

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT THE QURAN WAS FULLY PRESERVED? - IS IT NOT THE AHADITH THAT INFORMS US?

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INTRODUCTION

The subject title shares a question (as part of a wider claim) usually cited by Muslims who assert that the Quran has reached us in the same manner as [Ahadith](#).

What this at times unfortunately conveys is a tacit weakness in the enquirer's methodology to wrestle with all the Quranic verses to prove to themselves whether or not this is indeed a Divine scripture. Instead, it is often found that many Muslims accept the veracity of its Divine origins because they have been led to believe that it was preserved by a rigid process and they lay blind trust in that process. This is normally the 'mantra' and typical of the Muslim that has 'inherited' their religion.

A question bears pondering. When a non Muslim individual sincerely accepts the Quran as the Word of God, does he or she really care 'how the Quran was preserved'? Do they really accept the Quran as God's word because the [Ahadith](#) attests that the Quran can be traced all the way back to a Prophet which they do not yet believe in?

The answer is of course, in the negative. They challenge the arguments **presented** by the Quran **and accept or reject it** on the basis of whether or not the arguments convince them that it is a Divine message. It is useful to appreciate that at this stage the enquirer has not yet established belief that the Quran is the book of God during their initial study of the Book. They are merely **examining** the claim. Is one really then to think they would pay any heed to the books of [Ahadith](#) that may refer to the Quran's preservation? Would one ever invite a non-Muslim by handing them a Book of Hadith? Why not?

Sadly, this remains the paradox. A Muslim who 'inherits' their religion is taught that the Prophet is a messenger of God **first** and thus the Quran needs to be accepted as a Divine scripture of God. In contrast, a **New Muslim** accepts the Quran as a Divine scripture **first** (through some sort of analysis) and then puts faith in the person who delivered the message as a Prophet of God.

EXTANT HISTORY IS NON THE WISER

A proper study of historical sources strongly indicates that even the earliest historians of Islam, such as Ibn Ishaq, were non the wiser as to how the Quran was actually revealed and in what order.

(Please see related article [1] below)

Ibn Ishaq, Islam's earliest historical source for Prophetic biography was often just merely relating the stories he acquired from other traditionalists and his works were in wide circulation before any of the traditional books of Ahadith took canon. What comes as a surprise for many academics is the fact that the earliest historians were not even convinced which Surah was the first revelation! (Was it Surah 96 or Surah 73? - does it really matter?).

(Please see related articles [2] and [10] below)

Therefore, there can only be one logical deduction. The Quran wants the reader to ponder on its narratives with a view to accept or reject it as the word of God as opposed to blindly accepting it. Blind acceptance would not require one to research its message. This would be no different from any blind adherent of any faith.

(Please see related article [3] below)

IT IS ONLY THE AHADITH THAT RAISES DOUBTS TO THE QURAN'S PRESERVATION

It is the [Islamic secondary sources](#) that inform the reader:

- That verses were missing and a goat ate the stoning verse with regards to adultery [1]
- That the Prophet of God introduced the Satanic verses [2]
- That Caliph Uthman burnt the extant copies of the Quran [3]
- That there was a missing suckling verse (Ten clear sucklings which made the marriage unlawful, then it was later abrogated (and substituted) by five sucklings and then was somehow removed or missed from the Quran altogether [4]
- That there was a missing Ibn Adam verse (regarding Ibn Adam's possession of a wadi of property) [5]
- That there was a missing 'pleasing' verse from the Quran (regarding those that were slain at Bi'r Mauna which included the verse "Inform our tribe on our behalf that we have met with our Lord. He has been well pleased with us and has satisfied our desires) [6]
- And many others, from al-Baraa, verses that were lost with dead Muslims, cancelled and repealed verses and those forgotten by the Prophet himself and those lost by Quranic reciters [7]

Does the Quran make such fanciful claims or even hint to it?

No.

Is one really led to believe that the information of the Quran's preservation would be left to the protection of those historians and compilers that give us the 'Satanic Verses' (Ibn Saad via Al Waqidi)? or by compilers that refer to individuals that tell us amongst other things:

- That that Prophet made love to all his wives in one night [8]
- How the Prophet fondled his wives during their menses [9]
- That Satan passes wind (flatulence) during Adhan [10]
- That the Prophet forgot his surahs [11]
- That the Prophet ordered dogs to be killed [12] (See contradiction) [13]
- That Satan urinates in one's ears [14]
- That the Prophet was confused about sexual relations with his wives under the influence of magic [15]
- The Prophet allowed to burn people with fire [16]
- That the Prophet allowed the killing of women and children in war [17]
- That Moses slapped the angel of death [18]

... and numerous others.

(As an example, please see related article [4] below)

These reports are often exploited by critics of Islam as can be seen in the following video.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=91AM7665cbo

To Muslims who are not conversant with the history and contents of their sources, such videos can become very disconcerting.

HAS THE QURAN REACHED US VIA THE SAME METHODS SUCH AS AHADITH?

No.

This statement has no basis. Most (if not all) reports within the [Ahadith](#) corpus are based on 'Ahad reports' or singular transmissions (sole witnesses to the narrative) and collected centuries removed from source by later compilers with many discrepancies. For example in the main, what Abu Hurairah narrates, no one else narrates the same Hadith. This is an example of an 'Ahad' report or witness. The Quran in contrast has not reached us by 'Ahad' witnesses, but rather, it has been transmitted in its entirety by a consensus of the community (mutawwatir) long before any [Ahadith](#) works were compiled or canonised.

(Please see related article [5] below)

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE QURAN

No.

This statement is simply based on ignorance and a lack of erudite study. There has only been one Quran that has been transmitted **through the consensus** of its followers.

No early codex to date has shown **differences which alter the message significantly**. Yes indeed, for many Muslims it would be a complete surprise to learn that there are indeed scribal errors (spelling mistakes) or changes in Surah or verse orders, or even differences in Hafs and Warsh in some

manuscripts but there is no fundamental change in meaning or message which alters the overarching message the Quran is attempting to deliver.

Many Muslims find themselves compromised not having ever studied the nature of the differences that do exist but have been led to believe that each letter of each manuscript ever written has been protected from even the slightest error of a scribe's stroke.

(Please see related article [6] below and in particular, the section: SO WHAT ABOUT THE QURAN'S OWN PROTECTION? Please also see related article [7])

The written codex of the Quran only provided a backup proof of an oral source of revelation. The written codex was not itself the source of the Quran. The Quran in its message remains intact.

WHERE ARE THE ISNAD'S WHICH SUPPORT THE QURANIC VERSES?

The requirement of [Ahadith](#) 'isnads' (chain of narrators) are proof themselves that the [Ahadith](#) were not preserved in written form. The requirement that necessitated the need for 'isnads' seems inevitably linked to the fact that the veracity of the statements they provided were most likely challenged by the earliest Islamic communities. This challenge was most likely initiated when the [Ahadith](#) canon started to take form and disseminate. Isnads also took provenance to provide the Hadith reports a sense of credibility and authenticity.

The Hadith themselves clearly mention the existence of countless forgeries.

It is pertinent to question why were 'isnads' not required for each verse of the Quran? This is a very sound question. Why did the early Islamic community not deem it necessary to provide 'isnads' for every verse of the Quran?

The reason is very simple. The text and veracity of the Quran was agreed to by a consensus of the earliest Islamic communities (Ummah).

Another question is worth pondering at this point. Why were the [Ahadith](#) not preserved by the early Caliphs who would be best placed to authenticate the narratives due to their proximity in time to the Prophet

If there existed an absolute requirement to understand the message of the Quran through the [Ahadith](#), why were the [Ahadith](#) not then preserved at the earliest and best opportunity?

FINAL THOUGHTS

There are only two methods as to how the Quran has reached us today:

(1) One method of preservation which is depicted by unreliable [Ahadith](#) reports collected **centuries later** but depicting a period centuries earlier.

(2) Or by a foolproof system protected by God (15:9) which could include a manner of processes such as:

- An oral tradition aided by perpetual memory recitation **and** preserved in written form by set scribes during the time of the Prophet (80:13-16; 68:1; 96:1-5; 98:2-3; 25:5) and immediately afterwards. We even have Quran memorisers today known as 'Huffuz' and are aware of some very early complete Qurans (Topkapi; Samarkand, Sana'a codex etc).
- By restricting the development of [Islamic secondary sources](#) so the Quran remained the sole source of guidance for the earliest Muslim communities. Ahadith only took canon **centuries later** and were never attested and written down by either the Prophet or any of his immediate companions which have reached us today.

Both have their arguments to support them.

The only real answer with regards preservation is what the Quran itself implores one to do.

Challenge the book of God and see if the arguments that it presents satisfies and appeals to one's intellectual faculties and heart as the Divine book of God.

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“Why don't they research the Quran? (Arabic: Tadaburuna). Don't they realise that if it was from someone other than God, they would have found many contradictions / discrepancies in it (* Arabic: Fihī ikh-tilāfan kathīran)”

*** For a nuanced interpretation of the Arabic phrase 'Fihī ikh-tilāfan kathīran', please see article (11) below.**

In the end, one is free to accept or reject the message as a Divine word of God. There has never been any compulsion in God's religion. **(Please see related article [11] below)**

Related Articles:

- (1) [Ibn Ishaq's Sira of Prophet Muhammad \(pbuh\)](#)
- (2) [Fluid Beginnings of Asbab ul-Nazul](#)
- (3) [Blind Following](#)
- (4) [Did the Prophet Contravene His Own Teachings? - A Problematic Hadith](#)
- (5) [The Difference Between Hadith and Sunna](#)
- (6) [Do I Need to Perform Ablution \(Wudu\) Before I Can Touch the Quran?](#)
- (7) [The Compilation of the Quran](#)
- (8) [The Quran Stands Alone As Sole Religious Guidance](#)
- (9) [The Best Hadith](#)
- (10) [Unknown Towns and Names - Why fill in the gaps?](#)
- (11) [Does the Quran Assert in Verse 4:82 That it Contains No Contradictions?](#)
- (12) [Forced Faith is No Faith](#)

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- [2] AL TABARI, Ta'rikh Volume 1
- [3] SAHIH BUKHARI, Volume 6, Book 61, Number 510, Translator: M. Muhsin Khan. Source: University of Southern California Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, Translation available [online] <http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/061-sbt.php> [Accessed 11th March 2013]
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