

THE GLORIOUS QUR'AN

From Revelation To Recitation & Beyond

*PRESERVATION OF THE
QUR'AN IN THE ERA OF
HAZRAT ABU BAKR* 

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PRESERVATION OF THE QUR'AN IN THE ERA OF HAZRAT ABU BAKR ؓ

Hazrat Abu Bakr's ؓ compilation was a major event in the history of the Qur'an's preservation. It brought together all the written fragments on which the Qur'an was previously written during the Prophet's lifetime in order to produce a single official unified compilation.

In the early years of revelation, the Qur'an Shareef was memorised and written by a large number of Sahabah ؓ. It was generally in the form of verses and surahs written on various objects and items that were available. The Qur'an was not compiled in a complete standard book form.

However, soon after the demise of Rasulullah ﷺ, his first noble Khalifah, Hazrat Abu Bakr ؓ thought it necessary to bring together the scattered units of the Qur'an and standardise its preservation. Seventy expert reciters and scholars of the Qur'an were martyred in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ in a treacherous ambush known as the incident of Bir Maunah. In the battles against apostasy, in the time of Abu Bakr ؓ, another seventy scholars of the Qur'an were martyred. Umar ؓ expressed concern over this alarming situation, and suggested to Abu Bakr ؓ that precaution should be taken to preserve the Qur'an in writing.

APPOINTMENT OF A COMMITTEE TO PRESERVE THE QUR'AN

Considering the urgency of the matter, Hazrat Abu Bakr ؓ appointed a committee, headed by the noble Sahabi, Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit ؓ to compile the Qur'an Shareef in a complete book form.

Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit ؓ was already one of the scribes of Nabi ﷺ who would write the verses of the Qur'an Shareef when they were revealed, and was also one of those who had committed the Qur'an to memory. It was a major responsibility placed on the shoulders of one man. He therefore said: "By Allah, had they burdened me with the shifting of a mountain it would have been easier than their request that I gather the Qur'an." *(Sahih al-Bukhari with Fath al-Bari 9:8-11)*

Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit ؓ invited all the Muslims who had the Qur'an Shareef or some part of it with them in written form to bring it forward for the compilation. Amongst the senior companions who had their own compilation were Mu'adh bin Jabal, Ubay bin K'ab, Abu Darda and Zaid bin Thabit ؓ himself.

The difference between their compilation and the compilation that Abu Bakr ﷺ had requested was that theirs were intended for their own personal use, whilst Abu Bakr's ﷺ was for the benefit of the public and general Muslims.

The verses that the Rasulullah ﷺ had arranged to be written under his supervision were preserved by the companions. Hazrat Zayd ﷺ collated them so that the new copy could be made from them. Consequently, a public proclamation was made to the effect that anyone possessing any number of written verses of the Qur'an should bring them over to him. When a written verse was brought to him, he would verify its authenticity by first testing its reliability against his own memory. Then, Sayyiduna Umar, who was also a hafiz of the Qur'an and is proven through reliable narrations to have been assigned by Hazrat Abu Bakr ﷺ to work with Zayd on the project, would test it against his own memory (Fathul Bari). No written verse was accepted until such time that two trustworthy witnesses had testified to the fact that the particular verse was written in the presence of Nabi ﷺ (Al-Itqan).

Lastly, the verses in writing were collated with collections that different companions had prepared for themselves. *(Al-Burhan fi Ulumil Qur'an of Zarkashi)*

After consulting all such material and confirming it with his own memory, coupled with the testimony of many witnesses, he compiled the first standard script of the Qur'an Shareef in a book form. In this compilation, the Surahs were not arranged in their respective order, but every Surah was written and kept separately.

However, this does not preclude that the actual sequencing and placement of Surahs in their respective, was fixed by the Prophet himself, through revelation, and safeguarded through oral transmission. Only non-abrogated verses were included.

'THE MUSHAF'

The fully compiled copy, known as the 'mushaf' was kept by Hazrat Abu Bakr ﷺ in his personal care, until his demise. 'Mushaf' literally means a manuscript that is bound between two covers as a single volume.

Thereafter, the copies were placed in the care of Hazrat Umar ﷺ. After the demise of Hazrat Umar ﷺ the copies were given to his daughter, Hazrat Hafsa (Radhiyallahu Anha) to keep. Hazrat Hafsa (Radhiyallahu Anha) was one of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. It was placed in her care for safekeeping until the need arose for the third Khalifa, Hazrat Uthman Ghani ﷺ to request it from her.



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