



## The Merits of Reciting the Qur'an

Abridged translation from *Tilawat al-Qur'an al-majid: faḍā'iluhā, ādābuhā, khaṣā'isuhā* by the late scholar 'Abd Allāh Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī

### 1) God Praises the Recitation of His Book in the Qur'an

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ ﴿١١﴾ لِيُوفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُّقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ إِذِنَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

As for those who recite the Book of God and establish regular prayer and spend (in charity) out of what we have provided for them, secretly and openly, they intend an exchange that will not be fruitless, as God will pay them their due and more, from His divine bounty. For God is most forgiving, most appreciative. And what We have revealed to you by inspiration from the Book is the truth, verifying what preceded it; for God knows and sees everyone. We bequeathed scripture to those of Our servants We chose; but some of them oppress their own souls, while some of them are moderate, and some of them are in the forefront in good deeds, by God's leave; that is a great blessing, [*Sūrat al-Fātir*: 29-32].

The first verse from the above is known as “the verse of the reciters” (*ayat al-qurrāʾ*) as mentioned by Qatāda. In this verse, God the Exalted praises the reciters who read His Book and act according to it. They pray, spend their wealth, and uphold His commands. For this reason, God has promised them a great reward in exchange for their works. God then reminds us of the importance of this glorious Book and the favor with which it descended. Namely, that the Qur’an is the revealed Truth that verified what was revealed in the Divine books to previous Prophets. God then privileged the Muhammadan community by selecting them to inherit this Divine scripture.

People are then classified according to their degree of abiding with the commands of the Book of God. The first category are those who oppress their own souls (*ẓalimun li-nafsihi*). These are people who abandon the definitive commandments of the Qur’an or ignore its prohibitions. The next category is that of the moderate (*al-muqtaṣid*). This group performs what is obligatory and leaves what is forbidden without performing anything beyond this. Finally those in the forefront of good deeds (*sābiqūn bi-l-khayrāt*) also perform what is obligatory and abandon what is prohibited; but they add to this by also competing in good actions and performing additional devotional acts beyond what is obligatory (*nawāfil*).

## 2) To be Continuous in Completing and Re-reading the Qur’an is Amongst the Acts Most Loved to God

It is related by al-Tirmidhī and others on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه saying: “A man said: ‘O Messenger of God, what is the most beloved act to God the Exalted?’ He said, “One who sets out (*yaḍrib*)—meaning starts—from the beginning of the Qur’an [and recites] to the end. Each time he finishes he starts again [*kullamā ḥalla artaḥal*].”

What is meant here is that each time one completes a reading of the Qur’an, it is recommended that one immediately begin the next one. This is why scholars of the Qur’an would tell those who finish a *khitma* that they should follow it up with the *Fātiḥa* and the beginning of *al-Baqara* up to “And they are the successful ones (*ulāʾika hum al-muflīḥūn* [*Sūrat Baqara: 5*])” in adherence to the words of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم “each time he finishes he starts again.”

In this noble hadith, we see clear evidence to whoever seeks a relationship with God and proximity to the King of the worlds that they should continue each *khitma* with many other *khitmas*. Each completion and new beginning results in becoming closer and more connected to God. This is because this path is one of that is fast and carries momentum, and there is nothing that [brings one close to God] faster than what the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم encouraged us to do.

## 3) Recitation of the Qur’an is the Most Virtuous Form of Worship

It is related by al-Bayhaqī on the authority of Nuʿmān b. Bashīr رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “The most superior form of worship for my community is the recitation of the Qur’an.”

Al-Sijzī relates in his *Ibāna* on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه: “The best worship is the recitation of the Qur’an.”

Al-Daylamī reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه, that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “The most worshipful servant is the one who recites the Qur’an.”

#### 4) **The Reciter is Rewarded for Each Letter and Each Reward is Tenfold Regardless if it is Recited with Understanding or Without Understanding.**

Al-Tirmidhī and others have related on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه saying, “I heard the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم say: ‘Who reads a letter from the Book of God the Exalted receives a reward for it. Each reward is tenfold. I do not say that ‘A-L-M’ is a letter but rather ‘A’ is a letter, ‘L’ is a letter, and ‘M’ is a letter.’”

This hadith indicates that even if one recites the Qur’an without understanding its meaning, they receive this reward that is multiplied since most people read the verse, “A-L-M” without knowing its meaning.

Imām al-Nawawī رحمته الله states: “Know that the preferred position upon which the majority of scholars take is that the recitation of the Qur’an is superior to *tasbīh* (repeating the words *subhānallah*) or *tahlīl* (repeating the words *lāilāhaillaallah*) or any other form of remembrance of God.”

The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said in a hadith in Tirmidhī on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه: “The superiority of the words of God over the rest of words is as the superiority of God over His creation.”

#### 5) **The People of the Qur’an are the People of God and His Elite Group (*ahlu Allāhi wa khāṣṣatuhu*)**

Al-Nasā’ī and Ibn Māja, as well as al-Ḥakīm, relate in a sound (*hasan*) chain of transmission on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه saying: “The Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said: ‘God has a select group from amongst the people.’ They said: ‘Who are they O Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم?’ He صلى الله عليه وسلم replied: ‘The people of the Qur’an. They are the people of God and His elite group.’”

In other words, whoever aspires to become of the people of God must strive to work with the Qur’an, for it is truly the connected path to God, as the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم has testified. May God make us of the people of Qur’an!

#### 6) **The Reciter of the Qur’an Discourses with his Lord and Calls Upon Him**

On the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said: “Whoever wishes to speak with his Lord should read the Qur’an.”

Al-Munawī has said the term, “speaking with the Lord,” is used in a metaphorical sense. For the Noble Qur’an is a letter from God the Exalted to humanity. It is as if the reciter is saying, “O God you said such and such,” and he is in this way discoursing with his Lord.

## 7) The Qur'an is the protected Fortress of God and Whoever Enters it is Secure

Al-Dārimī relates in his chain of transmission on the authority of Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Recite the Qur'an for God does not cause distress to the heart which contains the Qur'an. This Qur'an is the fortress of God the Exalted and whoever enters it is secure. Whoever loves the Qur'an should rejoice."

## 8) The House in which the Qur'an is Recited is Visited by Angels and is Expanded to its Inhabitants

Imām Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Marwazī has related in his chain of transmission on the authority of Anas ؓ: "A house in which the Qur'an is recited becomes attended by Angels and is abandoned by Satan (*shayātīn*). It becomes expanded to its inhabitants and its goodness (*khayr*) becomes abundant and its vice (*sharr*) decreased. As for the house in which Qur'an is not recited, it is attended by Satan and abandoned by Angels. It is constricted to its inhabitants and its virtue is decreased and its vice becomes abundant."

Al-Dāraqaṭnī relates on the authority of Anas ؓ and Jābir ؓ that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Make plentiful the recitation of the Qur'an in your homes. For the house in which Qur'an is not read: its goodness becomes decreased, its vice becomes increased, and it becomes constricted to its inhabitants."

## 9) The Houses in which the Qur'an is Recited Become Illuminated to the Inhabitants of the Heavens

Al-Bayhaqī has reported on the authority of 'Ā'isha ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: "The houses in which the Qur'an is recited glow to the inhabitants of the Heavens the way in which the stars glow to the inhabitants of the earth."

Al-Ḥakīm al-Timidhī reports on the authority of Abū Hurayra ؓ and Abū Dardā' ؓ, "The houses of the believers are as lanterns in front of the Throne [of God]. It is recognized by the inhabitants of the seven Heavens. They say: 'This light emanates from the homes of the believers who recite the Qur'an.'"

## 10) Recitation of the Qur'an Purifies the Heart

Al-Bayhaqī relates in *Shu'ab al-īmān* on the authority of Ibn 'Umar ؓ saying, "The Messenger of God ﷺ said: 'This heart rusts as iron rusts when exposed to water.' It was asked: 'O Messenger of God what is its purifier?' He said: 'An abundant remembrance of death and recitation of the Qur'an.'"

## 11) Recitation of the Qur'an Benefits its Reciter and his Parents

Abū Dāwūd relates on the authority of Sahl b. Mu'adh ؓ that the Messenger of God ﷺ said: "In regards to the one who recites the Qur'an and acts according to it, God will crown his parents on the day of judgment with a crown of light superior to the light of the sun inside one of the

houses of the world, had it been in it. So what do you think the state of one who acts according to it will be?”

In other words, if the parents of the reciter of the Qur’an will be awarded with a crown of light, how much greater will be the reward of the reciter himself? And what kind of crown of honor will he be granted? Indeed, his garb and his veneration will be superior. May God make us from amongst them!

## 12) According to Sacred Law the More Learned of the Qur’an Are to be Given Precedence over the Less Learned

Muslim and others have related on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said: “The people are to be led [in prayer] by the most learned of the book of God the Exalted.”

In the transmission of Aḥmad in his *Musnad*, on the authority of Ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ the Prophet ﷺ said: “The people are to be led [in prayer] by the most learned in God the Exalted’s book. If they are equal in their Qur’an, then the most learned of the *sunna*. If they are equal in the *sunna*, then the earliest of them in the migration (*hijra*) [is to lead]. If they are equal in their [time of] migration, then the one who is older [is to lead]. No man should lead prayer within his own family, or sovereign within his own kingdom, nor [should a person] sit in his home in a place of honor except with his (the learned person’s) permission.”

Bukhārī and others relate that the Prophet ﷺ would compare two men from the dead of the Battle of Uhūd and ask, “Which of them is more learned in the Qur’an?” Whenever one of them was specified, he would have them buried first.

It is also related in the books of the *Sunan* on the authority of Hisham b. ‘Āmir ؓ that the Prophet ﷺ said, “Dig [the graves] deep and wide. Place two or three in one grave. Give precedence to the ones who are most learned in the Qur’an [i.e. bury them first].”

Ibn ‘Abbās related: “The reciters of the Qur’an were the companions of the assembly of ‘Umar ؓ and his advisors, regardless of whether they were young or old.”

## 13) Honoring the People of the Qur’an is a Form of Honoring the Emblems of God (*ta’zīm sha’ā’ir Allāh*)

God the Exalted says: “And if any honor the emblems of God, that is from the piety of hearts,” [*Sūrat al-Hajj* :32].

The “emblems of God” are the representations of God’s religion and the upholders of the Sacred Law. Hence, the emblems of God include the Qur’an, mosques, rituals of the pilgrimage, and things similar.

The upholders of the Sacred Law include scholars and reciters of the Qur’an. Imām al-Nawawī ؓ used this noble verse [above] to support his position that respecting the people of the Qur’an is

obligatory because they are of the emblems of God. Similarly, respecting scholars who are the upholders of the religion of God is also obligatory. It is not permissible to harm or despise them. Nor is it permissible to disregard them. For harming them or disrespecting them are a sign of hypocrisy and an ominous end. May God protect us!

It has been transmitted that al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ‘Asākir said, “Know O brother—May God grant us success in attaining His good pleasure and make us of those who are God-fearing—that the flesh of the scholars are poisoned. The punishment for those who attempt to expose the faults of scholars are certain. Whoever uses his tongue to defame a scholar, God will afflict him with the death of his heart before the death of his body. [God says] “So let those who oppose his command beware lest a trial befalls them or a painful punishment strikes them, (*Sūrat al-Nūr*: 63).”

Al-Ṭabarānī has reported on the authority of Abū Umāma رضي الله عنه that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “There are three [types of people] who are not belittled by anybody other than a hypocrite: An old Muslim, a person of knowledge, and a just leader.”

#### 14) Reading the Qur’an out of the Text (*muṣṣhaf*) is Superior to Recitation from One’s Memory

It has been reported by al-Bayhaqī and al-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Aws b. Aws رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The recitation of a person without the text is one thousand degrees [in terms of reward] and his recitation out of the text multiplies this [reward] by another one thousand degrees.”

It has been related by al-Bayhaqī and al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī on the authority of Abu Sa’īd رضي الله عنه, “Give your eyes their share in worship by looking at the text of the Qur’an (*muṣṣhaf*), contemplating on it, and recognizing its marvels.”

Imām al-Nawawī—may God have mercy on him and continue to benefit us from him—has said, “Recitation of the Qur’an from the text is superior to its recitation from one’s memory. This is because gazing upon the text of the Qur’an is a recommended form of worship. In this way [the two forms of worship], recitation and looking at the text of the Qur’an, become combined. Al-Qāḍī Ḥusayn from amongst our companions, Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, and many others from our righteous predecessors concurred on this opinion.

#### 15) The Homes in which the Qur’an is Recited Radiate with Light

Al-Bayhaqī has related on the authority of Anas رضي الله عنه that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Illuminate your homes with prayer and recitation of the Qur’an.”

#### 16) The Carriers of the Qur’an are Granted the Right of Intercession (*shafā’a*) on the Day of Judgment

Al-Tirmidhī and others relate, on the authority of ‘Alī رضي الله عنه that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Who recites the Qur’an and memorizes it and makes permissible that which it has made permissible and

forbids that which it has forbidden; God will enter him into Paradise and allow him to intercede on behalf of ten members of his family who would have otherwise been bound for the Fire.”

## 17) The Merit of Gathering to Learn God’s Book

Imām Muslim relates, “No people have gathered in a house, from amongst the houses of God to recite the Book of God and study it except that: serenity descends upon them, they are covered by mercy, surrounded by angels, and God remembers them among those in His company.”

## 18) The Qur’an Intercedes on Behalf of its Reciter on the Day of Judgment

Muslim relates on the authority of Abū Umāma رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “Recite the Qur’an for it will come as an intercessor (*shafī’an*) for its companions on the Day of Judgment.”

The intercession of the Qur’an may take the form of the forgiveness of sins, ascension in degrees, or the completion of reward. This is indicated by what has been reported by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, and others on the authority of Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه that the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “A chapter from the Qur’an that is composed of thirty verses interceded on behalf of a man until God forgave him. It was: “Blessed be He who has the kingdom in his hand (*tabāarakalladhī biyadihi al-mulk*, [*Sūrat al-Mulk*: 1]).”

The second hadith which indicates this is based on what al-Tirmidhī has related on the authority of Abū Hurayra رضي الله عنه the Messenger of God صلى الله عليه وسلم said, “The companion of the Qur’an comes on the Day of Judgment and the Qur’an says, ‘O God ornament him!’ So he is adorned with the crown of honor. Then the Qur’an says, ‘O God increase him!’ So he is dressed in the garb of nobility. Then the Qur’an says, ‘O God be pleased with him!’ So God becomes pleased with him.”