān on their spears to interrupt the battle. Nobody accused anyone else of using a ‘Persian’ version of the Qur’ān which would have counted against the enemy of ‘Ali who was then the caliph.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3 (SAEs)

3. Explain how ‘Uthmān b. Affan harmonized the various version of the Qur’ān.

3.4 SUMMARY

The death of many memorizers of the Qur’ān at the battle of Yamama necessitated the attempt to compile the revelations into one unified book. This singular event was very significant when today we see the same Qur’ān being read without variation or difference. This was the result of the companions of the Prophet who ensured that the book was preserved till date.

The compilation of the Qur’ān took several efforts by the companions of Prophet Muhammad. Beginning with Abubakr, the first caliph, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī, the Qur’ān as we have it today has been carefully compiled such that no verse was missing. This is why it is regarded as the holy book of Islam. This unit has explained the various stages of the compilation.

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3.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. The fear that the Qur'an might go into oblivion consequent upon the death of many memorizers of the Qur'an during the battle of Yamamah led to the first attempt to compile the Qur'an by Caliph Abubakr. He instructed Zaid b. Thābit to prepare a single copy of the complete revelation. Consequently, Zaid b. Thābit, on the authority of the first caliph brought together all the revealed verses into the *suhuf* (sheets) from both oral as well as written sources. In order to confirm their genuine submissions, the caliph demanded for two witnesses for each piece. This document remained with Abubakr.
2. Chaliph 'Uthman was therefore responsible for the production fresh copies from the original *Suhuf* sent to various Muslim regions where differences were noticed to replace other material in circulation. This attempt brought about uniformity of the copy of Qur'ān in an all the Muslim region, thereby providing an ample opportunity to confirm the original of the holy book. It also allows more copies to be available in case there was dispute over other copies.
3. 'Uthmān re-produced copies of the Qur'an from the original copy in the custody of 'Umar's daughter and wife of the Prophet, Hafsa. It was from this single copy that he sent to various regions of the Muslim world, while the

original remained with Hafsat until her death. The original copy with ‘Uthmān was known as *Mushaf Uthmānī* (Uthmanic edition).

Every year, ‘Uthmān ensured that all the regions recite the copies of the Qur’ān with them, while he, with the original, listened to confirm that there were no variations or interpretations. This he did in the presence of the memorizers that were still alive.

Unit 4 : The Manuscripts of the Qur’ān

Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Background to Manuscripts of the Qur’an
 - 4.3.1 Old Manuscripts of the Qur’ān
 - 4.3.2 The Damascus Manuscript
 - 4.3.3 The Madinah Manuscript
 - 4.3.4 The Samarkand Manuscript
 - 4.3.5 The Egyptian Manuscript
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Reading
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn the various scripts of the Qur’ān and the developments of script writing in the pre-Islamic and the Islamic era. The mode of writing in those days was done by the use of the available technology.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the various scripts of the Qur’ān
- explain the peculiarities of some manuscripts of the Qur’ān
- discuss the stages of the writings of the Qur’ān before modern technology.

4.3 Background to Manuscripts of the Qur’an

Before the Glorious Qur’an got to the stage of writing it in a book form, it has undergone some stages of development as will be revealed to you in this unit.

4.3.1 The Old Manuscript

Although writing was not very common in the pre-Islamic days, it is a well-known activity among the Arabs. History told us of many writers of poems, verses of

praises and so on, and who became famous because to their writings. The script used in the 7th century of Islam i.e. during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad consisted of very basic symbols, which expressed only the consonantal structure of a word and which were not very clear in reading and identifying. For example, while today we have Arabic letters such as *ba*, *ta*, *tha*, *ya* with distinguishing points of one, two or three on top or below the alphabets, the early letters of Arabic alphabets contained no such points. All the letters used to be written simply as a straight line.

Consequently, from this basic system of writing, there developed over the ages, various types of scripts such as *Kufi*, *Maghribi*, *Naqsh*, etc., which later spread to other parts of the world. According to Denffer, this later invention by Muslims with interests in Arabic calligraphy brought about standardized types and formalization of Arabic writing began to develop. For the script of the Qur'ān, there were two important steps which brought about the forms in which we have the Qur'ānic text as it is today. The two steps were the introduction of

- Vowelling marks (*Tashkil*)
- Diacritical Marks (*Aijan*)

Taskhil is the name for signs indicating the vowels in Arabic scripts. They were unknown in the pre-Islamic times. These signs helped to determine the correct pronunciation of the word and to avoid mistakes for example *bayt*, *baytun*. The next is *Aijan* (diacritical marks) Arabic letters which started as lines and point which the ancient Arabic did not have was later developed with strokes which helped to distinguish the various letters which could be easily mixed up. Without *aijan*, word such as *bayt* cannot be easily recognized. We should note that *aijan* were rarely in use in the pre-Islamic days.

The very early copies of the Qur'ānic manuscripts did not have signs of *ya*, *ba*, *ta*, *tha* etc. It was during the period of the fifth Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik al-Marwam (66-68 H) that these were introduced. The first man to introduce these points to the Qur'ānic text was a later companion of the Prophet (*Tabi 'i*) known as Al-Duali.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the *tashkil* and *aijan* in the early Qur'ānic manuscript.

4.3.2 The Damascus Manuscript

It was reported that three out of the four of the copies of the early Qur'ānic script by 'Uthmān b. Affan were destroyed by fire and in war after the few years of their existence. But the copy to Damascus was intact and was kept at Malatja. The destruction of the three copies gave Muslims a great concern as the only copy in Damascus may be targeted by the opponents of Islam who knew at that time that it was the only survivor out of the four original copies sent to Muslim lands.

The Damascus copy of the original Qur’ān was cited by many scholars who later developed keen interest in the study of sciences of the Qur’ān. Among them was Ibn. Battuta (779/1377) who said he saw the copy in Granada, Marrakech, Basra and other cities. Also Ibn Kathir (d. 774/1372) relates that he saw the Damascus copy of the Qur’ān in the year 518 in Palestine. According to him, the copy of the Qur’ān was very large, in beautiful clear strong writing with strong ink, in parchment made of camel skin. Some people believed that this copy was later sent to Leningrad and from there to England. Others held the view that this *Mushaf* remained in the mosque of Damascus, where it was last seen before the fire in the year 1310/1892.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

2. Write brief notes on the Damascus manuscript of the Qur’ān.

4.3.3 The Madinah Manuscript

This same manuscript of the Qur’ān was later found in Madinah according to Ibn Jubair (d.614/1217) who said he saw the copy in the mosque of Madinah in 580/1184. According to other sources, this manuscript remained in Madinah until the Turks took it from there in 1334 (1915). It was reported that this copy removed by the Turkish authorities to Istanbul came to Berlin during the World War I. To confirm this, the Treaty of Versailles, which concluded the World War I, contains the following clause:

Article 246: Within six months from coming into force of the present Treaty, Germany will restore to His majesty, king of Hedjaz, the original Koran of Caliph Othman, which was removed from Madinah by the Turkish authorities and is stated to have been presented to the Ex Emperor William II.

We should note however that the Qur’ān later moved to Istanbul, not Madinah. But there were strong indications that the same text, in its original was preserved and that nothing has tampered with it. There was yet another manuscript known as Imam manuscript. This was the one kept by Caliph ‘Uthmān himself, and was said to be reading when his assassins came to kill him. The same manuscript was to be found later in Samarkand.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3 (SAEs)

3. Write short notes on the Madinah manuscript.

4.3.4 The Samarkand Manuscript

According to Denffer, this was the copy kept in Tashkent (USSR). It may be the Imam manuscript or any of the other copies made at the time of ‘Uthmān b. Affan, the third Caliph. This manuscript came to Samarkand in 890 Hijra (1485) and remained there till 1917. A Russian Orientalist gave a detailed description of it and that many pages were damaged and missing. Efforts were made to reform the pages through the reproduction of 50 copies and sent to many Muslim rulers such as Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid, the Shah of Iran, the Amir of Bukhara, etc.

This Samarkand manuscript was significant in that its edition circulated among the reproduction moved to other world leaders who also kept the document jealously and for posterity. The manuscript was later returned to its former place and reached Tashkent in 1924, where it has remained since. It is good to note that the Soviet authorities had made several copies, which are presented from time to time to visiting Muslim heads of state and other important personalities.

In 1980, photocopies were produced in the United States of America, with a two-page forward by M. Hammdullahi. According to the author of a book, *History of Mushaf* of ‘Uthmān in Tashkent, a number of reasons for the authenticity of the manuscript were given as:

- a. The fact that the script is written in the first half of the first century Hijra.
- b. The fact that it is written on parchment from a gazelle, while the later Qur’ānic scripts were written on paper-like sheets.
- c. The fact that it does not have any diacritical marks which were introduced around the eighth decade of the first century; hence the manuscript must have been written before then.
- d. The fact that it does not have vowelling symbols introduced by Du’ali, who died in 68 Hijra, hence it is earlier than this.

On the whole, what was clear was that two of the copies of the Qur’ān which were originally prepared by ‘Uthmān, are still available to us today and their text and arrangement can be compared with any other copy of the Qur’ān be it in print or handwriting. They will be found to be identical.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4 (SAEs)

- | |
|--|
| 4. Highlight the significance of the Samarkand manuscript. |
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4.3.5 The Egyptian Manuscript

The Qur'ānic text in printed form now in use widely in the Muslim world is the 'Egyptian Edition'. It is also known as the king Fu'ad edition, since it was introduced in Egypt under king Fu'ad of Egypt. It was first printed in Cairo in 1925. Subsequently, numerous copies have been produced.

The effort of the Egyptians in this direction was to first preserve the manuscript, reproduce the original and then begin mass reproduction. The various stages of preserving the manuscript later received the attention of the Egyptian government and a more scientific preservation was made of the document.

The various manuscripts of the Qur'ān are only confirming the stages of preservation of the document up till present day. None of the manuscripts was ever found with any defect that may have affected the content of the Qur'ān because, as we have seen, each period of the transition, the document received the best of protection from human corruption and interpolation. But above all, Allah, the author of the Qur'ān had assumed that it is He who protects the book from any form of crookedness.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5 (SAEs)

5. Write short note on the Egyptian manuscript of the Qur'ān.

4.4 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about the various manuscripts of the Qur'ān, and how they were preserved from one generation to the other. The manuscripts were the originals from where the present copy of the Qur'ān emerged. The manuscripts of the Qur'ān provide a good opportunity to see how the Arabic alphabet developed. It is interesting that the Arabic, which is the language of the Qur'ān, is still alive today worldwide unlike the language of some other holy books that had become extinct.

4.5 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. *Taskhil* is the name for signs indicating the vowels in Arabic scripts. They were unknown in the pre-Islamic times. These signs helped to determine the correct pronunciation of the word and to avoid mistakes for example *bayt*, *baytun*.
Aijan (diacritical marks) Arabic letters which started as lines and point which the ancient Arabic did not have was later developed with strokes which helped to distinguish the various letters which could be easily mixed up. Without *aijan*, word such as *bayt* cannot be easily recognized.
2. Three out of the four of the copies of the early Qur'ānic script by 'Uthmān b. Affan were destroyed by fire and in war after the few years of their existence. But the copy to Damascus was intact and was kept at Malatja. The Damascus copy of the original Qur'an was cited by many scholars like Ibn Battuta and Ibn Kathir.
Some people believed that this copy was later sent to Leningrad and from there to England. Others held the view that this *Mushaf* remained in the mosque of Damascus, where it was last seen before the fire in the year 1310/1892.

3. The manuscript of the Qur'ān was later found in Madinah according to Ibn Jubair. This manuscript remained in Madinah until the Turks took it from there in 1334 (1915). The Qur'ān later moved to Istanbul. There was yet another manuscript known as Imam manuscript which was the one kept by Caliph 'Uthmān himself, and was said to be reading when his assassins came to kill him. The same manuscript was to be found later in Samarkand.
4. The Samarkand manuscript was significant in that its edition circulated among the reproduction moved to other world leaders who also kept the document jealously and for posterity. A number of reasons for the authenticity of the manuscript were given as:
 - a. The script is written in the first half of the first century Hijra.
 - b. It is written on parchment from a gazelle, while the later Qur'ānic scripts were written on paper-like sheets.
 - c. It does not have any diacritical marks which were introduced around the eighth decade of the first century.
 - d. It does not have vowel symbols introduced by Du'ali.
5. The 'Egyptian Edition' is also known as the King Fu'ad edition. It was first printed in Cairo in 1925. Subsequently, numerous copies have been produced. The effort of the Egyptians in this direction was to first preserve the manuscript, reproduce the original and then begin mass reproduction. The various stages of preserving the manuscript later received the attention of the Egyptian government and a more scientific preservation was made of the document.

MODULE 2: FORM AND CONTENTS OF THE QUR'ĀN

Unit 1	The Makkan and Madinan <i>Suwar</i>
Unit 2	Divisions of the Qur'ān
Unit 3	Literary Forms and Style of the Qur'ān
Unit 4	Variant Readings of the Qur'ān.....
Unit 5	The development of science of qirā'ah.....

Unit 1: The Makkan and Madinah *Suwar*

Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Background to the Qur'anic *Suwar*
 - 1.3.1 The Makkah *Suwar*
 - 1.3.2 The Madinah *Suwar*
- 1.4 Features and Characteristics of Makkah and Madinah *Suwar*
- 1.5 The Essence of Studying the Makkah and Madinah *Suwar*
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings
- 1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, the revelation of the Qur'ān at two major cities - Makkah and Madina shall be discussed. Although the two are contained in the Qur'ān, there is the need for a Muslims to know the difference between them. This is only for the purpose of appreciating their style and content. None of the two is inferior or superior to another in terms of originality. The period of Makkah revelations covers the pre-Hijra (AD. 622), while the period of Madinah revelations is the post-Hijra period.

1.2 Learning Objectives

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify the characteristics of the Makkah and Madinah *Suwar*;
- recognize the features of both Makkah and Madinah *Suwar*; and
- explain the content of both the Makkah and Madinah *Suwar*.

1.3 Background to the Qur'anic *Suwar*

This period during which the Qur'an was revealed is significant in understanding the content of the holy scripture. This will be revealed to you in this unit.

1.3.1 The Makkan Suwar

The Makkan *Suwar* refer to revelation of the Qur'ān that occurred while Muhammad was in Makkah. These were the early days of Islam when the Prophet after being called to Prophethood began his mission of Islam.

The Makkan phase of the revelation lasted about 13 years, from the first revelation up to the period of Hijra of Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah. During this period, Muhammad was occupied mainly with invitation of people (the Makkah pagans) to Islam. These were the people whose life and times were characterized by idol worshipping, moral decadence and low moral standards.

Also, the Prophet during this period of revelation was playing the role of an announcer of his creator. Announcing the directives of his creator, Allah, of a new faith that centres on the worship of the creator and not the created, and also to warn them of consequences of their refusal to heed the call. So, we can say that the period of revelation in Makkah marked the beginning of Islam as a monotheistic religion.

1.3.2 The Madinah Revelation

The Madinah revelation (*Suwar*) were those revealed to the Prophet Muhammad after the hijra. This period lasted about ten years, from hijra to the death of the Prophet. The foundation of Islam was laid in Makkah which resulted in the formation of a Muslim community (*Ummah*) in Madinah. The Madinah *Suwar* were addressed to four groups of people unlike those of Makkah that were specifically addressed to the Quraish and other tribes. The four were:

- The *Muhājirūn*, who migrated with the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah.
- The *Ansār*, indigenes of from Madinah who helped the *Muhājirūn*.
- The *Munāfiqūn* who were from Madinah and pretended to support the Muslims.
- The *Ahl al-Kitāb*, i.e. Jews and Christians with their respective scriptures.

Thus, the Madinah *Suwar* were received by more than one homogenous group unlike the Makkans.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. What do you understand by the Makkan revelation?
2. Explain in brief the groups of people to which Madinah *Suwar* addressed.

1.4 Features and Characteristics of the Makkan and Madinah *Suwar*

The Makkan *Suwar* have their main themes as follows:

- The unity of Allah (*Tawhīd*)
- The coming Resurrection and Judgment Day
- Righteous conducts, and lessons of the people and prophets of the past.

The Madinah *Suwar* on the other hand have their main themes as:

- Transformation of the Muslim Community into a state.
- The social, economic, political, military etc life of Muslims.
- The rules, regulations and ordinances of Islam.

Apart from the above, the Makkan *Suwar* are generally short, the language is poetic and the *Suwar* are full of oaths. In addition, the sentences are short, and are mostly full of warnings of hell to evil doers and promise of paradise for doers of good. The Madinah *Suwar*, on the other hand are generally longer and more explanatory. They make direct references to battles and other encounters by Muslims. These *Suwar* also address the faithful and the people of books. They also address mankind as *an-nās*, i.e all people. Generally, all chapters whose revelation began in Makkah are known as Makkan *Suwar* even if their parts were revealed in Madinah.

In other words, a *surah* is said to be of Makkan origin even if it contains verses from Madinah. Also, a *surah* is said to be of Madinah origin when its beginning was revealed in Madinah, even if it contains verses from the Makkan period in its text. Furthermore, there are 19 *suwar* with what some scholars called *huruf tahji* (such as *alif, lam, min* e.t.c). All these *suwar* are of Makkan origin except *sūratul Baqara* (chapter 2) and *Āl-Imrān* (chapter 3).

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

3. Explain some features and characteristics of the Makkan and Madinah *Suwar*

1.5 The Essence of Studying the Makkan and Madinan *Suwar*

To know the origin and order of some of the revelations of the Qur'ān is important for understanding their meaning which can often be more easily grasped if one knows the time and circumstances that relate to them. For example, many Makkan verses of the Qur'ān may be especially meaningful to Muslims living in an un-Islamic environment, whereas some Madinah verses would appeal much to Muslims who are in the process of forming a community (*Ummah*).

In addition, in cases of ruling on Islamic matters, unless one knows which of the two or more related verses were revealed first, one cannot decide

which legal ruling is now binding upon the Muslims. Thus, the knowledge of chronology, i.e. which verse comes before another, is very essential in addition to their origin. The knowledge about the Makkah and Madinah *Suwar* is derived from the companions (*sahabah*) of the Prophet Muhammad, and those who came after them (*tābi 'ūn*). The Prophet himself did not categorize any *surah* as either Makkah or Madinah. The reason for this was simple - everybody was a witness to the revelations during the lifetime of the Prophet. After his death, there arose the need to explain the origin of these verses in order to fully understand their context and content.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3 (SAEs)

4. Explain the significance of Makkah and Madinah <i>Suwar</i> .
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1.6 SUMMARY

The knowledge of Makkah and Madinah revelation is one of the important branches of '*Ulūm-ul- Qur'ān* - Science of the Qur'ān. It is not merely of historical interest, but particularly important for the understanding and interpretation of the respective verses.

Both the Makkah and Madinah *Suwar* as we can see from this unit are parts and parcel of the Qur'ān. The divisions of the two are only representing the place where Muhammad was during their revelations. We have studied in this unit some basic features and characteristics of the two.

1.7 REFERENCES /FURTHER READING

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1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

Answers to SAE 1

1. The Makkan *Suwar* refer to revelation of the Qur'ān that occurred while Muhammad was in Makkah. The Makkan phase of the revelation lasted about 13 years, from the first revelation up to the period of Hijra of Muhammad from Makkah to Madinah.
2. The Madinah *Suwar* were addressed to four groups of people. They were:
 - The *Muhājirūn*, who migrated with the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah.
 - The *Ansār*, indigenes of from Madinah who helped the *Muhājirūn*.
 - The *Munāfiqūn* who were from Madinah and pretended to support the Muslims.
 - The *Ahl al-Kitāb*, i.e. Jews and Christians with their respective scriptures.

Answers to SAE 2

3. The Makkan *Suwar* have their main themes as follows:
 - The unity of Allah (*Tawhīd*)
 - The coming Resurrection and Judgment Day
 - Righteous conducts, and lessons of the people and prophets of the past.

The Madinah *Suwar* on the other hand have their main themes as:

- Transformation of the Muslim Community into a state.
- The social, economic, political, military etc life of Muslims.
- The rules, regulations and ordinances of Islam.

Answers to SAE 3

4. It assists in understanding the meaning of the Qur'an if one knows the time and circumstances that relate to them. Also, in cases of ruling on Islamic matters, unless one knows which of the two or more related verses were revealed first, one cannot decide which legal ruling is now binding upon the Muslims.

Unit 2: Division of the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 Division of the Qur'ān
 - 2.3.1 The *Sūrah*
 - 2.3.2 *Āyah*
 - 2.3.3 *Juz'un*
 - 2.3.4 *Hizb*
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings
- 2.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be taught the various division of the Qur'ān as a book of guidance for the Muslims. These divisions are meant to ease the recitation of the book and to fully understand its contents. Scholars, researchers and students of the book found the divisions very convenient in their use of the book.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- list the various divisions of Qur'ān;
- identify some signs and strokes of the Qur'ān; and
- use the various divisions to understand the Qur'ān better.

2.3 Division of the Qur'ān

To facilitate easy reading and memorization of the Qur'ān, the scripture is divided into some sections as discussed below.

2.3.1 The *Surah*

Sūrah (pl. *Sūrat* or *Suwar*) literally means 'row' or 'fence'. In technical language, it is the passage with division of the Qur'ānic text, i.e. a chapter or part, set apart from the preceding and following text.

In the Qur'ān, there are 114 chapters or *Suwar*. This division is what Qur'ān 2:23 referred to when it challenged the opponents of Islam thus:

And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to our servant, then produce a Surah like it, and call your witness or helpers beside Allah, if your doubts are true.

The chapters of the Qur'ān are of varying lengths. The longest contains 286 verses. The shortest chapter contains only three verses. It should be noted that all *Suwar* with the exception of Surah 9 begins with the word *Bismillāhi Rahmānir Rahīm*, which means “In the name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful”. However, Surah 27:30, the *Bismillāhi* missing in *Sūrah Tawbah* is found thus:

*It is from Solomon, and is (as follows):
'in the name of Allah, The Gracious, The Merciful''.*

All the 114 *Suwar* in the Qur'ān have names which serve as a title or heading. The names are often derived from an important or distinguishing word in the text itself such as *al-Anfāl* (8), *al-Baqara* (2). In some cases, some *sūrah* are named after the first few alphabets with which the *sūrah* begins such as *Tā-hā* (20), *al-Furqān* (25), *Yā-sin* (36).

2.3.2 Āyah

Āyah (pl. *āyāt*) means ‘sign’, but in technical language, it refers to the shortest division of the Qur'ān, i.e. a phrase or a sentence. Since the revelation of the Qur'ān is a guidance to mankind, it is therefore not surprising that its smallest divisions are called ‘signs’. The term verse is only used by English translators, it may not be the most appropriate since Qur'ān is not poetry.

An ayah of the Qur'ān may carry more than one meaning, while some need to be read along with the next in a surah. Some *āyāt* are self-explanatory while some are allegorical. The proper understanding of these depends on the knowledge of individual who engages on the study of the Qur'ān.

Both the order of the ayah within each surah and the arrangement of the surah were finally determined by the Prophet under guidance from the Angel Jibril in the year of his death, when the angel came to him twice to revise the text with him.

2.3.3 Juz'un

Juz'un (pl. *ajza*) literally means part or portion. The Qur'ān is divided in 30 portions of appropriately equal length for easy recitation during the thirty nights of Ramadan.

The learning of the Qur'ān in view of its technical nature normally takes some time. Pupils learning the book often spend months and even years before graduation. Way of ensuring that a pupil completes the learning in good time is to divide the entire period along the *Juz'u*. By this, a child will move from one *Juz'u* to another. Ceremonies are held for such completion in the past by local Mallams. Today, in order to further enhance effective recitation of the Qur'ān, the

holy book is printed in 30 volumes. Thus, with 30 good reciters, the whole Qur'ān can be recited through the *Juz'u* arrangement.

2.3.4 *Hizb*

This is further division of *Juz'un*. There are sixty sub-divisions of the Qur'ān also for easy recitation and memorization. Each *hizb* is further sub-divided into quarters follows:

- a. First quarter *hizb* (*Rub'u hizb*)
- b. Half of *hizb* (*Nasnu hizb*)
- c. Third quarter *hizb* (*Thalatha Ruba'a hizb*)

This sub-division of the Qur'ān also helps pupils to learn the Qur'ān by engaging them to complete the *hizb* within a period of time after which they would fulfil completion of a *Juz'u*. To such learners, they cannot move to another *hizb* unless they have mastered the reading of the previous ones.

In the thematic structure of the Qur'ān, some *hizb* follow a set pattern of theme while others may not. These themes are usually followed by commentators of the Qur'ān (*Mufasssirūn*). Both the *hizb* and *juz'u* provide an easy coverage of the Qur'ān within a stipulated time frame.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the term *Sūrah* in the Qur'ān.
2. Write short notes on the ayah in the Qur'ān
3. What are the uses of *Juz'u* in the recitation of Qur'ān?
4. Briefly discuss *hizb* as a division of the Qur'ān.

2.4 SUMMARY

This unit has presented the various terms commonly used to describe the various divisions in the Qur'ān. The essence of this is to educate you on these terms and their importance in the learning of the Qur'ān.

The divisions of the Qur'ān into *Juz'u* and *hizb* is for easy recitation of the holy book by Muslims. Although there are further divisions of the Qur'ān, those discussed in this unit are the most essential and popular among many scholars of Qur'ān.

2.5 REFERENCES/ FURTHER READINGS

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2.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1. *Sūrah* literally means 'row' or 'fence'. In technical language, it is the passage with division of the Qur'ānic text, i.e. a chapter or part, set apart from the preceding and following text. There are 114 chapters or *Suwar* in the Qur'ān. The longest chapter contains 286 verses, while the shortest chapter contains only three verses.
2. *Āyah* (pl. *āyāt*) means 'sign', but in technical language, it refers to the shortest division of the Qur'ān, i.e. a phrase or a sentence.
3. *Juz'un* (pl. *ajza*) literally means part or portion. The Qur'ān is derived in 30 portions of appropriately equal length for easy recitation during the thirty nights of Ramadan. Way of ensuring that a pupil completes the learning in good time is to divide the entire period along the *Juz'u*. Also, with 30 good reciters, the whole Qur'ān can be recited through the *Juz'u* arrangement.
4. *Juz'un* is division of the Qur'ān into sixty sub-divisions for easy recitation and memorization. Each *hizb* is further sub-divided into quarters follows:

- a. First quarter *hizb* (*Rub 'u hizb*)
- b. Half of *hizb* (*Nasnu hizb*)
- c. Third quarter *hizb* (*Thalatha Ruba 'a hizb*)

Unit 3: Literary Forms and Style of the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Literary forms and style of the Qur'ān
 - 3.3.1 Is Qur'ān a Poem?
 - 3.3.2 Stories in the Qur'ān
- 3.4 Similes and Parables of the Qur'ān
- 3.5 Oaths (*qasam*) in the Qur'ān
- 3.6 Abbreviated Letters in the Qur'ān
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 References/Further Readings
- 3.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be taught the various literary forms and styles of the Qur'an as a book of guidance for the Muslims. This unit is essential to allow you appreciate that the Qur'an goes beyond human concoction and manipulation, hence not the composition of the Prophet as believed by some people.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- distinguish Qur'an from other forms of poetry;
- explain some stories in the Qur'an;
- explain some figures of speech of the Qur'an.
- identify some abbreviated letters in the Qur'an.

3.3 Literary forms and style of the Qur'ān

3.3.1 Is Qur'ān is a Poem?

The European Orientalists and the opponents of Muhammad have described some passages of the Qur'ān as more poetic than others. This was why he was even accused of being a soothsayer. The Qur'ān itself refutes this thus:

It is not the word of a poet; little it is you believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer; little admonition it is you receive. This is a message sent down from the lord of the worlds. (Qur'ān 69:40-43).

The accusations against Muhammad refuted in the above passage are based on the usage of a particular style, employed in the Qur'ān, which is said to be like a rhymed prose or something close to it. A rhymed Prose is a literary form with some emphasis on rhythm and rhyme but distinct from poetry. It is not as sophisticated as poetry but has been employed by Arab poets, and it is the best known of the pre-Islam Arab literary works. Such passages of the Qur'ān such as *Sūratul Ikhlās* are seen by some people as a poem. They look at such end rhymed of the Arabic text:

There are wide differences between the English literature and the Arabic Qur'ān. Ibn Khaldun (d.809 H/1406), the well-known author of the *Muqaddima*, pointed out in a passage on literature of the Arabs the difference between literature and the Qur'ān in general and between rhyme poem and Qur'ān in particular. He gave example of *Sūratul Ikhlās* quoted above that has a rhyme ending with the syllable *ad*.

*Qul Huwallahu ahad
Allahu Samad
Lam Yalid Wa Lam Yūlad
Walam Yakun Lahu Kufwan ahad.*

3.3.2 Stories in the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān contains many narratives (*qisas* or *qisis*). It states:

We do relate to you the most beautiful of stories, in that We reveal to thee this (portion) of the Qur'ān... (Q 12:3)

These stories, which illustrate and underline important aspect of the Qur'ānic message, fulfill their functions in a variety of ways. The following are some of the messages of stories in the Qur'ān:

- Explanation of the general oneness of Islam.
- Reminder of the earlier Prophets, their people and their struggle.
- Providing some arguments against some non-Muslims of Islam such as Jews and Christians.
- General guidance and Reminder to the Muslims.
- Indication for the continuity and truth of Muhammad's message.
- Strengthening the conviction of the Prophet and the believers.

In the style of the Qur'ān, these stories can be distinguished between the following three kinds:

- a. References to events that took place during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, such as the battle of Badr (Qur'ān 3:13), the battle of Uhud (Qur'ān 3:121-128), the battle of *Ahzab* (Qur'ān 33:9-27) and the *Isra'i* (ascension of Prophet Muhammad) in Qur'ān 17:1.
- b. Stories of the Prophets of Allah, their people, their message, their call, their persecution e.t.c, such as the stories of Nūh (Q26), Mūsa (Q28), Yūsuf (Q12) and many others.
- c. Other Qur'ānic narratives about past people or events, such as the stories about the Companions of the cave (Surat 18), etc.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. The Qur'ān is not a poem. Discuss.
2. Explain the place of stories in the understanding of the Qur'ān.

3.4 Similes and Parables in the Qur'ān

Another significant style prominent in the Qur'ān is the use of similes known as *amthāl* (Sing. *Mithl*) in many passages. These *amthāl* are employed to explain certain truths or to drive home important points of the message, by likening it to something well known or describing it in a particular manner.

The *amthāl* in the Qur'ān are also scientific in nature as Allah draws attention of man to the phenomena around him. A deep look at such expressions in the Qur'ān enriched one's knowledge of the world.

Again, the *amthāl* is a further confirmation that Muhammad could not have sat down somewhere and put those words together. They are superhuman statements. Few examples here would suffice.

He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure: But the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is scum likewise.

Thus, doth God (by parable) show forth the Truth and falsehood. For the scum disappears like forth cast out; While that which is for the good of mankind

remains on the earth. Thus doth God set forth parables (Qur'ān 13:17).

This verse is full of parable. Here God is explaining to man His power to send rain to all, both believers and non-believers. We can see how the rivers flow in different channels according to their capacities. Through the rain, Allah shows mercy, knowledge, wisdom and guidance to man. All human beings receive it. In the physical world, water is pure and beneficial. But forth and scum will gather according to local conditions. The message here is that the forth may make a great show on the surface, but it will not last. So will there be frothy knowledge, which will disappear, but Allah's Truth will remain for life.

Allah set forth parable (of two men); one a slave under the domination of another. He has no power of any sort: And (the other) man on whom we have bestowed goodly favours from ourselves. And he spends thereof (freely), privately and publicly. Are the two equal? (By no means): praise be to Allah. But most of them understood not.

Allah set forth (another) parable of two men; one of them dumb, with no power of any sort; a wearisome burden is he to his master; whichever may he directs him, he brings no good. Is such a man equal with one who commands justice, and is on a straight way? (Qur'ān 16:75-76).

The first parable is of two men, one of whom is a slave completely under the domination of another, with no powers of any sort, and another a free man, who is gifted in many ways, and is generous in giving out of his wealth both privately and publicly. While the first man represents the imaginary gods which men set-up whether power or nature, which have no independent existence, the second describes in a faint way the position of Allah, self-subsistent, to whom belongs the dominion of all that is in heaven and earth, and Who bestows freely of His gifts on all His creatures. In the second parable, one man is dumb, he cannot explain anything, and is certainly doing nothing; such are idols when taken as false gods. The other man is in a position to command, and he commanded what is just and righteous. Such are the qualities of Allah.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

3. Explain with examples the similes and parables in the Qur'ān.

3.5 Oaths (*Aqşam*) in the Qur'ān

In a number of passages in the Qur'ān, Allah employ oath-like expressions. These are known in Arabic as *aqşam* (Sing. *qasam*). Their function is to strengthen and support an argument, and to disperse doubts in the minds of the listener. In the Arabic texts, these passages are often opened by the word 'wa' (وَ) or the phrase 'La uqsim)' which literally means 'Indeed I swear'. Some may ask why Allah needs to swear to an oath before making a statement or an injunction? The response to this is that the Arabs who were the first recipient of the Qur'ān usually appreciate an oath as a way of emphasizing a matter. So, most Makkan *suwar* have these *aqşam*.

It is also a way of Allah's justification to punish man if, after the oath as an emphatic statement, yet man did not heed His words, then the wrath and heavy punishment of Allah can be meted on him. Sometimes an oath is taken by Allah Himself:

*But no, by the Lord, they can have no real faith until
they make three a judge in all disputes between them
and find in their souls no resistance
against thy decision but accept them with
fullest conviction (Qur'ān 4:65).*

Also, oaths are taken by Allah's creation. For instance:

*By the sun, and his (glorious) splendour,
By the moon as she follows it.
By the day as it shows up (the sun's) glory,
By the night as it conceals it.
By the firmament and its (wonderful) structure,
By the earth and its (wide) expanse.
By the soul and the proportion and order given to it
(Qur'ān 91:1-7).*

The oath taking in Islam is a very fundamental issue. Oath should only be taken by the name of Allah, the creator, but not to anything created. It is *shirk* (disbelieve) in Islam for a man to take an oath with any other deity besides Allah who alone should be called as witness. This is one of the differences between a Muslim and non-Muslim.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3 (SAEs)

4. Highlight the Qur'ānic stand on oath taking.

3.6 Abbreviated Letters in the Qur'ān

The so-called 'abbreviated letters' are an important section of what is known as *Mutashabihat*, i.e. what is cut. It is another regular feature in the Qur'ān. A glance through the chapters of the Qur'ān would show that some begin with Arabic alphabets, two, three, or more.

In technical language, *Mutashabihat* is used for certain letters found at the beginning of several *suwar* of the Qur'ān, called the abbreviated letters'. To some, these letters could just be the style of the Qur'ān but indeed this forms an important topic under the science of Qur'ān. As for the frequency of these letters, there are fourteen such letters occurring in various combinations at the beginning of 29 *suwar*. The following is a list of their occurrence and distribution in the Qur'ān:

- Alif Lam Ra - (الرَّ) Chapters 10, 11, 12, 14, 15
- Alif Lam Mim (الم) Chapters 2, 3, 29, 30
- Alif lam Mim Ra (المِر) chapters 13, 31, 32,
- Alif Lam Mim sad (المص) - chapters 7
- Ha Mim (حم) - chapters 40,41,43,44,45,46.
- Sad (ص) - chapters 38
- Ta Sin (طس) - chapters 27
- Ta Sin Mim (طسم) - chapters 26, 28
- Ta Ha (طه) - chapters 20
- Qaf (ق) - Chapters 50
- Kaf ya 'ain, sad (كيعص) - chapters 19
- Nun - (ن) - chapter 68
- Ya sin - (يس) - chapters 36.

The meaning and purpose of these letters are uncertain. However, some scholars offered some explanations regarding their meanings and imports. Some held the view that these letters might be abbreviations for certain sentences and words, such as for example *Alif Lam Mim* meaning *Allahu a'lam* (Allah knows best) or *Nun* meaning (light) etc.

Other scholars are of the view that these letters are not abbreviations but symbols and names of Allah, or something else. Some even held the view that these alphabets have some numerical significance, as the

semantic letters have numerical value. Another group of scholars are of the view that these letters were used to attract the attention of the Prophet (and later his audience) for the revelation to follow.

One significance of these alphabets is that they are followed immediately by a verse that talks about the Qur'ān, which again emphasizes that the alphabets are symbols of the unique nature and style of the Qur'ān. What you should know is that the meaning of the letters is known to Allah alone and only He can explain them better not even the Prophet.

The Qur'ān says of these letters “... *these are the symbols of the perspicuous book.*” (Qur'ān 12:1).

Self-Assessment Exercise 4 (SAEs)

5. Explain the *Mutashabihat* in the Qur'ān.

3.7 SUMMARY

You have learnt in this course the various styles and forms of the Qur'ān such as its poetic and prose-like nature; the features of the book; the similes and parables as well as the significance of the abbreviated letters.

These features make the Qur'ān an excellent document that could stand the test of time. No wonder in spite of many hundred years of its revelation, it has retained its originality till date.

The literary style of the Qur'ān makes it a special book that has to be read, not only with the tongue and voice and eyes, but with the best light that our intellect can offer. This is the best way one can appreciate the pre-eminent position of the book in the life of a Muslim. An ordinary eye cannot comprehend and grasp the depth of knowledge and wisdom of the book, hence the need to carefully study it and put its contents to practical use.

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3.9 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Answers to SAEs 1

1. The Qur'ān itself refutes the allegation of being poetical thus:

It is not the word of a poet; little it is you believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer; little admonition it is you receive. This is a message sent down from the lord of the worlds. (Qur'ān 69:40-43).

2. The Qur'ān contains many narratives (*qisas* or *qisis*). These stories illustrate and underline important aspect of the Qur'ānic message., fulfill their functions in a variety of ways. The following are some of the messages of stories in the Qur'ān:

- Explanation of the general oneness of Islam.
- Reminder of the earlier Prophets, their people and their struggle.
- Providing some arguments against some non-Muslims of Islam such as Jews and Christians.
- General guidance and Reminder to the Muslims.
- Indication for the continuity and truth of Muhammad's message.
- Strengthening the conviction of the Prophet and the believers.

Answers to SAEs 2

3. The Qur'ān makes use of similes known as *amthāl* (Sing. *Mithl*) in many passages. They are employed to explain certain truths or to drive home important points of the message, by likening it to something well known or describing it in a particular manner.

The *amthāl* in the Qur'ān are also scientific in nature as Allah draws attention of man to the phenomena around him. Also, the *amthāl* confirms that Muhammad could not have sat down somewhere and put those words together. They are superhuman statements.

Examples are contained in Qur'ān 13:17; Qur'ān 16:75-76.

Answers to SAEs 3

4. Oath -like expressions are known in Arabic as *aqsam* (Sing. *qasam*). Their function is to strengthen and support an argument, and to disperse doubts in the minds of the listener.

It is a way of Allah's justification to punish man if, after the oath as an emphatic statement, yet man did not heed His words, then the wrath and heavy punishment of Allah can be meted on him.

The oath taking in Islam is a very fundamental issue. Oath should only be taken by the name of Allah, the creator, but not to anything created. It is *shirk* (disbelieve) in Islam for a man to take an oath with any other deity besides Allah who alone should be called as witness. This is one of the differences between a Muslim and non-Muslim.

Answers to SAEs 4

5. *Mutashabihat* means the so-called 'abbreviated letters' which is a regular feature in the Qur'ān. Some chapters of the Qur'ān begin with Arabic alphabets, two, three, or more. *Mutashabihat*, in technical language, is used for certain letters found at the beginning of several *suwar* of the Qur'ān, called the abbreviated letters'. There are fourteen such letters occurring in various combinations at the beginning of 29 *suwar*. Examples are طه ص المر الم

Unit 4: The Development of Science of *Qirā'at*

Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Stages in the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.1 First Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.2 Second Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.3 Third Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.4 Fourth Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.5 Fifth Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
 - 4.3.6 Sixth Stage of the Development of *Ilmu 'l- Qirā'at*
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References /Further Readings
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The birth of *Qirā'at* can be traced to the night the arch-Angel-Jibril was first sent by Allah to commission Muhammad (SAW) as a Prophet and Messenger by asking the Prophet to recite after him, the verses of the first revelation:

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ
أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

1. Recite in the name of your Lord who created -
2. Created man from a clinging substance.
3. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous -
4. Who taught by the pen -
5. Taught man that which he knew not.

The method employed by the Angel in imparting the Qur'ān to the Prophet from the beginning to the end could be called *Talqin* (i.e guide-reading). The verses of the entire Holy Book were imparted to the prophet with correct intonation and following the rules of the science to be later known as *Tajwīd*.

Later, whenever Jibril came to teach the Prophet the Qur'ān, the Prophet would request him to teach him in other forms. Thus Jibril taught him seven different forms of reading the Qur'ān (*al-Qirā'atu `s-Sab'ah*)

4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to itemize the stages in the development of the *'Ilmu `l-Qirā'at*.

4.3 The Stages in the Development of *'Ilmu `l Qirā'at*

It can be said that like *tajwīd*, scholars have identified six various stages in the development of *'Ilmu `l Qira'at* as a science right from the time Angel Jibril first taught the Prophet the reading of the Qur'ān as discussed above, through the time rules and principles were laid down for the reading of the Qur'ān as a basic science, to the time the science of *Qira'ah* became fully developed. The stages are hereunder discussed:

4.3.1 First Stage in the Development of *'Ilmu `l Qirā'at*

: The incident described above as its origin is considered the first stage in the development of *'Ilmu `l Qira'at*.

4.3.2 Second Stage in the Development of *'Ilmu `l Qirā'at*: In accordance with the instruction of Allah to the Prophet to recite the *Qur'ān* properly and to teach his followers its recitation in like manner (Q.17:106), Muhammad read the *Qur'ān* to his followers and even taught them its reading following the way and manner he was taught by the Angel Jibril.

There were instances when the Prophet would recite the *Qur'ān* before the people he was calling. He also engaged in teaching his followers whatever verses of the *Qur'ān* taught to him by the angel. Some of his Companions reported that, when they learnt ten verses from him, they would not learn some others till they had mastered those ten and even put them into practice. Thus, they learnt the *Qur'ān*, both in theory and in practice simultaneously.

At this stage, those *sahabah* who learnt the *Qur'ān* from the Prophet used to recite it to him in order to ascertain the correctness of what they had learnt. The Prophet would then give his approval or correct them as appropriate.

4.3.3 Third Stage in the Development of *'Ilmu `l Qirā'at*: This was when some *sahabah* who had mastery in the reading of the *Qur'ān*, with the permission and guidance of the Prophet taught other companions, verses and

chapters of the *Qur'ān* in the exact way and manner they had learnt from the Prophet.

Among the *sahabah*, who, for the mastery they had and the approval and recommendation they had received from the Prophet, taught others were: ^ᶜAbdullah bin Mas^ᶜud, Salim, the Mawlah of 'Abi Hudhayfah, Mu^ᶜadh bin Jabal and 'Ubay bin Ka^ᶜab. About these four, the Prophet is reported to have said: "Learn the reading of the *Qur'ān* from four" (he then mentioned their names). Others, who also got the Prophet's approval were ^ᶜAli bin 'Abi Talib, Zayd bin Thabit, 'Abu Darda' and 'Abu Musa 'al-'Ash^ᶜari. You should however note that the most proficient of the *sahabah* in *Qur'ān*ic recitation was 'Ubayy bin Ka^ᶜab. About him ^ᶜUmar said: "Ubayy was the best of us in the recitation of the *Qur'ān*."

These *sahabah* taught others who were not as good as themselves verses and *surah* of the *Qur'ān*. For instance, 'Ubayy and Zayd both taught 'Ibn ^ᶜAbbas – the master commentator of the *Qur'ān* among the *sahabah*- the reading of the *Qur'ān*.

The Prophet himself, following the conversion of a people, would deploy a reciter to them, whose duty was to teach the people, the reading and understanding of the *Qur'ān*. According to 'Ibn Ishaq, who reported from 'Al-Barra', he said: "The first of the *Sahabah* to come to us (in *Madinah*) were Musab bin'Umayr and 'Ibn 'Umm Kulthum. The two, taught us the recitation of the *Qur'ān*. It was later that ^ᶜAmmar and Bilal came".

Report even has it that a house in *Madinah* was named "*Daru 'l-Qurra*" (house of reciters), which could be regarded as an institute or a school for *Qur'ān*ic recitation. Most of the *Qurra*' deployed by the Prophet to *Madinah* resided in this house.

4.3.4 Fourth Stage in the Development of *ᶜIlmu'l Qirā'at*: Following the settlement of the Muslims in *Madinah* after *Hijrah*, recitation of the *Qur'ān* and its learning became prominent especially during the time of the caliphs so much so that some people made its teaching and learning their major pre- occupation. They were later known and referred to as *Qurra*' (*Qur'ān*ic reciters). Seventy of them were found among the 'Ansar, who gathered every evening at a designated place, to teach themselves the *Qur'ān*

thereby updating their knowledge. This is the fourth stage in the development of the science of *Qur'ān Recitation*.

4.3.5 Fifth Stage in the Development of *‘Ilmu’l Qirā’at*: By the time [‘]Uthman was appointed Caliph, Islam had already spread beyond Arabia. Four rival provinces namely Kufah, Hims, Syria and Basrah had emerged. The Muslims found in these areas had learnt the *Qur'ān* in its various forms from various *sahabah* who had come to settle down in those areas.

In Kufah for example, the form of reading adopted by [‘]Abdullah bin Mas[‘]ud was in use. That of [‘]Ubayy bin Ka[‘]b was used in Syria, that of Miqdad bin [‘]Amr in Hims, and that of [‘]Abu Musa al-Ash[‘]ari in Basrah.

At this time, it was noticed that some of the new converts in these areas, out of ignorance, were mixing up the various forms of reading while some even tried to show the superiority of a form over the others. This sad trend made some *sahabah* to call the attention of the Caliph to the need to act promptly and decisively too, by finding a lasting solution to these problems. Hudhayfah Ibn al-Yaman was reported to have suggested to caliph [‘]Uthman saying: “O Commander of the faithful! Prevent this nation from becoming as divided as the Christians and the Jews”. The Caliph, immediately, constituted a committee of leading reciters among the *sahabah*, charging them with the duty of making official copies of the *Qur'ān*. These official copies were to be sent with Qur’ānic reciters as teachers to major centers. The Caliph, with the support of all the *sahabah* instructed the committee thus:

“If you fall into disagreement as to the dialect in which certain words are pronounced, follow the Quraysh dialect, for the Qur'ān was revealed in this dialect”.

Thus, with this development, the *Qur'ān* became standardized and official copies were made, each reflecting a particular form of reading and with bias for the Quraysh dialect as directed by the Caliph, hence, both the problem of a tribe claiming superiority of its dialect over the other and that of mixing the forms together indiscriminately were once and for all solved.

The Caliph then sent copies of these standardized *Qur'ān* to various provinces with reciters who had mastery in the form and the script used in writing the *Qur'ān*. [‘]Abdullah As-Saib al-Makhzumi (d.70 A.H.) was deployed to

Makkah; 'Abu 'Abdur-Rahman As-Salmi (d.74 A.H) was deployed to Kufah where he taught for forty years. [◌]Amir bin [◌]Abdul Qays (d.55 A.H.) was sent to Baṣrah. Al- Mughirah bin Shihab (d.71 A.H.) was deployed to Syria while Zayd bin Thabit (d.45 A.H.) was to teach in Madinah – the seat of government.

By the middle of the second century after *Hijrah*, recitation of the *Qur'ān* in the various methods (*Qira'at*) gained currency, so much so that centers were developed in places like Madinah, Makkah, Kufah, Basrah and Sham, with many scholars from among the next generation of Muslims after the *Sahabah* (i.e *Tabi[◌]un*) heading these centers as chief reciters. In Madinah, Mu[◌]adh bin 'Al-Harith popularly known as Mu[◌]adh – the reciter (d.62 AH), Sa'id bin Al-Musayyib (d.94 A.H.), [◌]Urwat bin Az-zubayr (d.95 A.H.) and a host of others were the leading reciters among the *Tabi[◌]un*. In Makkah, Mujahhid bin Jabr (d.102), Tawuz bin Kaysan (d.106), [◌]Atta' bin 'Abi Ribah (d.115) etc. were the champions. The leading reciters in Kufah were [◌]Amr bin Sharhabit (d.60 A.H.), Masruq bin Al-'Ajda' (d.62 A.H.) and Al-'Aswad bin Yazid Al- Nakhi[◌]i (d.75 A.H.) etc. In Basrah, [◌]Amir bin 'Abd-Qays (d.55 A.H.), Yahya bin Ya'mar (190 A.H.), Al-Hasan al-Basri (d.110 A.H.) etc. were the leading reciters while in Sham, it was al-Mughirah bin Shihab al- Makhzumi and some others.

These scholars and their other contemporaries not mentioned learnt the recitation of the *Qur'ān* in its various methods from the *sahabah* who were deployed to their various cities by caliph [◌]Uthman and they later taught it to the generation that came after them (*Tabi[◌] tabi[◌]in*).

You should note that this fifth stage was a crucial stage in the development of *Tajwīd*. It marked a turning point in its development because that was the time methods of recitation (*qirā'at*) gained prominence.

4.3.6 Sixth Stage in the Development of *Ilmu'l Qirā'at*: This final stage started with the succession of the above mentioned scholars among the *tabi[◌]un* by another generation of scholars among the *tabi[◌] tabi[◌]in*. At this stage, there existed a large number of scholars from among this new generation all of whom were considered specialists in the field of Qur'ānic recitation. Most of their methods of recitation were authenticated by chains of reliable narrators ending with the Prophet. These scholars were also scattered about in various cities. In Makkah were [◌]Abdullah bin Kathir, Hamid bin Qays al-A[◌]raj, Muhammad bin

Muhaysin. In Madinah were 'Abu Ja^cfar Yazid bin al-Qa^cqa^c, Shaybah bin Nisah and Nafi^c bin Abi Na^cim. In Basrah, there were ^cAbdullah bin Abi 'Ishaq, ^cIsa bin ^cAmr, 'Abu ^cAmr bin al-'A'la, ^cAsim bin 'Abi 'n- Nujud, Sulayman al-a^cmash, Hamzah and Al-Kisa'i. In sham were ^cAbdullah bin ^cAmir, Atiyyah bin Qays Al-kilabi, 'Ismail bin ^cAbdullah bin al-Muhajir, Yahya bin al-Harith al-Dhimari and Shurayh bin Yazid al-Hadrami.

Of these scholars and a host of others, some later emerged as the most popular and were known as Imams of Qur'ānic recitation with people trooping to them to learn their methods. As such, in every town, the method of a particular Imam became the adopted one by everybody in the town. For this reason, the methods were named after them.

By the middle of the fourth century, the methods of seven of them had become the most recognized and popular ones. These methods were adopted in over 200 Muslim cities. These seven methods of reading became standardized when an Iraqi scholar by name 'Abu Bakr bin Mujahid wrote a book entitled "*Al-Qirā'ātu s-Sab-'ah*" (the Seven Readings). The book was the first of its type to select and collect together the seven methods of reading. This, the author did, after subjecting the various methods prevalent then to serious criticism and scrutiny.

By this time, certain rules had been laid down to determine the authenticity of the various existing *qira'at*. It was based on these rules that some scholars felt that Al-Mujahid's selection and limitation is not an accurate representation.

They felt there were some other scholars who were as good as the seven selected by Al-Mujahid. They, therefore, added some other three and later some other four, thereby making the number of the authentic methods of recitation ten or fourteen. They finally concluded that any method of recitation that fulfils the conditions for the criticism of *qira'ah* must not be rejected even if it is not from any of the seven or the ten or the fourteen accepted Imams.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1 (SAEs)

1. Trace the origin of *Ilmu 'l-Qirā'at*.
2. Highlight the Stages through which *Ilmu 'l-Qirā'at* passed.

4.4 SUMMARY

The above are the six developmental stages that the *Qirā'āt* like *Tajwīd* passed through before attaining its present status. When you view the above discussion critically, you would realize that the emphasis is more on *ʿilmu ʿl-Qiraʿat* and not *ʿilmtuʿt- Tajwīd*. That was because at the early stage, *Qurʿān* was being learnt and read with *Tajwīd* already applied; as such, there was no emphasis at all on its science whereas arguments on differences in forms of recitation had been a common phenomenon right from the time of the Prophet. You will recall that it was not until towards the end of the third century that one 'Abu Muzahim al-Khaqani (d.325 A.H./947 C.E) felt the need to codify and lay down the rules of *Tajwīd* and wrote the first work ever on its principles. And, in any case, *qirā'ah* cannot be done without the application of *Tajwīd*.

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4.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1. The birth of *Qirā'at* can be traced to the night the arch-Angel-Jibril was first sent by Allah to commission Muhammad (SAW) as a Prophet and Messenger by asking the Prophet to recite after him, the verses of the first revelation.

The verses of the entire Holy Book were imparted to the prophet with correct intonation and following the rules of the science to be later known as *Tajwīd*.

Later, whenever Jibril came to teach the Prophet the *Qurʿān*, the Prophet would request him to teach him in other forms. Thus Jibril taught him seven different forms of reading the *Qurʿān* (*al-Qirā'atu ʿs-Sabʿah*).

2. **1st Stage:** The stage where Angel Jibril came to teach the Prophet how to read.

2nd Stage: This is the stage where the Prophet recited the *Qur'ān* properly and to taught his followers its recitation in like manner. This is the stage the companions learnt the *Qur'ān*, both in theory and in practice simultaneously. At this stage, those *sahabah* who learnt the *Qur'ān* from the Prophet used to recite it to him in order to ascertain the correctness of what they had learnt. The Prophet would then give his approval or correct them as appropriate.

3rd Stage: This was when some *sahabah* who had mastery in the reading of the *Qur'ān*, with the permission and guidance of the Prophet taught other companions, verses and chapters of the *Qur'ān* in the exact way and manner they had learnt from the Prophet.

4th Stage: This was the stage when recitation of the *Qur'ān* and its learning became prominent especially during the time of the caliphs so much so that some people made its teaching and learning their major pre-occupation. They were later known and referred to as *Qurra'* (Qur'ānic reciters).

5th Stage: This was the stage where the Qur'an was learnt in four rival provinces namely Kufah, Hims, Syria and Basrah. This was when Caliph 'Uthman sent copies of the standardized *Qur'ān* to various provinces with reciters who had mastery in the form and the script used in writing the *Qur'ān*.

6th Stage: This is the final stage where with the succession of scholars among the *tabi^cun* by another generation of scholars among the *tabi^cin* there existed a large number of scholars from among this new generation all of whom were considered specialists in the field of Qur'ānic recitation. Most of their methods of recitation were authenticated by chains of reliable narrators ending with the Prophet.

Unit 5: Meaning, Kinds and Conditions Governing Authenticity of *Qirā'āt*

Unit Structure:

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3 *Al-Qirā'āt* (the Variant Readings)
 - 5.3.1 Definition of *al-Qirā'āt*
 - 5.3.2 Kinds of *al-Qirā'āt*
 - 5.3.3 Conditions for acceptance of *al-Qirā'āt*
- 5.4 *Al-Qurrā'* – The Reciters
- 5.5 *Riwāyāt* – Versions of Recitation
- 5.6 Summary
- 5.7 References /Further Reading
- 5.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the just concluded discussion above, mention is made of *Qirā'āt* and that some principles were, at a point in time, laid down to determine the authenticity of *Qirā'āt*. It is good that more light is shed on this for your proper understanding. This section will therefore treat you to the meaning and kinds of *Qirā'āt* as well as the conditions for its authenticity. There is also a discussion on versions and renditions known in *Tajwīd* parlance as *riwāyāt*.

5.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to

1. Define *Qirā'āh* and *riwāyah*
2. Discuss various kinds of *qirā'āt*
3. State the yard stick for the validation or rejection of *Qirā'āh*

5.3. Meaning, Kinds and Conditions Governing Authenticity of *Qirā'āt*

5.3.1 Definition of *al-Qirā'āt*

Al-qirā'ah (plural – *Al- qirā'āt*) is a verbal noun from the verb “*qara'a*”. Literally, it means “recitation” but technically, it is a method of Qur'ānic recitation adopted by a particular leading Imam among reciters different from the method adopted by another leading Imam. Such differences between the methods could be in the

pronunciation of letters (*hurūf*) or in the pronunciation of their forms (*Hay'at*). This is how Az-zarqani defines *qirā'ah*.

According to Az-zakhashi, *qira'ah* refers to the variations in the reading of the wordings of the *Qur'ān*. These variations could be in its letters and their manner of articulation such as lightening (*takhfif*) and stressing (*tashdid*) etc. *Qira'ah*, according to Ibn Al-Jazri is not just variations in reading but a science that deals with the manner in which the wordings of the *Qur'ān* are articulated. Ad-dimyati-al-Banna defines *qira'ah* as a science, through which areas of agreement and variations among transmitters of the *Qur'ān* are known. These agreements and variations could be in elision of letters (*hadhf*), establishment of letters (*'Ithbat*), vowelisation (*tahrik*) and vowelessness (*Taskin*), disjunction (*fasl*) and conjunction (*wasl*) etc.

Based on these definitions, Muhammad Sayyidi in his “*At-tadhkirah*” concludes that *Al-qira'ah* could be defined as the articulation of the wordings of the *Qur'ān* in the exact way and manner the Prophet articulated them or the way and manner in which they were read by the *sahabah* in the Prophet's presence and for which he gave his approval.

In summary, *qirā'ah* could be defined as the variations in the methods of reading traceable to the Prophet. It is considered one of the components of *ilmu't-Tajwīd* by some scholars while some others opine that *Tajwīd* is rather one of the branches of *ilmu 'l-Qirā'at*.

5.3.2 Kinds of *al-Qirā'āt*

Classical *Tajwīd* scholars have identified six kinds of recitation. They are *Mutawatir*, *Mash-hurah*, *'Ahadah*, *Shadh-dhah*, *Mawdu'ah* and *Mudarrajah*.

(i) *Al-Qira'ah al- Mutawatir:* This refers to the *qira'at* that were supported by a large number of reliable narrators as cannot be reasonably expected to agree on falsehood. The chain of narrators, in this kind of *qira'at* is continuous. This kind of *qira'at* is absolutely faultless, no weakness is identifiable with the *'Isnad* and none of the authorities on the *'Isnad* has been impugned in anyway, rather, they are known for their up-rightness and good memories. It is the most accurate of the six kinds. The seven most popular *qira'at* fall in this category.

(ii) *Al-Qira'at al-Mash-hurah:* This is the kind of *qira'ah* whose reporters are accurate. It agrees with the rules of Arabic grammar while it also corresponds with the script of one of the Qur'ān distributed during the era of Caliph ^CUthman. This kind of *qira'at* is considered sound, but not as sound as *Al-Mutawatir*. It is to *al-mutawatir* in terms of authenticity and soundness what *Hasan* is to *Sahih* in *hadith* classification.

(iii) *Al-Qira'atu 'l-'Ahad:* This refers to any *qira'ah* with only one transmitter. Also, it neither coincides with any of the Qur'ānic scripts distributed during the era of Caliph ^CUthman nor with the rules of Arabic grammar. This kind of *qira'ah* does not hold strong validity, because, by its nature, it is open to susceptibility.

(iv) *Al-Qira'atu 'sh -Shadhdhah:* This refers to any *qira'ah* with weak chain of narrators in the sense that, it goes back to the *Tabi^Cun* only, and not to the companions or the Prophet. The *qira'at* that fall in this category are the ones on which serious doubt can be cast.

(v) *Al-Qira'atu 'l-mawdu^Cah:* This kind of *qira'ah* is regarded as quite invented or forged. It is considered not genuine as it is only attributed to its Imam without chain of narrators.

(iv) *Al-Qira'atu 'l-mudarrajah:* This kind of *qira'ah* contains some words, which are not originally part of the Qur'ānic text, but used by the Prophet in interpreting the Qur'ān. An example of this, is the *qira'ah* of Sa^Cd bin'Abi Waqas of verse 198 of Chapter 2 which he read thus:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فِي مَوَاسِمِ الْحَجِّ

(meaning – It is no crime in you if you seek of the bounty of your Lord *during pilgrimage*); and that of Zubayr on verse 104 of Chapter 3 thus:

وَلَتَكُنَّ مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ
وَيَسْتَعِينُونَ بِاللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ.

(meaning – let there arise out of you, a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right *and seeking Allah's help on whatever befalls them*).

The italicised in the two instances given above are considered as part of the interpretation of the Prophet on the verses and not part of the Qur'ānic text.

Apart from the first two kinds of *qirā'at*, the text of the Qur'ān, according to scholars of *Tajwīd*, should not be read with any of the rest four, while belief in them is also considered not obligatory.

5.3.3 Conditions for acceptance of *al-Qirā'āt*

You have just learnt that there are different kinds of *qirā'ah*. Don't you think that it is pertinent to know the criteria used in classifying *qirā'at*? This is exactly what you are going to learn now.

For a *qirā'ah* to be regarded as authentic and as such accepted and adopted, it has to fulfill certain conditions (*shurūt*). These conditions are three. It is based on these conditions that *qirā'at* are categorized as either *sahīhah* (sound) or *shadhdhah* (unusual). Any *qirā'at* that fulfils all of the three conditions is regarded as *sahīhah* while any *qirā'ah* in which any of the conditions is missing is regarded as *shadhdhah*.

- i. The first condition is that, the *qirā'ah* must have an authentic chain of narrators that is continuous and ending with the Prophet. Also, the narrators must be known to be upright and possess good memories. This is known as

“*sihatu’s-sanad*”. Also, the *qirā’ah* must be conveyed by a large number of narrators as cannot be reasonably expected to agree on falsehood. This is known as “*at-tawatur*”.

- ii The second condition is that, the *qirā’ah* must be in perfect agreement with the known grammatical structures of Arabic language. To verify this, references could be made to the passages of pre-Islamic prose and poetry.
- iii. The third condition is that, the *qira’ah* must be in accordance with the script of one of the copies of the Qur’ān distributed during the era of Caliph ^CUthman.

Self-Assessment Exercises 1 (SAEs)

1. Define *al-Qirā’āt*
2. List the kinds of *al-Qirā’āt*.
3. Give the conditions for acceptance or rejection of a *Qirā’at*

5.4 Al-Qurrā’ – The Reciters

You would probably have heard the word *Qārī’* before, it is the singular form of *Qurrā’* which simply refers to the authentic reciters of the Qur’ān, whose methods of reading were supported by a large number of reliable narrators ending with the Prophet. These *qurra’* are the ones to whom the various *qirā’āt* are attributed. They are also sometimes referred to as *’Imam*.

Remember that we earlier mentioned that the *qira’at* were initially many in number before they were pruned down to seven.

Here are the seven *qurrā* or Imams whose *qira’at*, according to Al Mujahid are the most authentic.

1. Al-Imam Nafi^C bin ^CAbdu ’r- Rahman bin Na^Cim al- Madani. He was of Isfahan origin but had his base in Madinah. He died in 169 A.H.
2. Al-Imam Ibn Kathir. He was ’Abu Muhammad ‘Abdullah bin Kathir Ad-Dari. He was the leading Imam in Makkah. He died in 120 A.H.

3. Al-Imam 'Abu ^ḤAmr. His full name was 'Abu ^ḤAmr Zabban bin al-Ala ^ḤAmmar. He was the leading Imam of Qur'ānic recitation in Basrah. He died in 154 A.H.
4. Al-Imam ^ḤAsim. He was 'Abu Bakr bin 'Abi 'n- Najud al 'Asadi. He had his base in Kufah. He died in 127 A.H.
5. Al- Imam Ibn ^ḤAmir. He was ^ḤAbdullah bin al-Yahsubi. His sobriquet was 'Abu Na^Ḥim and 'Abu ^ḤImran. He was the leading Imam in Sham (Damascus). He died in 118 A.H.
6. Al- Imam Hamzah. His full name was 'Abu 'Immarah Hamzah bin Habib ^ḤAziziyah. He had his base in Kufah. He died in 156 A.H.
7. Al- Imam al-Kisa'i. He was 'Abu 'l- Hasan ^ḤAli bin Hamzah al Kisa'i. He was a grammarian. He also had his base in Kufah and died in 189 A.H.

It should, however, be noted that while Al-Mujahid considered Al- Kisa'i as one of the seven authentic reciters, some others dropped him for Ya^Ḥqub.

Self-Assessment Exercises 2 (SAEs)

4. List the seven *qurrā* or Imams whose *qira'at*, according to Al-Mujahid are the most authentic.

5.5 Riwāyāt – Versions of the Qirā'āt

You have just learnt about methods of recitation and the Imams who championed them. You should however note that these methods of recitation (*qirā'at*) were taught by these Imams to their students in various versions. The versions are called *Riwayat*. Thus each *qirā'ah* has a number of *riwāyāt* (versions) between which exist some slight differences which are traceable to the Imam. These students who had learnt various versions of the *qirā'at* from their Imams further popularized the *riwāyat* by transmitting them to others through chains traceable to the Imams of the *qirā'at*.

However, in order to curb the proliferation of *riwayat* in any given method of reading (*qira'ah*), the two most popular ones are given prominence over the rest. Thus, in the *qirā'ah* of Imam Nafi^c, for instance, the versions of *Warsh* and *Qalun* are the two most prominent ones; and in the *qira'at* of Imam ^cAsim, the versions of *Hafs* and *Shu^cbah* are the two most prominent ones etc.

In summary, therefore, for every *qira'at* are two recognized *riwayat*. Thus for the whole of the seven recognized *qira'at*, there are fourteen recognized *riwayat*.

The following illustrates the seven most authentic methods of reading and their recognized *Riwayat*.

QIRA'AT (METHODS OF READING)		RIWAYAT (VERSIONS OF READING)	
1.	Al-Imam Nafi ^c	1.	Warsh
		2.	Qalun
2.	Al-Imam Ibn Kathir	1.	Al-Bazi
		2.	Qanbul
3.	Al-Imam 'Abu ^c Amr	1.	Ad-Duri
		2.	As-Susi
4.	Al-Imam ^c Asim	1.	Hafs
		2.	Shu ^c bah
5	Al-Imam Ibn ^c Amir	1.	Hisham
		2.	Ibn Dhakwan
6	Al-Imam Hamzah	1.	Khalaf
		2.	Khallad
7.	Al-Imam Al-Kisāī	1.	'Abu 'l – Hārith
		2.	Ad-Durrī

Note that each *rāwī* also had many students who learnt under him, his version of reading as taught to him by his Imam, but this version of reading had become popular through the two most prominent of the *rawi*'s students who are referred to as '*Ashab-al-Turuq.Turuq* (sing *Tariq*), in *Tajwīd* science, refers to the mode, in which a version or reading was transmitted and popularized.

Thus, for instance, 'Abu Ya^cqub Yusuf bin 'Amr al-Azraq (d. 240 AH) and 'Abu-Bakr Muhammad bin^c Abdur-Rahim' Al-'Asad popularly known as 'Al-Asbihani (d.294 AH) were the two students of *Warsh* through whom the *riwayah* or *warsh* became popularized among the people. The *riwayah* became popularly known in Misra and Maghrib through 'Al-'Asraq and in Iraq through 'Al-'Asbihani.

It should, however, be noted that each of these *'ashab-al-Turuq* also has some *ruwat* (transmitters). For example, with reference to Ibn al-Jazri, *Al-'Asraq*'s mode of reading in the version of *Warsh* had almost 35 different transmitters among whom 'Ismail bin ^ᶜAbdullah 'An-Nuhas and 'Abu Bakri ^ᶜAbdullah bin Malik, popularly known as 'Ibn Yusuf, became the most popular.

Self-Assessment Exercises 3 (SAEs)

5. Mention the seven most authentic methods of reading and their recognized *Riwayat*

5.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, you have learnt the meaning and definition of *Tajwīd* as well as the relationship and difference between *ᶜilmu't- Tajwīd* and *Tajwīdu 'l- Qur'ān*. Equally, you have learnt about the position of *Tajwīd* and its significance. This chapter also leads you to the origin and development of *Tajwīd* with elaborate discussion on the various stages it passed through before attaining its present status. Remember also that the chapter discusses the *Qirā'at* and *riwāyat*. Perfect recitation of the Qur'ān requires not only sound knowledge of *Tajwīd* but also its application. The application of the rules of *Tajwīd* helps the reciter to avoid commission of errors. Though not all Muslims will specialize and have expertise in *Tajwīd* , but every Muslim must have at least knowledge of the rudiments needed when reciting the Qur'ān since the recitation of the Qur'ān is expected to be carried out with the application of the rules of *Tajwīd* .

5.7 REFERENCES / FURTHER READING

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5.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

Answers to SAEs 1

1. *Al-qirā'ah* (plural – *Al- qirā'āt*) is a verbal noun from the verb “*qara'a*” which literally means “recitation” but technically means a method of Qur'ānic recitation adopted by a particular leading Imam among reciters different from the method adopted by another leading Imam. According to Ad-dimyati-al-Banna, *qira'ah* as a science through which areas of agreement and variations among transmitters of the Qur'ān are known. *Qirā'ah* could be defined as the variations in the methods of reading traceable to the Prophet.
2. Classical *Tajwīd* scholars have identified six kinds of recitation. They are:
Mutawatir,
Mash-hurah,
'Ahadah,
Shadh-dhah,
Mawdu^hah, and
Mudarrajah.
3. i. The *qirā'ah* must have an authentic chain of narrators that is continuous and ending with the Prophet. Also, the narrators must be known to be upright and possess good memories.
ii The *qirā'ah* must be in perfect agreement with the known grammatical structures of Arabic language.
iii. The *qira'ah* must be in accordance with the script of one of the copies of the Qur'ān distributed during the era of Caliph ^hUthman.
4. i. Al-Imam Nafi^h bin ^hAbdu 'r- Rahman bin Na^him al- Madani.
ii. Al-Imam Ibn Kathir. He was 'Abu Muhammad 'Abdullah bin Kathir Ad-Dari.

- iii. Al-Imam 'Abu ^ḥAmr. His full name was 'Abu ^ḥAmr Zabban bin al-Ala ^ḥAmmar.
- iv. Al-Imam ^ḥAsim.
- v. Al- Imam Ibn ^ḥAmir.
- vi. Al- Imam Hamzah.
- vii. Al- Imam al-Kisa'i.

5.

<i>QIRA'AT</i> (METHODS OF READING)		<i>RIWAYAT</i> (VERSIONS OF READING)	
1.	Al-Imam Nafi ^ḥ	1.	Warsh
		2.	Qalun
2.	Al-Imam Ibn Kathir	1.	Al-Bazi
		2.	Qanbul
3.	Al-Imam 'Abu ^ḥ Amr	1.	Ad-Duri
		2.	As-Susi
4.	Al-Imam ^ḥ Asim	1.	Hafs
		2.	Shu ^ḥ bah
5	Al-Imam Ibn ^ḥ Amir	1.	Hisham
		2.	Ibn Dhakwan
6	Al-Imam Hamzah	1.	Khalaf
		2.	Khallad
7.	Al-Imam Al-Kisāi	1.	'Abu 'l – Hārith
		2.	Ad-Durrī

MODULE 3: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE QUR'ĀN

- Unit 1 Qur'ān as the primary source of Shariah.....
- Unit 2 The Essence and Message of the Qur'ān
- Unit 3 Views of non-Muslims about the Qur'ān
- Unit 4 The Authenticity of the Qur'ān
- Unit 5 Qur'ānic Principles on Unity, Equality and Peaceful Co-existence of Mankind

Unit 1: The *Qur'ān* as a Source of the *Shari'ah*

Unit Structure

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3. The *Qur'ān* as a Source of the *Shari'ah*
 - 1.3.1 General Classification of the contents of the Glorious *Qur'ān*
- 1.4 The Significance of the *Qur'ān* as the first primary source of *Shari'ah*
- 1.5 A Highlight of legal Verses of the *Qur'ān*
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References and Further Reading
- 1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Module 1 of this Course detailed you with the lexical and technical meaning of *Shari'ah* and expatiated upon the importance, concept and scope of the Islamic law. The relations between the terms Islam, *Shari'ah* and *Fiqh* were also analysed for your digestion. The last Unit of the Module focused on analysis of the pre-Islamic Arab customs and the reforms introduced by Islam.

In this Module, you are going to study and digest the sources of the *Shari'ah* legal system which are the *Qur'ān*, the *Sunnah*, *Ijmā'* (Consensus of Opinions) and *Qiyās* (Analogical Deduction). Since the *Qur'ān* is the first primary and the most important source of the *Shari'ah* on which all other sources are based, we are going to begin by shedding light on the importance and roles of the *Qur'ān* as a source of the *Shari'ah*.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to

- i. Give a general classification of the contents of the Glorious *Qur'ān*
- ii. Expatriate upon the significance of the *Qur'ān* as the first primary source of *Shari'ah*
- iii. Highlight the legal verses of the *Qur'ān*.

1.3 The *Qur'ān* as a Source of the *Shari'ah*

The *Qur'ān* is the first and the original source of *Shari'ah*- the Islamic Law. It does not only stipulate but also provides guidelines on how to implement its provisions. It puts the nature of man into consideration always. The guidance provided in the *Qur'ān* covers all the aspects of life except that it does not go into details in most cases. As a legal treatise, the *Qur'ān* has the peculiarity of covering all aspects of man's life. It contains the Law potentially and not explicitly. It is incumbent on Muslims to avail themselves of guidance the Book provides as failure to do so amounts to nothing less than disbelief and recantation.

1.3.1 General classification of the verses of the *Qur'ān*

The verses of the Holy *Qur'ān* can be classified into four categories:

- (i) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of the gift of Allah: (*a`-t-Tadhkīr bi ālā`i Allah*). There are numerous gifts of Allah like water, air, sun, moon, day, night, heavens, earth, children, vegetation, animals, etc. which point out the existence of Allah, the Divine Lordship of Allah, Oneness of Allah, etc.

“Which of the bounties of Allah will you reject?” constitutes the chorus of twenty-nine verses of *Qur'ān* Chapter 55, *Sūratu `r-Rahmān*.

- (ii) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of various happenings, incidents, etc. (*a`-t-Tadhkīr bi āyām Allah*). A number of events show how Allah had helped His Prophets and other pious people, and how he had punished the wrongdoers. The example of Allah's help to Prophet Ibrahim, Ismail, Musa, Harun, Isa and Muhammad can be seen throughout the pages of the Holy Book. Also the example of Allah's punishment on the wrongdoers can be observed in the *Qur'ān* in the cases of Fir-'awn, (Pharaoh), Nimrūd, Qārūn, Abū Lahab and the communities of Ād and Thamūd.

- (iii) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of death and eschatology (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi`l mawt wa mā ba `da `l-mawt*). Death and all events which follow death are mentioned in the Holy *Qur`ān*. These are as follows:
- (a) Questioning in the grave by the two Angels , Munkar and Nakīr
 - (b) *Barzakh*, the intermediate state after the death till the day of resurrection
 - (c) Resurrection
 - (d) The day of judgement
 - (e) Rewards and Punishments
 - (f) Heaven and Hell
 - (g) The Beatific vision (seeing Almighty Allah face to face)
- (iv) Passages of the Holy Book that contain injunctions of Allah with which mankind should abide (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi Āyāt al-Ahkām*). A highlight of this will be presented shortly after the following section.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. Discuss the four themes to which the verses of the *Qur`ān* can be classified.

1.4 The Significance of the *Qur`ān* as the First Primary Source of *Sharī`ah*

The Holy *Qur`ān*, as we mentioned previously, is the first primary source of the *Sharī`ah*. It has the final say on any issue that relates to the Islamic Law, or, to be more specific, way of life. This is in view of the fact that the Law in Islam does not only treat criminal, civil, commercial and international cases. It goes further to discuss morals, ethics, worship, eschatology, metaphysics and social interaction. In other words, everything that a Muslim needs, is provided for by the *Sharī`ah*. The *Qur`ān*, as a Law Book, is therefore different from any other one man has ever known. The following are some of its distinctive qualities:

i. Complete way of Life: As said while discussing the scope of the *Shari^Cah*, man's religious life is traditionally divided into three broad aspects by the early scholars of Islam. These are the '*Aqīdah* (creed) '*Ibādah* (worship) and *Mu^Cāmalah* (social interaction). The first, as the translation shows, relates to faith or doctrinal issues such as belief in Allah and the other Articles of Faith. The second is on the acts of worship such as *Salāt* (Prayer), *Zakāt* (obligatory charity) and other cardinal principles of Islam; while the third consists of legislations on what transpires between one person and another or a group of persons. This may relate to economy, politics, entertainment and social activities generally. That is why some regards it a misnomer to single out some verses of the *Qur'ān* and tag them as being the only ones capable of legal application.

ii. Synthesis of morality and law: The modern concept of law does not have any regard for moral and ethical consideration. An obvious case can be perverted if the lawyer handling it is capable or knows how to play his card to influence the judge. The ultimate aim is to impress the judge without any consideration for the conscience. The *Shari^Cah* is different in this because it constantly reminds man of the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of Allah. He knows everything and will give appropriate rewards in the hereafter. The *Qur'ān* cautions those in charge of dispensing justice asking: "Is Allah not the Judge of judges?" (*Q.* 95:8).

iii. Stipulating the Law Potentially: By this we mean that the *Qur'ān* is just "the model illustration for future legislation and does not constitute a legal code by itself". It provides the principles in most cases without stipulating the Law explicitly or actually. Should it attempt to do so, it would be too voluminous and will not serve the purpose it is meant for. The explicit and actual legislations are furnished in form of *Sunnah* which is the second primary source of the *Shari^Cah*. This shows the indispensable roles the Prophet played as the recipient, interpreter and practical demonstrator of the *Shari^Cah*.

The fact that the *Qur'ān* has not supplied details in every aspect of life also provides opportunities for interpreting the law to accord with all times and places. Had it given specific legislations in the light of the situation at the time of the Prophet, it would have restricted itself to that time and the Arab land. In that case, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to make the legislations applicable in the present time. The need for its review would have been irresistible, just like the case of other codes all over the world.

iv. Perfect: No man is perfect, and anything coming from him cannot be perfect. That is why the need is always felt to improve on policies by modification, review or outright change. As a result of this, constitutions all over the world are subject to review, amendment or repeal. But the case of the *Qur'ān* is different. Its source is Allah to whom the past, the present and future are the same. He knows everything. Owing to His infinite knowledge, He is fully aware of all possible future needs of man and how to meet them. As such, He has revealed the *Qur'ān* as guidance in which there is no doubt in accordance with man's nature.

Any deviation from it will not only make man fail to achieve the desired aim but will also create difficulties for him. We are all witnesses to what happens in developed countries where technological advancement has failed to bring about peace and tranquility in the society. Organised violent crimes are the order of the day in most of them.

v. Facilitation of Implementation: Unlike other legal codes which expose man to temptations and, at the same time, expect him to keep the law, the *Qur'ān* gives due consideration to the nature of man and takes steps to enable him to carry out the injunctions. For instance, raping is a crime all over the world but woman is encouraged to make herself as attractive and seducing as possible in dressing, keeping dates and visiting males.

The case of Mike Tyson, the heavy-weight boxing champion jailed for six years for raping a contestant in a beauty contest is apposite here. The lady was approached and invited to his hotel accommodation. The invitation was honoured and only God knows how she dressed and behaved to arouse his carnal feelings. The situation can hardly arise in an Islamic setting. The woman is enjoined to dress decently without exposing her beauty. Members of the opposite sexes are instructed to “lower their gaze” and avoid promiscuous intermingling (*Qur’ān* 34:30-31). A woman or girl is not allowed to visit any man who is not her husband or relative. Thus, to commit fornication or adultery is very difficult in the Islamic country unlike what obtains in the West. In fact, the principle in the Islamic jurisprudence is that anything that may lead to a sin is a sin in itself.

In sum, the *Qur’ān* contains the totality of the *Shari’ah* although in principle without going into detail in many cases. It provides the framework on which the elaborate exposition of the *Shari’ah* in the Sunnah, *Ijmā’* and *Qiyās* is based. Due to this unique role it plays, the *Qur’ān* is considered the most authoritative of the sources of the *Shari’ah*. It has the final say on every legal issue. It is even used to determine the authenticity of Hadīth because all the sayings and practices of the Prophet are expected to be in accordance with it. In case any statement or action is ascribed to him but is contrary to the *Qur’ān*, it will have no legal value. It must have been forged.

As the *Qur’ān* is meant to guide man to the realization of the purpose of his creation both here and in the hereafter, he is enjoined to ensure that he lives according to its provisions. The Prophet was specifically instructed to judge cases according to it. The *Qur’ān* 5:49 says:

To you we sent the scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety, so judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverting from the Truth that has come to you.

Failure to adhere to the provisions of the *Qur'ān* in dispensing justice is strongly condemned and those guilty of this sin are called *al-Kafirūm* (the unbelievers), *al-zālimūn* (the wrong-doers) and *al-Fāsiqūn* (the rebels) (*Qur'ān* 5:44-47). This means that the sin is so grave that it may rob one of one's faith and turn one into an evil-doer and a rebel. Hence, carrying out the *Sharī'ah* provisions as in the *Qur'ān* is part of one's responsibilities as a Muslim.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

2. Assess the qualities of the *Qur'ān* as the first primary source of *Sharī'ah*.

1.5 A Highlight of legal Verses of the *Qur'ān*

Many *Qur'ānic* verses contain the commandments and injunctions of Allah for governing the conduct of every Muslim from birth to death; their observance will bring him eternal happiness. These verses are called *Āyāt al- Aḥkām*. They may be grouped into four categories:

(i) *The Concise Injunctions*

These are the precise commandments contained in the Holy *Qur'ān*. But the Holy *Qur'ān* does not give detailed rules regarding these commandments. For example, the Injunctions concerning purification (*Tahārah*), prayers (*Ṣalāt*), fasting (*Ṣawm*), poor rate (*Zakāt*) and pilgrimage (Hajj) etc. are all mentioned in the *Qur'ān*, but the detailed rules about this are to be found in the traditions of the Prophet (SAW).

(ii) *The Concise-cum-Detailed Injunctions:*

These Injunctions are those which are contained in the verses some of which mentioned the commandments in brief but others mention them in detail and further leave them to the *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* as for example injunction on war, peace, Jihad, prisoners of war, booty and relations with non-Muslims. These details are not merely left to the *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah* alone but *Ijtihād* can also be a method to find suitable solution to the problems.

(iii) The detailed Injunctions:

These Injunctions are contained in the *Qur'ān* which give complete details of the commandments. Therefore, there is no room for *Ijtihād* e.g. all the *Hadd* punishments *Qiṣāṣ*, unintentional homicide, murder, theft, (*Sariqah*), robbery (*Hirābah*), *Zinā* (Fornication), and *Qadhf* (Defamation).

(iv) Fundamental principles of Guidance derived from injunctions:

The Holy *Qur'ān* also mentioned certain fundamental principles for the guidance of Muslims. But these principles have no clear-cut definition either in the *Qur'ān* or the *Sunnah* except basic norms. They are to be provided through the due process of *Ijtihād*. These principles are:

- a) Principles of freedom
- b) Principle of justice
- c) Principle of consultation
- d) Principle of public interest
- e) Principle of equality

It is the consensus of the opinion among the interpreters of the *Qur'ān* and Muslim Jurists (*al-Mufasssirūn* and *al-Fuqahā'*) that any Muslim who legislatively innovates, or enacts laws inconsistent with what God has revealed, enforcing his own laws while renouncing the revealed ones - unless he believes that this innovated or self-imposed laws are correct interpretation of Allah's revelation- would be classified under one of the categories of either *Fāsidūn*, *Fāsiqūn*, *Zālimūn*, and finally *Kāfirūn*. For example, if a ruler does not apply the Islamic penalty for theft or slander or adultery, preferring the judgement of man-made law, such a ruler will be considered definitely an unbeliever.

If a ruler fails to apply Islamic Jurisprudence for reasons other than disbelief, he is considered a wrongdoer, and if, as a result of neglecting Islamic Jurisprudence he violates a human right or overlooks a principle of justice and equity, he is considered a rebel.

List of some of the Legal Injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān

Ijmā' (Consensus of juristic opinion):	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v59, 115
Qiyās (Analogy)	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v227, <i>Al-Hashr</i> 59v2
Ijtihād :	<i>Al-'Ankabūt</i> , 29v69
Istihṣān (Juristic preference):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v185; <i>Al-Hajj</i> , 22v78
Marriage :	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v222,235; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v4, 19,21,23,24,25; <i>Al-Māidah</i> , 5v5,7; <i>Al-A'rāf</i> , 7v189; <i>Al-Nūr</i> , 24v3,22,26,32,33; <i>Al-Ahzāb</i> , 33v37; <i>Al-Rūm</i> , 30v21; <i>Al-Mumtaḥinah</i> 60v10,11,12
Purpose of Marriage :	<i>Al-Rūm</i> , 30v21; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v1; <i>Al-Nahl</i> , 16v72. <i>Al-Nūr</i> , 24v31; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v3. Polygamy: <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v3,29.
Mahr (Dower):	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> ,4v4,20,21,24,25; <i>Al-Māida</i> ,5v6; <i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v236
Nafaqah (Maintenance):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v233,241; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v34; <i>Aṭ-Ṭalāq</i> , 65v6,7 <i>Al-Ahzāb</i> , 33v50
Good behaviour between spouses :	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v19, 129, 130.
Code of conduct for believing women :	<i>Al-Nūr</i> , 24v30,31
Responsibilities of man :	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v34,35,128
Marriage with unbelievers :	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v221
Marriage with <i>Ahlul-Kitab</i> :	<i>Al-Māidah</i> , 5v 6
Prohibited degree of Relationship :	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v22,23,24.
Zihār (Injurious comparison)	<i>Al-Ahzāb</i> , 33v4; <i>Al-mujādalah</i> , 58v2,3,4.
Īlā (Vow of desertion):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v226.
Li 'ān (Mutual Cursing):	<i>Al-Nūr</i> , 24v 4-12
Ṭalāq (Divorce):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , v227-232,236- 237,241,242; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , <i>Al-Ahzāb</i> , 33v49; <i>Al-Talaq</i> , 65v1,2,6,7.

Khul'u (Redemption):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v229; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v128
Iddah (Retreat):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v228,234,235; <i>Al-Talaq</i> , 65v1-4.
Raja'a (Revocation of Divorce):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v228; <i>Al-Ahzab</i> , 33v49.
Ridā'ah:	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v233.
Orphan and guardianship:	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> ,4v2,3,5,6,8,10,127; <i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v220.
Succession or Inheritance:	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v180,181; <i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v7,8,11,12,
Waṣīyyah (Wills):	<i>Al-Nisāi</i> , 4v7,8,11,12,33,176.

LEGAL TRANSACTIONS

Business (Sales):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v188,275.
Deeds of sales:	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v282
Usury (Ribā):	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v275,276,278,279,280,281 <i>Āl-Imrān</i> , 3v130.
Debt:	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v245,280-283; <i>Al-Muzammil</i> , 73v20; <i>A`t-Taghābun</i> , 64v17.
Measurement:	<i>Banū Isrā'īl</i> , 17v35; <i>A`sh-Shūra</i> , 42v181,182,; <i>Hūd</i> , 11v85.
Lawful consumption:	<i>Al-Baqarah</i> , 2v168,172.
Justice:	<i>A`n-Nisāi</i> , 4v58,135; <i>Al-Māidah</i> , 5v9,45,47; <i>Al-A`raf</i> , 7v29; <i>A`n-Nahl</i> , 16v90.

CRIMES

- Theft (*Sariqah*):** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v286; *Al-Māida*, 5v41,42
- Fornication (*Zina*):** *Banū Isrā'īl*, 17v32; *A`n-Nūr*, 24v2-9
- Alcohol or any intoxicant:** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v219; *Al-Māida*, 5v93
(*Hirābah*): *Al-Māida*, 5v36,37
- Murder (*Qatl*):** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v178,179; *Al-Māidah*, 5v35
- Defamation (*Qazf*):** *A`n-Nūr*, 24v4,5,11,20,23,24.
- Witness:** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v140,282,283; *Al-Nisāi*, 4v15,135;
- Oath (*Al-Yamīn*):** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v224, 227; *Al-Māidah*, 5v92; *A`n-Nahl*, 16v94;
- Punishments:** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v178,179; *Al-Nisāi*, 4v15, 16, 92, 93;
Al-Māidah, 5v36, 37, 41, 42, 48; *A`n-Nūr*, 24v2-5
- Repentance (*Tawbah*):** *A`t-Tawbah*, 9 the whole chapter especially v29 which deals with legal injunctions.
- Consultation (*Shura*):** *Āl-Imrān* 3v158; *Al-Shurah*, 42v38
- Law of War and Peace:** *Al-Baqarah*, 2v217, *Al-Nisāi*, 4v71, 100; *Al-Anfāl*, 8v41, 61

In sum, an Egyptian scholar ‘Abdu `l-Wahhāb bn `l-Khallāf classified Qur`ānic legislations as follows: Constitutional Provisions – 10 verses; International law – 25 verses; Jurisdiction and procedures – 13 verses; Civil laws – 30 verses and Economic and Financial injunctions – 20 verses (Clinton Bennet: 1994. P.100)

Self-Assessment Exercise 3 (SAEs)

3. Highlight the legal Verses of the *Qur`ān*

1.6 SUMMARY

This unit opens with a classification of the verses of the *Qur'ān* into those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of the gift of Allah; through the remembrance of various happenings, incidents, etc. through the remembrance of death and eschatology and those that contain injunctions of Allah with which mankind should abide. It then gives a highlight of the significance of the *Qur'ān* as the first primary source of *Sharī'ah* containing provisions for all aspects of human life; and enumerating its distinctive qualities as a Law Book different from any other one man has ever known.

It then focuses on the grouping of *Āyāt al-Aḥkām* (verses having bearings on legal injunctions) and concludes with a list of some of such legal injunctions in the Holy Book.

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1.8 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Answers to SAEs 1

The verses of the Holy *Qur'ān* can be classified into four categories:

- (i) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of the gift of Allah: (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi ālā'i Allah*).
- (ii) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of various happenings, incidents, etc. (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi āyām Allah*).

- (iii) Those that direct mankind to learn lessons through the remembrance of death and eschatology (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi`l mawt wa mā ba `da `l-mawt*).
- (iv) Passages of the Holy Book that contain injunctions of Allah with which mankind should abide (*a`t-Tadhkīr bi Āyāt al-Ahkām*).

Answers to SAEs 2

- 2. i. Complete way of Life:
- ii. Synthesis of morality and law
- iii. Stipulating the Law Potentially
- iv. Perfect
- v. Facilitation of Implementation

Answers to SAEs 3

- 3. (i) ***The Concise Injunctions:*** These are the precise commandments contained in the Holy *Qur`ān*. For example, the Injunctions concerning purification (*Tahārah*), prayers (*Ṣalāt*), fasting (*Ṣawm*), poor rate (*Zakāt*) and pilgrimage (Hajj) etc. are all mentioned in the *Qur`ān*, but the detailed rules about this are to be found in the traditions of the Prophet (SAW).
- (ii) ***The Concise-cum-Detailed Injunctions:*** These Injunctions are those which are contained in the verses some of which mentioned the commandments in brief but others mention them in detail and further leave them to the *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*.
- (iii) ***The detailed Injunctions:*** These Injunctions are contained in the *Qur`ān* which give complete details of the commandments.
- (iv) ***Fundamental principles of Guidance derived from injunctions:*** The Holy *Qur`ān* also mentioned certain fundamental principles for the guidance of Muslims. But these principles have no clear-cut definition either in the *Qur`ān* or the *Sunnah* except basic norms. They are to be provided through the due process of *Ijtihād*. These principles are:
 - a) Principles of freedom
 - b) Principle of justice
 - c) Principle of consultation
 - d) Principle of public interest
 - e) Principle of equality

Unit 2 The Essence and Message of Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3 The Essence and Message of the Qur'ān
 - 2.3.1 Universality of the Message of the Qur'ān
- 2.4 Qur'ān and Science
 - 2.4.1 Qur'ān and Science I
 - 2.4.2 Qur'ān and Science II
 - 2.4.3 Qur'ān and Science III
- 2.5 Summary
- 2.6 References/Further Readings
- 2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the essence and the message of Qur'ān as a holy book for the Muslims. Since the book has become an important material in the life of a Muslim, we should know what are the various messages and its essence which makes its study so important to an average Muslim.

2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. discuss the essence and message of the Qur'ān;
2. explain the Qur'ānic injunctions which serve as a basis for today's scientific discoveries;
3. evaluate the rich content of the Qur'ān as a book for every generation.

2.3 The Essence and Message of the Qur'ān

2.3.1 Universality of the Message of the Qur'ān

The previous holy books were sent to specific people and their messages did not go beyond the territories of such groups to which they were sent so also were the Prophets through whom such messages were sent by Allah. But in the case of the Qur'ān, its message is not only to the Arabs, the people of Muhammad, but indeed to the whole mankind. For instance, the Qur'ān is full of account of the rise and fall of nations and empires of the world. Supporting itself with historical facts. The book also reviewed achievements of the old reformers, passed judgments on the various religions of the world and gave verdicts on the differences and disputes between nations. In addition, the Qur'ān teaches ethical canons and principles of culture.

Furthermore, the Qur'ān contains laws of social, economic organization, group conduct and international relations. All these make the Qur'ān universal document whose use cannot be restricted only to a group or tribe.

The Qur'ān being the final message must contain the incomplete messages of the previous books before it. This was exactly what we have in the Qur'ān. It fills the gap in the other messages and further presented itself as a universal and all-embracing book. For example, the Qur'ān explains the essence of life, and how to live happily in it. It also gives picture of the vanity of the world and how to prepare only for the life hereafter.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1 (SAEs)

1. Explain the universal nature of the Qur'ān.

2.4 The Qur'ān and Science

2.4.1 The Qur'ān and Science I

Science and modern inventions have come to agree with what has been revealed in the Qur'ān several hundreds of years ago. A good example is the embryonic development. The Qur'ān states:

*“We created man from extract of clay. Then We made him as a drop in a place of settlement, firmly fixed. Then We made the drop into an *alaqah* (leech, suspending thing, and blood clot) then We made the *alaqah* into a *mudghah* (chew-like substance)...”* (Qur'ān 23:12-14)

Modern scientists agreed that '*alaqah* mentioned in the Qur'ān accurately described the embryo stage. Similarly, the scientists agreed with the description of the *mudghah* stage of the child development. Questions came up again as to how could Muhammad who was never a scientist know these over hundreds of years ago? The use of advanced equipment and powerful microscopes to confirm that indeed the embryo and its sac during the '*alaqah* stage is similar to a blood clot, and that the *mudghah* stage acquires the appearance of a chewed-liked substance and testimony to the scientific knowledge of the Qur'ān.

According to Ibrahim, as far as it is known in the history of embryology, little was known about the staging and classification of human embryos until the twentieth century. For this reason, the description of the human embryo in the Qur'ān cannot be based on scientific knowledge in the seventh century. The only reasonable conclusion is that these descriptions were revealed to

Muhammad from God. He could not have known such details because he was an unlettered man with absolutely no scientific training.

2.4.2 Qur'ān and Science II

Modern scientists have just discovered that mountains have underlying roots. These roots are deeply embedded in the ground; thus, mountains have a shape like a peg. The Qur'ān many hundreds of years ago has described this when it says:

“Have We not made the earth as a bed, and the mountains as pegs?”
(Qur'ān 78:6-7)

According to the modern scientists, these roots can reach several times their elevations above the surface of the ground. So, the most suitable word to describe mountains on the basis of this information is word 'peg' since a properly set peg is hidden under the surface of the ground. The history of science tells us that the theory of mountains having deep roots was introduced only in the later half of the nineteenth century.

Mountains play an important role in stabilizing the crust of the earth. They prevent the shaking of the earth. According to Geologists; the whole earth would have been unstable if not for the mountains that dotted it. The Qur'ān further reveals:

“And He has set firm mountains in the earth so that it would not shake with you ...” (Qur'ān 16:15).

The question is this - could anyone during the time of Prophet Muhammad have known of the true shape of the mountains? Could anyone imagine that the solid massive mountain which he sees before him actually extends deep into the earth and has a root?

The same exposition which Qur'ān gave on the role of mountains was also given on the origin of the entire universe. The Qur'ān, many years ago, revealed that the illuminating stars we see at night were, just as was the whole universe, in that 'smoke' material. It states:

“Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke.”
(Qur'ān 41:11)

Because the earth and the phenomena around us such as the sun, the moon, stars, planets etc have been formed from this same 'smoke', we can conclude that the earth and the heavens were one connected entity. They, by the power of the Almighty, were formed and then separated from each other. Qur'ān says:

“Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were one connected entity, then We separated them?” (Qur’ān 21:30)

2.4.3 Qur’ān and Science III

Still on science, the Qur’ān mentioned that there is a barrier between two seas that meet and that they do not transgress.

“He has set forth the two seas meeting together. There is a barrier between them. They do not transgress.” (Qur’ān 55:19-20)

Modern scientists have discovered that in the places where two different seas meet, there is a barrier between them. This barrier divides the two seas so that each sea has its own temperature as well as density. For example, the Mediterranean Sea water is warm saline and less dense compared to the Atlantic Ocean water.

When the Mediterranean Sea water meets enters the Atlantic over the Gibraltar still, moves several hundreds of kilometers into the Atlantic water at a depth of about 1,000 meters with its own warm, saline and less dense, the Mediterranean water stabilizes at this depth. Although, there are large waves, strong currents and tides in these seas, they do not mix or transgress this barrier.

When the Qur’ān speaks about the divider between fresh and salt water, it mentions the existence of a “forbidding partition” with the barrier thus:

“He is the one who has set free two kinds of water, one sweet and palatable, and the other salty and bitter. And He has made between them a barrier and a forbidding partition.” (Qur’ān 25:53).

We may ask this question; why did the Qur’ān mention the partition when speaking about the divider between fresh and salt water, but did not mention it when speaking about the divider between the two seas?

Modern scientists explain that where fresh (sweet) and salt water meet, the situation is somewhat different from what is found in places where two seas meet. It has been discovered that what distinguishes fresh water from salt water is a kind of ‘zone’ which has a different salinity from the fresh water and the salt water.

This has just been discovered only recently, using advanced equipment to measure temperature, salinity, density, oxygen etc. The human eye cannot see the difference between the two seas that meet, rather the two seas appear to us as one homogenous sea. Similarly, the human eye cannot see the division of water in a place called estuaries into three kinds - Fresh Water, Salt Water and the Partition. The Qur'ān mentioned these many hundred years ago while the scientists only discovered them recently.

“It is He Who has Let the two bodies of flowing water: One palatable and sweet, And the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is not to be passed.” (Q.25:53)

“He has let free the two seas meeting together: Between them is a Barrier which they do not transgress.” Q55:19-20)

Qur'ān further describes deep sea thus:

“Or (the unbelievers' state) is like the darkness in a deep sea. It is covered by waves, above which are waves, above which are clouds. Darkness, one above another. If a man stretches out his hand, he cannot see it.” (Q24:40).

The above verse mentions the darkness found in deep seas and ocean, where, if man stretches out his hand, he cannot see it. The darkness in deep seas and oceans is found around a depth of 200 meters and below. At this depth, there is no light and human beings cannot dire more than 40 meters without the aid of submarines or special equipment. All these Qur'ānic expositions are no doubt beyond the comprehension of Muhammad, which further confirms that the message is divine.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2 (SAEs)

2. What is the teaching of Qur'ān on human embryo?
3. Explain the Qur'ānic references to the creation of the universe.
4. Explain the teachings of Qur'ān on the creation of seas and oceans

2.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have come across the various expositions of the Qur'ān as related to science. We have learnt in this unit that indeed science rather than opposing the Qur'ān, it has come to confirm several

statements from the book. No other book revealed to prophets is as scientific as the Qur'ān and these have been explained briefly in this unit.

The essence of the revelation of the Qur'ān is to broaden the knowledge of man about the power and might of Allah through His creations. Even though we cannot see Allah, the Qur'ān has made us to appreciate Him and accept Him as the all-powerful, all-knowing. Through the Qur'ān, several things unknown to man become clear and many others yet unknown are all recorded in the holy book.

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2.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

Answer to SAE 1

1. The previous holy books were sent to specific people and their messages did not go beyond the territories of such groups to which they were sent. However, the message of the Qur'ān is not only to the Arabs, but indeed to the whole mankind.

Furthermore, the Qur'ān contains laws of social, economic organization, group conduct and international relations. All these make the Qur'ān a universal document whose use cannot be restricted only to a group or tribe.

The Qur'ān fills the gap in the other messages and further presented itself as a universal and all-embracing book.

Answer to SAE 2

2. A good example of the contribution of the Qur'an to science is in the area of embryonic development. The Qur'ān states:

“We created man from extract of clay. Then We made him as a drop in a place of settlement, firmly fixed. Then We made the drop into an alaqah (leech, suspending thing, and blood clot) then We made the alaqah into a mudghah (chew-like substance) ...” (Qur'ān 23:12-14)

The use of advanced equipment and powerful microscopes to confirm that indeed the embryo and its sac during the 'alaqah stage is similar to a blood clot, and that the *mudghah* stage acquires the appearance of a chewed-like substance and testimony to the scientific knowledge of the Qur'ān.

3. The Qur'ān many hundreds of years ago has described the essence of creation of mountain thus: *“Have We not made the earth as a bed, and the mountains as pegs?”* (Qur'ān 78:6-7). Contemporary Geologists have also confirmed that the whole earth would have been unstable if not for the mountains that dotted it. On stars, the Qur'ān, many years ago, revealed that the illuminating stars we see at night were, just as was the whole universe, in that 'smoke' material. Because the earth and the phenomena around us such as the sun, the moon, stars, planets etc have been formed from this same 'smoke', we can conclude that the earth and the heavens were one connected entity.

4. The Qur'ān mentioned that there is a barrier between two seas that meet and that they do not transgress. *“He has set forth the two seas meeting together. There is a barrier between them. They do not transgress.”* (Qur'ān 55:19-20) Modern scientists have discovered that in the places where two different seas meet, there is a barrier between them. This barrier divides the two seas so that each sea has its own temperature as well as density.

Unit 3 Authenticity of the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3 Authenticity of the Qur'ān
 - 3.3.1 The Qur'ān as an Authentic Source of History
 - 3.3.2 The Life of Muhammad
 - 3.3.3 Evidence from the Qur'ān
 - 3.3.4 Predictions of the Future Fulfilled
 - 3.3.5 Agreement with Modern Science
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings
- 3.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of arguments by some non-Muslims as to the genuineness of the Qur'ān as a book of Allah. In this unit, you will learn how the Qur'ān and other evidences have proved that indeed the book has divine origin.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

1. discuss the divine origin of the Qur'ān.
2. explain to a non-Muslim the authenticity of the Qur'ān both in content and in context;
3. express through the life of the Prophet that the message he brought was to the whole world.

3.3 Authenticity of the Qur'ān

3.3.1 The Qur'ān as an Authentic Source of History

By authenticity, we mean that the Qur'ān was truly the revelation from Allah through Prophet Muhammad to mankind. Before him, as we mentioned earlier, there have been prophets sent with books such as Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus Christ) and Daud (David).

It therefore became evident that although Muhammad did not meet these prophets, yet his message contained their histories deeds and accounts of their lives. The Qur'ān contains histories of prophets such as Musa, Daud, Yunus, Ibrahim e.t.c. Thus, the Qur'ān contains those aspects of life left out in the earlier revelations.

In addition, the Qur'ān acknowledges earlier revealed books and prophets of Allah. This goes to confirm that the revelation of the Qur'ān is a continuation of Allah's communication with mankind through periodic revelation. Qur'ān 40:10 says:

“Say: See you? If this teaching be from Allah, and you reject it, and a witness from among the children of Israel testifies to it. Similarly (with earlier scriptures), and has believed while you are arrogant. How unjust are you. Truly Allah guides not a people unjust.”

Historians rely on the information from the Qur'ān in their writings because it remained an original source of material for past events as it affected people and places. To this end, the Qur'ān is not just a book of worship, it is also a powerful historical document which predated the birth of Prophet Muhammad by telling the story of the old Romans or the Babylonians or even the Israelites.

3.3.2 The Life of Muhammad

In order to prove the authenticity of the Qur'ān, the life of Prophet Muhammad could also be a good reference point.

First, he was an unlettered Prophet. For this reason, it would be difficult for such a person to sit down somewhere and write a volume as Qur'ān and claim it is from Allah.

Secondly, the Makkans were known for literary activities even before Muhammad was born. Most of them were poets of high standing who used to organize competition to showcase their best material in the art of composition. But when they had contact with verses of the Qur'ān, they could not but accept the unrivaled rich language and its composition which was superior in diction compared to their poetic erudition; and they accepted the Qur'ān as being from a power beyond Muhammad. This was why they accepted the Qur'ān as a superior revelation.

In addition, when Muhammad had contact with kings and rulers of countries, his first instrument of conviction was the Qur'ān. Most of these rulers eventually accepted Islam not because of the eloquence of Muhammad but because of the powerful statements contained in the Qur'ān. It therefore means that the Qur'ān was enough a message of conviction to which even leaders had to confirm and accept.

3.3.3 Evidence from the Qur'ān

Unlike other holy books, the Qur'ān speaks of itself as being a revelation from the supreme being Allah. This evidence and many others put the authenticity of the book in no doubt. This is because Muhammad could not have invented such statements. For instance, Qur'ān 56: 77-80 states thus:

“That is indeed the Qur'ān most honourable, in a Book well-guarded, which none shall touch but those who are clean. A revelation from the Lord of the worlds.”

To those who claim that the Qur'ān is not divine, the Qur'ān itself debunked the claim thus:

Or, do they say, he (Muhammad) has forged it? Say then, bring ten forged chapters, like it and call upon whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful. (Q11:13).

The above is a challenge that nobody or group has ever responded to over thousand years when the Qur'ān threw it. The Qur'ān went further to challenge not only men, but even the Jinn with their supernatural powers. None can produce the like of the Qur'ān even if they combined their efforts in such a direction. Qur'ān 17:88 states:

If man and jinn should combine together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like of it even though some of them helped each other.

With all these, we can deduce that the evidence of the authenticity of the Qur'ān is very much abundant within the text itself. And this is a further confirmation of the divine nature of the book.

3.3.4 Predictions of the Future Fulfilled

Not only is the Qur'ān relevant to the history of the people and events of the past, but is also full of prediction most of which have been fulfilled. And with our human reasoning, those that are yet to be fulfilled would soon come to pass based on concrete evidences.

A good example was the Qur'ānic prediction of the victory of the Roman Empire over Persia after the Persians had defeated it. This properly came to pass seven years later in 622 CE. The Qur'ān 30: 2-4 states thus:

“The Roman Empire has been defeated, in a land close by, but they (even) after this

*defeat of theirs will soon be victorious;
within a few years, with God is the decision
in the past and in the future, on that day
shall the Believers rejoice.”*

Also, the Qur’ān prophesized that Islam shall prevail over all other religions. This is being fulfilled today as the religion is gaining firm root in areas that used to be hostile to the Muslims. Qur’ān 48:28 states:

“It is He who has sent His Apostle with Guidance and the religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all Religion; and enough is God as a witness.”

Self-Assessment Exercises 1 (SAEs)

1. The Qur’ān is not only a religious book, but also a historical document. Discuss.
2. How did the personality of Muhammad prove that the Qur’ān was an authentic book?
3. Highlight some evidence from the Qur’ān to prove its authenticity.
4. Discuss the predictions of the Qur’ān on its divine status.

3.4 SUMMARY

The following are the major points that you have learnt in this unit:

- The life of Prophet Muhammad is a proof to the genuineness of the Qur’ān.
- There are several passages of the Qur’ān to support the genuineness of the Qur’ān.
- The fulfillment of the prophecies in the book is another assurance of its genuineness.

We have discussed in this unit the various proofs for the authenticity of the Qur’ān, whereas other books are limited in scope and audience. The Qur’ān has proved to be a universal book for all ages, nations and tribes.

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3.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

Answer to SAE 1

1. Before the advent of Prophet Muhammad as a prophet, there were prophets sent with books such as Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus Christ) and Daud (David). Although Muhammad did not meet these prophets, yet his message contained their histories, deeds and accounts of their lives.
Also, historians rely on the information from the Qur'ān in their writings because it remained an original source of material for past events as it affected people and places.
2. The Prophet was an unlettered Prophet, so, it would be difficult for such a person to sit down somewhere and write a volume as Qur'ān and claim it is from Allah. Also, when the Makkans had contact with verses of the Qur'ān, they could not but accept the unrivaled rich language and its composition which was superior in diction compared to their poetic erudition; and they accepted the Qur'ān as being from a power beyond Muhammad.

Furthermore, when Muhammad had contact with kings and rulers of countries, his first instrument of conviction was the Qur'ān. Most of these rulers eventually accepted Islam not because of the eloquence of Muhammad but because of the powerful statements contained in the Qur'ān.

3. Unlike other holy books, the Qur'ān speaks of itself as being a revelation from the supreme being Allah. This evidence and many others put the authenticity of the book in no doubt. E.g. Qur'ān 56: 77-80 & 11:13. The Qur'ān went further to challenge not only men, but even the Jinn with their supernatural powers. None can produce the like of the Qur'ān even if they combined their efforts in such a direction (Qur'ān 17:88).
4. The Qur'ān is also full of prediction most of which have been fulfilled. And with our human reasoning, those that are yet to be fulfilled would soon come to pass based on concrete evidences. A good example was the Qur'ānic prediction of the victory of the Roman Empire over Persia after the Persians had defeated it. This properly came to pass seven years later in 622 CE (Qur'ān 30: 2-4). Also, the Qur'ān prophesized that Islam shall prevail over all other religions. This is being fulfilled today as the religion is gaining firm root in areas that used to be hostile to the Muslims (Qur'ān 48:28).

Unit 4 Views of Non-Muslims about the Qur'ān

Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3 Views of Non-Muslims about the Qur'ān
 - 4.3.1 The People of the Book (*Ahlul-Kitāb*)
 - 4.3.2 Qur'ān Confirmation Earlier Revelations
 - 4.3.3 Muslims Believe in Earlier Scriptures
 - 4.3.4 Qur'ānic Views on Jesus Christ
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings
- 4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Having studied the contents of the Qur'ān as a holy book and a guide for the Muslims, you will in this course learn about some of the views of non-Muslims about the Qur'ān. The non-Muslims are believers in faiths other than that preached by Prophet Muhammad as explained in the *Kalimatul Shahādah*. To know some of these views is necessary in order to understand their views about Islam, especially in a multi-religion society like Nigeria.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. explain who the *Ahlul-Kitāb* (people of the Book) are;
2. identify some misgivings and misrepresentations of Qur'ān by non-Muslims;
3. discuss the true position of Islam on Muslim and non-Muslim relationship.

4.3 Views of Non-Muslims about the Qur'ān

4.3.1 The People of the Book (*Ahlul-Kitāb*)

The term 'People of the Book', i.e. *Ahlul Kitāb* is a phrase in the Qur'ān interpreted by people of various callings. It could be found in Qur'ān 5:68, 3:65, 3:72, 4:153, 4:71 e.t.c . In view of the availability of the Qur'ān in many translations, many of its verses are misinterpreted. For instance, the following verses are typical examples:

Abraham, when the law and the Gospel were not revealed till after him? Have ye no understanding?" (Q3: 65)

“O ye people of the Book! Why do you clothe truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth, while ye have knowledge?” (Q3: 71).

According to some Christians, the term people of the Book refers not just to the Jews and Christians but to the Muslims as well. Such Christians even quote Qur’ān 5:68 as implying that Muslims should believe in the Bible.

However, it should be clear that the phrase is never used in the Qur’ān to refer to the Muslims. The use of the term and its context makes this clear. The term refers to the Jews and Christians, as earlier believers in a revealed religion. Muslims are referred to in the Qur’ān as Muslims or ‘those who believe’ but never as *Ahlul Kitāb*.

We should note that the term, while often used for both the Jews and the Christians (as in Q3: 65) is sometimes used specifically for Jews as in Qur’ān 3:72 Qur’ān 3:64 and 4:17.

The people of the Book were invited to believe in Prophet Muhammad and the Qur’ān as in Qur’ān 3:10, 5:65. They were told that the Qur’ān is an embodiment (*tasdiq*) of the promises made in their scriptures with regard to the coming of Muhammad.

Some Christians quote Qur’ān 5:68-69 where Allah says:

“Say: O people of the Book! you have no ground to stand unless you stand fast by the law (Taurat) and the Gospel (Injil), and all the revelations that has come to you from your Lord.”

“Those who believe in the Qur’ān and those who follow the Jewish scripture, and the Christians and the sabians, and any who believe in God and the last day, and work righteousness shall have their reward... (Qur’ān 5:68).

“O ye people of the Book! Why do you dispute about with their Lord; and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (Qur’ān 2:62).

The above passage occurs in the Qur’ān several times and only shows a breath of vision unparalleled in any other faith. There is difference in the situation of the people of the Book according to whether or not message of Islam has reached them. Because of the distortion of the earlier scriptures, the beliefs of the people of the book have also become distorted from the pure teachings of their prophets. In the Qur’ān, God’s

message has been completed and preserved for people of all times and places.

Consequently, Muslims are told to call all people to the way of Islam (Qur'ān 16:125) and it is expected that many pious people of the book will recognize the truth of Islam and embrace it. Indeed, many Jews and Christians, past and present, have accepted Islam and are still accepting and practicing Islam.

4.3.2 Qur'ān Confirming Earlier Revelations

The Qur'ān never mentioned the word 'Bible' and no where in the Bible does it refer to itself as Holy Bible. However, the Qur'ān confirms previous revelations through references to the *Injīl*, *Taurāt*, *Zabūr*, and the scrolls of Abraham (*Suhuf Ibrahim*). Let us examine some of these revelations:

a. *Injīl*:

The word *Injīl* in the Qur'ān refers to the revelation made by God to Jesus. It is, in other words, the original Gospel of Jesus. The *Injīl*, just like the other revelations was meant for a particular people and a particular time and so has not survived the passage of time in its pure original form. This is even evident from statements made about the Bible by Christian scholars in the prefaces and introductions to modern versions of the Bible such as Revised Standard Version, New Testament Version, New English Bible, Living Bible e.t.c.

Today, we have what remains of the Gospel according to Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, which could contain bits or portions of the original *Injīl* of Jesus Christ.

b. *Taurāt*

This is also known as Torah, the book of Moses. It is revelation by God to Prophet Musa (Moses), and this is acknowledged by Muslims as an article of faith. Some non-Muslims have attributed the Qur'ān to be an offshoot of this book. This is not true, and from the contents of the book from the Qur'ān.

In addition, we should note that the first five books of the Old Testament (i.e. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) which some Christians attribute entirely to Moses as Torah, are not considered by Muslims to be so. This is because it can clearly be seen from these books of the Old Testament that a lot of materials was written about Moses from hearsay in the third person singular i.e. "he".

For example in Deuteronomy 34:5-12, it says: “...and Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died...” could Moses have written about his own death in the past tense (i.e. not a prophecy) and in the third person singular?.

The fact is that the Taurat, just like other earlier revelations, was meant for a particular people and time in its pure and original form. Therefore, Muslims can say that some aspects of the five books of Moses are acceptable. These are those that are confirmed by the Qur’ān and which retains their original form.

b. Zabūr:

Zabūr is the book revealed by God to Prophet Daud (David) for the guidance of his people. There is no evidence that it has been preserved till date. This book has often been equated or translated as “The Psalms” which were traditionally attributed to David. However, recent study casts doubt on their authorship.

For instance, the International Bible Version of the Bible says (in Plan of the Bible Pg.13):

“Psalms - Here are sacred songs, poems and prayers which originated in Israel’s worship and her experience with God. They are traditionally associated with David but reflect centuries of individual and corporate responses to God.”

In other words, they were written by a number of unknown people over a period of centuries. They cannot therefore be identified as Zabūr. Some of the descriptions given in Psalms such as 78: 65 “*Then the Lord awoke as from sleep, as a man awakes from the stupor of wine*” cannot be regarded as revelation from God. To Muslims, they sound blasphemous.

From the above, it should be clear that whenever the Qur’ān refers to the Injīl, Taurāt, Zabūr or “earlier revelations”, it is not referring to what is today called the Bible. The use of such verses in the Qur’ān by Christians in an attempt to prove the authenticity of the whole Bible is therefore only a sign of ignorance of the Qur’ān.

4.3.3 Muslims’ Belief in Earlier Revelations

Some non-Muslims quote Qur’ān 10:94-95 to say that Prophet Muhammed was advised by God to ask the Jews and Christians concerning the authenticity of the Qur’ān because the Bible was more authentic. We render here the full passage:

“And so, (o man) if you are in doubt about (the truth) of what we have bestowed upon from high, ask those who read the divine writ (revealed) before your time: and you will surely find that the

truth has come into you from sustainer. Be not, them., among the doubters, and neither be among those who are bent on giving the lie to God's messages, lest you find yourself among the lost."

Some of the commentators on the above verse maintained that verses 94 and 95 were addressed to the Prophet Muhammad. This assumption is not only incorrect, it is obvious that God's chosen prophet was never in danger of either doubting or denying the truth.

According to a Qur'ānic Commentator, Ar-Razi, those two verses were addressed to man in general. This interpretation makes it clear moreover, that the above passage is closely connected with verses 57 and 58, which speak of the guidance given to mankind through the ultimate divine writ, the Qur'ān.

Some even quote verses such as Qur'ān 41:136; 2:136; 2:1-5 and say that Muslims are required to believe in the Bible. For example:

"O ye who believe! Believe in God, His Apostle, and the scripture, which He has sent to His apostle, mind the scriptures which He has sent before him" (Qur'ān 4: 136).

We should note that what is meant in these verses is belief in the fact of earlier revelation, and not in the earlier revealed scriptures themselves in their present form, which is repeatedly stated in the Qur'ān. A Muslim in principle should believe that there were revealed books before the Qur'ān whatever happens to those revealed books including revisions, amendments are not covered by this provision.

4.3.4 Qur'ānic Views on Jesus Christ

Some non-Muslims quote Qur'ān 2: 87 and 2: 253 to say that Jesus Christ was unique in the sense that he was "the only one" inspired or strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Some also quote these verses to say that Muslims believe in the same concept of the Holy Spirit as Christians. For example, in Q 2: 87 Allah says:

"We give Jesus the son of Mary clear signs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit."

You should note that the Arabic word translated here as Holy Spirit is *ruh-al-qudus* which is also translated as the 'Spirit of holiness', divine inspiration', or 'Holy inspiration'. This word recurs in the Qur'ān in areas such as Qur'ān 16: 2, 40: 12, 42: 52, 97: 4 etc. But you should also note that Qur'ān 58:22 speaks of

all believers as being strengthened by inspiration (*ruh*) from Him, and it is not peculiar to Jesus.

Other Qur'ānic commentators interpret the term *ruh al-qudus* to mean Angel Jibril who brought this revelation or inspiration from Allah. It is therefore an issue of interpretation based on the context of the Qur'ān in which the term is used.

Some quote Qur'ān 21: 91 where Allah says about Mary (the mother of Jesus) “*We breathed into her of our Spirit*”, and say that this is the evidence that Jesus was the most special of being or that it signifies that he (Jesus) was part of God as in the concept of Trinity.

The fact you should know is that the statement refers to creation of man in general as being from “My Spirit”. For instance, Qur'ān 15: 29, and 38:72 - “*Then I formed him (man). ...And breathed into him my Spirit*”. And in Qur'ān 32:9 “*and thereupon He forms him fully and breathes into him of His Spirit*”.

‘There came to you messengers before me, with clear signs and even with what you ask for, why then did you kill them if you say the truth?’”

From the above, it is taken by some that the Qur'an supports that Jesus was killed. However, at the end of the Qur'ān 2:87, it was made clear that not all the messengers were killed. The Jews killed many of the Prophets sent to them, as mentioned in the Bible (Matt 23:37), but there is no place in the Qur'ān that indicates that Jesus was among those killed. On the contrary, Qur'ān 4:157- 158 states that they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear to them (as so). The same goes for the issue of rising from dead, which Islam did not support.

The Muslims' belief in Jesus, like all other Prophets, is that he was a God's messenger, he was called to prophethood, chosen to accomplish a mission of inviting people to the way of God. Jesus, as far as Islam is concerned has fulfilled that mission of preaching the message to his people. He is not God, and neither is he part of God.

Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. Explain the term ‘*Ahlul-Kitāb*’.
2. Explain with examples the Qur'ānic confirmation of previous revelations.
3. Explain the belief of Muslims on Jesus Christ.

4.4 SUMMARY

You have learnt in this course the positions of Islam on the misinterpretations and misgivings of non-Muslims about the Qur'ān. You now know who 'The people of the Book' are, the Qur'ān confirming earlier revelations, The Belief of Muslim in the earlier scriptures as well as the Muslims' view of Jesus Christ.

The position of the Qur'ān on the personality of Jesus is very clear. And since the Qur'ān was the last of the revealed books, we can hold that its message must have taken into consideration events and people of the past. Although Muslims believe in all the revealed books, the later distortions that have crept into these books have rendered them faulty, hence the Qur'ān remained the only incorruptible, unadulterated book for the guidance of man.

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4.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. *Ahlul Kitāb* is a phrase in the Qur'ān interpreted as 'People of the Book'. It could be found in Qur'ān 5:68, 3:65, 3:72, 4:153, 4:71 e.t.c. The phrase is never used in the Qur'ān to refer to the Muslims. The term refers to the Jews and Christians, as earlier believers in a revealed religion.
2. The Qur'ān confirms previous revelations through references to the *Injīl*, *Taurāt*, *Zabūr*, and the scrolls of Abraham (*Suhuf Ibrahim*). The word *Injīl* in the Qur'ān refers to the revelation made by God to Jesus. *Taurāt*, is the book of Moses. It is revelation by God to Prophet Musa (Moses), and this is

acknowledged by Muslims as an article of faith. Zabūr is the book revealed by God to Prophet Daud (David) for the guidance of his people. A Muslim in principle should believe that there were revealed books before the Qur'ān. Whatever happens to those revealed books including revisions, amendments are not covered by this provision.

3. The Qur'an describes 'Isa (Jesus) as *ruh-al- qudus* which is also translated as the 'Spirit of holiness', divine inspiration', or 'Holy inspiration'. This word recurs in the Qur'ān in areas such as Qur'ān 16: 2, 40: 12, 42: 52, 97: 4 etc. He was miraculously given birth to. The Qur'an asserts that he spoke while still in cradle and he performed a number of miracles like breathing in to a bird clay and it flew, healing the cripple and others. The Qur'ān 4:157- 158 states that they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it was made to appear to them (as so). The same goes for the issue of rising from dead, which Islam did not support. The Muslims' belief in Jesus, like all other Prophets, is that he was a God's messenger, he was called to prophethood, chosen to accomplish a mission of inviting people to the way of God. Jesus, as far as Islam is concerned has fulfilled that mission of preaching the message to his people. He is not God, and neither is he part of God.

Unit 5 The Qur’ānic Teachings on Unity, Equality of Mankind and Peaceful Co-Existence

Unit Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3 The Qur’ānic Teachings on Unity, Equality of Mankind and Peaceful Co-Existence
 - 5.3.1 Unity and Equality of Mankind
 - 5.3.2 Peaceful Co-Existence
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Readings
- 5.6 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn the teachings of Islam on unity, equality of mankind and peaceful coexistence. You will then agree that the *Qur’ān* is full of moral guidance in the areas of maintenance of peace and harmony. We have recorded in Nigeria a great number of religious riots which could have been averted if people are well furnished with the principles of peaceful co- existence among men as mentioned in the Qur’ān; hence the importance of the theme of his Unit.

5.2 Learning Outcome

At the end of this unit you should be able to :

1. explain the position of the *Qur'ān* on unity of the origin of mankind;
2. discuss the *Qur'ānic* position on the equality of human beings;
3. appreciate the Islamic stand on peaceful coexistence between members of a society.

5.3 The Qur'ānic Teachings on Unity, Equality of Mankind and Peaceful Co-Existence

Qur'ān as a divine Book preaches the gospel of peace among mankind. It calls peace the greeting of the righteous and their ways of life, and forbids aggression in all its ramifications. On the other hand, all people are seen to be equal in the eyes of God, and He wants them to treat one another as equal. Distinction between them on the basis of race, colour, social standing, skill and degree of intelligence, etc are artificial and should not be tolerated. Human beings should strive to serve Allah and contribute meaningfully to the well-being of their community and fellow men.

5.3.1 Unity and Equality of Mankind

A basic tenet of Islam is faith in the oneness of God and its constant lesson is the principle of unity and equality of mankind in the sight of God. Islam affirms this in unequivocal terms. It repudiates the doctrine of polygenism that ascribes multiple ancestries unto mankind. It also does away with the idea of 'Castes' or 'Classes' or races which forms basis of discrimination and segregation in many human societies.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا
زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ
وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer (Q.4:1)

In the area of maintaining love and peace, however, *Qur'ān* takes a step further by instructing that, all men are equal, whatever their colour, language, race, ethnicity, nationality and background. It addresses itself to the

conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers in form of race, status and wealth. *Qur'ān* removes all these impediments and proclaims the idea that the whole of mankind originated from Adam and Hawa' who were created by Allah.

The Holy *Qur'ān* wishes to unite the entire human race under one banner as one of its verses reiterates the common origin of man and explains the division of humanity into nations, or races and tribes. It tells us that the object and purpose of this division was to recognize each other. It goes a step further and points out to us that 'piety' is the only criterion and standard by which man is judged by Allah and by which we should judge our fellowmen. It reads thus:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted (Q49: 13).

An author of an English translation of the *Qur'ān* observes that, the above verse is not addressed to believers alone, but to men and women in general, who are told that they are all members of one family and their divisions into race, colours, tribes, families and nations should not lead to estrangement from, but to a better knowledge of each other. Superiority of one another in this vast unification depends on righteousness, on the careful observance of duties toward Allah and fellowmen, and, on moral greatness. (A.M. Hobohm, n.d.).

One can contrast this Islamic teaching with the Hindus conception that the Brahman is a cast derived from the gods and the Sudras a cast derived from the Asuras or demons.

Islam also opposes the idea of chosen race as taught by Judaism and is deadly opposed to the practice of apartheid policy in any form. Prophet Muhammad (S) chose Bilāl, an Abyssinian, as the first *Muadhdhin* (one who makes the call for prayers) in Islam and said about another companion Salmān, a Persian, that he belonged to his family. These are excellent examples of the teaching and practice of brotherhood in Islam. A Muslim is therefore asked not to make any discrimination on the basis of colour, race, or nationality.

Q. 49:13 quoted above is even clearer on the issue of unity, equality and brotherhood of humanity. It emphasizes that the colour of the skin is of no

consequence but the quality of the heart is of every consequence. The racial or national label matters nothing; the character matters everything.

Besides the Holy *Qur'ān*, there are a number of Traditions of the Prophet asking the true believers to refrain from making distinctions on the basis of caste or class or showing any kind of racial prejudice.

- (1) “He is not one of us who incites class prejudices or fights for class interest or dies in its pursuits.” (Bukhārī and Muslim)
- (2) “Seek refuge from the curses of the oppressed to whatever community he or they may belong, for the portals of God are always open for the oppressed.” (Abu Dāwud and Tirmidhī)
- (3) “The worst type of prejudice is to support one’s community even in tyranny.” (Al-Bayhāqī)
- (4) “He who knowingly lend support to tyranny is outside the fold of Islam.” (Al-Tabarānī).

All members of the Islamic society, therefore, whatever their race, or tribe, or dynasty, or colour, or language, are equal members and possess equal fundamental rights. The Islamic society is thus a Non-Racial, Non-Tribal, and Casteless Society. It may also be termed as an Egalitarian Society.

5.3.2 Peaceful Co-Existence

Maintaining peace in one’s community is one of the basic tenets of the *Qur'ān*, mostly because enmity between two opponents might develop into enmity among their friends, which often splits communities, states, countries and even nations into cliques whose main purpose would be to vex and harm one another. That is why *Qur'ān* urges people to make peace among those believers who are joined together by religious fraternity. It says:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا
عَلَى الْأُخْرَى فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّى تَفِيءَ إِلَى أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ
فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it

returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly(Q 49:9).

If fighting is forced on believers by aggressors, *Qur'ān* asks the former to stop the moment the latter signals his intention to stop. Human being should not be over-killed during wars. Muslims should be prepared to incline towards peace whenever their opponents express their willingness to abide by their terms of peace (Q 2:190; 8:61).

It is believed that, ultimate good does not mean the Muslims should only lead an upright life or simply avoid harming others. Rather, it also means that they should always seek to maintain peace with their fellow human beings. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) teaches that man should always seek to spread love and peace. He must make others happy and safe. He also teaches that men should leave alone what does not concern him. Because prying into another people's affairs may lead to friction, confusion and misunderstanding, which may thereafter cause chaos and rivalry in societies where peace reigns.

The *Qur'ān* calls for a peaceful co-existence of mankind in any given society because it is a means towards the achievement of happiness, harmony and tranquility, success and stability of all and sundry, so that when people turn to it they may attain the prosperity and peace they yearn for.

It further instructs individuals, communities and nations that are empowered by God to always stand to rescue the oppressed people in safeguarding their lives and properties but warns that such assistance must be on the fear of God and not on material gains. He says:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty (Q5:2).

Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. Outline the essential teachings of Islam concerning the unity of mankind.
2. Discuss equality of human beings as an importance moral teaching

- of Islam.
3. Examine the significance of peaceful coexistence among people.

5.4 SUMMARY

Islam affirms unity of the origin and equality of mankind in unequivocal terms. Both *the Qur'ān* and the Hadith repudiate 'cast' 'class' or racial systems which form bases of discrimination in many societies. Man should always seek to maintain peace with fellow human beings.

5.5 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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5.6. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

1. Islam repudiates the doctrine of polygenism that ascribes multiple ancestries unto mankind. The whole of mankind originated from Adam and Hawa' who were created by Allah.
It also does away with the idea of 'Castes' or 'Classes' or races which forms basis of discrimination and segregation in many human societies (Q.4:1).
2. The *Qur'ān* further instructs that all men are equal, whatever their colour, language, race, ethnicity, nationality and background. The Holy *Qur'ān* points out that 'piety' is the only criterion and standard by which man is judged by Allah and by which we should judge our fellowmen (Q49: 13). Besides the Holy *Qur'ān*, there are a number of Traditions of the Prophet asking the true believers to refrain from making distinctions on the basis of caste or class or showing any kind of racial prejudice.
3. The *Qur'ān* urges people to make peace among those believers who are joined together by religious fraternity (Q 49:9).
If fighting is forced on believers by aggressors, *Qur'ān* asks the former to stop the moment the latter signals his intention to stop. Human being should not be over-killed during wars. Muslims should be prepared to incline

towards peace whenever their opponents express their willingness to abide by their terms of peace (Q 2:190; 8:61).

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) teaches that man should always seek to spread love and peace. He must make others happy and safe. He also teaches that men should leave alone what does not concern him. Because prying into another people's affairs may lead to friction, confusion and misunderstanding, which may thereafter cause chaos and rivalry in societies where peace reigns.