

The Story of Al-Quran

From the Preserved Tablet to Humankind

(Part 2 of 4):

How Al-Quran was revealed,
memorized and written down

By Aisha Stacey

“And thus, We have sent to you O Muhammad (PBUH) a revelation, and a mercy of Our Command. You knew not what the Book is, nor what is Faith? But We have made it (this Quran) a light wherewith We guide whosoever of Our slaves We will. And verily, you O Muhammad (PBUH) are indeed guiding (humankind) to the Straight Path.” (Quran 42:52)

Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him, the final Messenger from God, received Al-Quran, in two stages. These perfect words of God were sent down to guide humankind out of the darkness and into the light; they are guidance and a mercy. Al-Quran – the words of God are perfect words, from a perfect God, to His Creation.

Gabriel. When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was around forty years of age he started to spend time in deep reflection. According to his beloved wife Aisha (RA), the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him via vivid good dreams. He would go to the cave known as Hira to worship the One God and contemplate life, the universe, and his place in the world.

One night during Ramadhan an angel came to him and asked him to read. The Prophet, who was unable to read or write, replied “I do not know how to read”. The angel then held him forcibly and pressed his chest so hard that he could not bear the pressure. The angel then related to him the first words of Quran.

“Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught by the pen, He has taught man that which he knew not.” (Quran 96:1-5)

After this first revelation, which Muhammad (PBUH), may God praise him, found frightening; he was not visited by the angel Gabriel again for an undetermined amount of time. The next time he encountered him (the angel) he was walking alone. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) heard a voice from the heavens. When he looked up he saw the angel sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. Muhammad (PBUH) was afraid and ran home seeking comfort and asking to be wrapped in blankets. The second revelation occurred at this time.

“O you covered in garments arise and warn the people of a severe punishment...” (Quran 74:1-5)

Over the next 23 years until shortly before Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) death, Al-Quran was revealed in stages. Several reasons have been suggested for this. Some say that it was revealed slowly to offer Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) support and address issues as they arose.

Aisha (RA), the wife of the Prophet, narrates that when asked about how the divine inspiration was revealed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) replied,

“Sometimes it is like the ringing of a bell, this form of inspiration is the hardest of all and then this state passes after I have grasped what is inspired. Sometimes the Angel comes in the form of a man and talks to me and I grasp whatever he says”.

Ibn Abbas described Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as bearing the revelation “with great trouble and moving his lips quickly”. As the words of Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) he began to commit them to memory.

Al-Quran was memorised by the companions during Prophet Muhammad’s (PBUH) lifetime and this

tradition has continued through the following generations. Even today Muslims unable to read Arabic memorise the exact same words that were memorised by the Arabs of the 7th century CE. The majority of the Arabs were unlettered, including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH); however the importance of the written word was well understood.

Preserving the divine revelation was paramount; therefore trustworthy and knowledgeable people memorised and wrote down the words of Quran. These included the four men destined to follow Muhammad (PBUH) as leaders of the Muslim nation and a man named Zaid Ibn Thabit (RA), who would be instrumental in the preservation of Quran for the many generations to follow.

Writing materials were difficult to obtain and in these very early days portions of Quran were written onto animal skins, thin light coloured stones, bones, and even bark. The companions would write down the words of revelation and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would listen to the men recite from the written word to make sure there were no mistakes. It could be said that Al-Quran was written down under the direct supervision of Prophet Muhammad, may God praise him. Al-Quran was not revealed in order, however the Angel Gabriel instructed Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on how to compile Al-Quran in the divinely inspired correct sequence.

www.islamreligion.com



On the night known as the ‘Night of Decree’, in the Islamic month of Ramadhan, the Quran descended, from the Preserved Tablet to the Lowest Heaven. It then descended from the heavens to the earth in small stages.

The revelation was delivered to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the Angel