Understanding Islam and Engaging Muslims

Session 2
The Quran

• The word Quran means **recitation**, The Kitab means **book**.
• The **ultimate guidance** for Muslims
• Compiled from 610-632 through "**progressive revelation**" over 23 years
• Verbally revealed through the angel Jibril (Gabriel) from God to Muhammad
• The inspiration is widely believed to be the letter from God's "tablet" of the Quran in Heaven. (85:21-22)
• **Divine promise about Quran:**
  – Surah 15:9 of the Qur'an proclaims: “We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).”

• **Arabic is the language of heaven.**
• Today the text of the Qur'an consists of **114 chapters** of varying lengths, each known as a Sura. Each *sura* is formed from several verses, called *ayats*.
  – **AHRUF:** “Jibreel recited the Qur'an to me in one way. Then I requested him (to read it in another way), and continued asking him to recite it in other ways, and he recited it in several ways till he ultimately recited it in seven different ways.”
• These verses were written on stalks of palm leaves, bones of dead animals, flat stones, and other materials. There was no complete manuscript of the Qur’an during this time.
• "Islamic law prohibits the touching of the physical Arabic Qur'an (and formal, but not casual, recitation) unless the person is in a state of purity which corresponds to the greater of Ablution . . . every Moslem must commit at least 12 vs. or lines of the Qur’an to memory."
Oral Tradition: Furthermore, Muslims believe that the Quran was precisely memorized, recited and exactly written down by Muhammad’s companions, the Sahaba.

Muhammad once told his followers to “Learn the recitation of the Qur’an from four: from Abdullah bin Masud—he started with him—Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Mu’adh bin Jabal and Ubai bin Ka’b” (Sahih al-Bukhari 3808).

Uthmanic Codification: Interestingly, Masud (first on Muhammad’s list) held that the Qur’an should only have 111 chapters (today’s version has 114 chapters), and that chapters 1, 113, and 114 shouldn’t have been included in the Qur’an.

• Abdullah Ibn Masud – 111 chapters
• Ubayy Ibn Ka’b – 116 chapters
• Today’s Qur’an – 114 chapters

According to Sunni Muslim Tradition:
• The third caliph Uthman (644-656) elected twelve years after the prophet’s death, who compiled and canonized the current version of Quran, then commanding that all previous versions be burned. (Leaman, Oliver (2006). "Canon". The Qur’an: an Encyclopedia. New York, NY: Routledge. pp. 136–139)

• There were several different versions of the Quran vying for official status when Uthman demanded that all but Zaid’s version be burned.
• Modern Muslims are often unaware of the stories behind the standardization of the current version of the Quran.
• Commentaries and exegesis (tafsir)
  – A body of commentary and explication (tafsīr), aimed at explaining the meanings of the Quranic verses.

• Reasons of revelation (asbab al-nuzul)
  – Asbāb al-nuzūl is a secondary genre of Qur'anic exegesis (tafsir) directed at establishing the context in which specific verses of the Qur'an were revealed.

  – Quran is not chronological in nature

According to Muslims

• Inimitable in style. (2:23, 17:88, 10:38)
• Holds scientific knowledge that was beyond man’s comprehension in the 7th century.
  – Moon and sun (78:12-13) – Celestial orbits (21:33) – Expansion of the universe (51:47)
• Geology, Oceanography, Biology, Physiology, Embryology, just to name a few
Incomplete Version

- According to one report by the son of the second caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, the present text of the Quran is incomplete since much of it has disappeared:
  - `Abdullah b. `Umar reportedly said, 'Let none of you say, "I have got the whole of the Qur'an." How does he know what all of it is? MUCH OF THE QUR'AN HAS GONE. Let him say instead, "I have got what has survived."' (Jalal al Din `Abdul Rahman b. Abi Bakr al Suyuti, al-Itqan fi `ulum al-Qur'an, Halabi, Cairo, 1935/1354, Volume 2, p. 25)

Abrogation

- The Quran claims Allah will replace abrogated texts with similar or better ones:
  - “None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that God Hath power over all things?” S. 2:106
- Portions of the Quran were abrogated in Muhammad's lifetime
  - Abrogation does not refer to the Christian or Jewish scripture
  - Muhammad “abrogated” or retracted the so called “satanic verses” (Sura 53:19-23).
In its essential form, the story reports that Muhammad longed to convert his kinsmen and neighbors of Mecca to Islam. As he was reciting Sūra an-Najm,[6] considered a revelation by the angel Gabriel, Satan tempted him to utter the following lines after verses 19 and 20:

- Have ye thought upon Al-Lat and Al-‘Uzzá and Manāt, the third, the other? These are the exalted gharāniq, whose intercession is hoped for.

**Missing Verses, Chapters & Passages**

- **Missing Chapters**
- When Ibn Umar—son of the second Muslim caliph—heard people declaring that they knew the entire Qur’an, he said to them: “Let none of you say, ‘I have learned the whole of the Koran,’ for how does he know what the whole of it is, when much of it has disappeared? Let him rather say, ‘I have learned what is extant thereof’” (Abu Ubaid, *Kitab Fada’il-al-Qur’an*).
- One of Muhammad’s companions, Abu Musa, supported this claim when he said that the early Muslims forgot two surahs (chapters) due to laziness:
- **Sahih Muslim 2286**
• **MISSING VERSES**
• Aisha also tells us that individual verses of the Qur’an disappeared, sometimes in very interesting ways:

• **Sunan ibn Majah 1944**—It was narrated that Aishah said: “The Verse of stoning and of breastfeeding an adult ten times was revealed, and the paper was with me under my pillow. When the Messenger of Allah died, we were preoccupied with his death, and a tame sheep came in and ate it.”

• Missing Passages:
• We know further that large sections of certain chapters came up missing. For instance, Muhammad’s wife Aisha said that roughly two-thirds of Surah 33 was lost:

• **Abu Ubaid, Kitab Fada’il-al-Qur’an**—A’isha . . . said, “Surat al-Ahzab (xxxiii) used to be recited in the time of the Prophet with two hundred verses, but when Uthman wrote out the codices he was unable to procure more of it than there is in it today [i.e. 73 verses].”
Contradiction: Nothing can change Allah’s words?

- Surah 6:115 (Pickthall) Perfected is the Word of your Lord in truth and justice. There is nothing that can change His words. He is the Hearer, the Knower.
- Surah 10:64 (Pickthall) Theirs are good tidings in the life of the world and in the Hereafter - There is no changing the Words of Allah - that is the Supreme Triumph.
- See also 6:34

Allah’s words are replaced

- Surah 2:106 (Pickthall) Nothing of our revelation (even a single verse) do we abrogate or cause be forgotten, but we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Know you not that Allah is Able to do all things?
- Surah 16:101 (Pickthall) And when We put a revelation in place of (another) revelation, - and Allah knows best what He reveals - they say: Lo! you are but inventing. Most of them know not.
- 16:102 Say: The holy Spirit has delivered it from your Lord with truth, that it may confirm (the faith of) those who believe, and as guidance and good tidings for those who have surrendered (to Allah).
Did Muhammad see Allah?

- **Yes**
  - 53:18 Truly he saw one of the greater revelations of his Lord.
  - 81:23 **Surely he beheld Him on the clear horizon.**
  
- **No**
  - Surah 6:102-103 (Yusaf Ali) That is God, your Lord! there is no god but He, the Creator of all things: then worship ye Him: and He hath power to dispose of all affairs. 103. **No vision can grasp Him,** but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.

The Caliphate

- A caliphate is the Islamic form of government representing the political unity and leadership of the Muslim world.
- During all of Islamic history the caliphate meant **both religious and political rule.**
- Different from the political-religious arrangement of medieval Europe, where church and state, pope and king, had distinctly different functions even though Christianity was the state religion.
- Muslims say there is no separation of church and state, religion and politics, in Islam.
Mohammad died in 632 his followers all assumed the need of a successor (caliph is the Arabic word for successor) to head up the Islamic community.

The caliphate was beset with problems at its beginning.

Some Muslims wanted the caliph to be Ali, son-in-law of Muhammad, but several of Muhammad’s closest associates chose Abu Bakr, contending that the selection should be on the basis of merit, not dynasty. It was the beginning of the Sunni-Shia split.

Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali

Sunnis call these first four caliphs the Rashidun, that is, the “rightly guided” caliphs.

These “rightly guided” caliphs were followed in 661 by an Umayyad caliphate ruling out of Damascus, which some Muslims consider a usurper caliphate.

It was succeeded in 750 by the Abbasid caliphate, so called because it came from the house of Abbas and restored leadership to the clan of Muhammad. The Abbasids moved their capital to Baghdad, and it was their rule that ushered in the long Golden Age of Islam.

The Abbasid caliphate came to an inglorious end with the Mongol invasion and capture of Baghdad and execution of its last caliph in 1258.
• Then with the advent of Turkish Ottoman rule the caliphate was restored, though under the name of Sultan. But this too came to an end in 1924 with the abolition of the caliphate by the modern Turkish reformer Ataturk as part of his modernization and secularization of Turkey.

• On June 29 an extremist Islamic group in Iraq proposed to set up a new caliphate. On that same day they also changed their name, formerly ISIS, for Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, to simply IS, Islamic State.

• All of this history of the caliphate helps us understand the recent events in Iraq, where an extremist group has named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi the caliph of a new Islamic State. One can see how this resonates with many radical Muslims around the world who share the hope of a restoration of Islam’s former glory.

• The Islamic State and its would-be caliph have practically no support in the broader Islamic world. The question is whether moderate Muslims can summon the will to take on the Islamic State’s well-organized military.
Dhimmitude

- **Dhimmi** is an Arabic word and it means “protected one”.
- The **dhimma** provides and details the legal, social and economic status of free non-Muslims in the Islamic state.
- World is divided into two “houses”.
  - *Dar al-Islam* (the house of submission) encompasses all countries that are under Islamic rule.
  - *Dar al-Harb* (the house of war) includes all other countries who are not yet in submission to Allah’s law (Shari‘ah).
- Despite modern trends to interpret these two houses as being situational (i.e., if a Muslim is able to freely practice his religion, then he is in *dar al-Islam*, even though the government is not Islamic), the traditional interpretation is that it depends on whether the government implements Shari‘ah or not.

---

- *Dar al-Hudna* (house of calm) refers to countries or areas under truce, bought by the non-Muslims (primarily Jews and Christians) at a price. If the *harbis* (inhabitants of *dar al-Harb*) refuse to pay tribute, hostilities resume until they become dhimmi, dead or Muslim!
  
  - Traditionally, Islam has viewed the willingness to agree to Hudna as a weakness to be exploited.

- When a country moves from *dar al-Harb* to *dar al-Islam*, the non-Muslims who surrender (and refuse to convert) become dhimmi under a ‘pact of protection,’ (*dhimma*).
• Being “protected” may give the impression that Islam has treated Christians and Jews well by virtue of their being ‘People of the Book’. However, the “pact of protection” imposes severe restrictions on what a dhimmi can do, wear, say, go or work, etc. In fact, the word dhimma implies that there is a debt by the dhimmi to the Muslim conquerors.

• Sura 9:29 provides the basis of the dhimma –
  – Fight against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (4) and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

• Is Dhimmitude Found in the Bible?
  • In fact, we find there is no counterpart in the Christian or Jewish Scriptures to this teaching in Islam. To the contrary, Jews were commanded to:
  • love the foreigner; for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt (Deuteronomy 10:19).
  • Christians are supposed to consider others better than themselves (Philippians 2:3).
  • And they feel no compulsion to fight as Muslims do because Jesus’ kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36).
• Christians aim to follow the teaching of Jesus, who told them to love (their) enemies and do good to those who persecute (them) (Matthew 5:44).
• Christians and Jews may not always have lived up to this ideal but, unlike the teaching of Islam, they have no justification for discriminatory behavior.
• Interestingly, it is reported by Ibn Jubayr that the crusading Franks treated their Muslim subjects akin to dhimmis—but these Muslim peasants were treated far better by the Franks than they had been by their own Muslim superiors!

The Law of Islam

• Law: Sharia
  – Civil and Criminal Law (Eg. UK- Civil Law)
  – Shari’a, path to water/ the path
    – The five major goals of the Sharia are the protection of sound religious practice, life, sanity, the family, and personal and communal wealth.

  – Sharia principles can be used to guide Muslims in marriage contracts, business contracts, child custody agreements, dietary customs, non- interest-based financial agreements, wills and testaments, charitable giving, and more.
The Sources of Sharia

• The process of legal interpretation *Fiqh* is based on three/four components: Knowledge through jurisprudence

• (1) the Qur’an, Islamic sacred scripture, which Muslims believe God revealed to humanity through the Prophet Muhammad,

• (2) the Sunna (or Prophetic model of behavior recorded in a literature called the Hadith),

• (3) The *Ijma*- consensus of religious scholars, and

• (4) Analogy/ *Qiyas*: Reasoning

Currently, 35 countries incorporate Sharia into their civil, common or customary law. (57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation)

Sharia is *neither static nor rigid* but instead a reflection on how different communities interpret it.

No single official document encapsulates Sharia.

**THE LAW SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS**

• Four major Sunni schools of thought
  – Shafi
  – Hanbali
  – Hanafi
  – Maliki

• Other schools of thought
  – Shi’a (Zaidi, Ismaili, Imami)
  – Qurani- Less prevalent schools
Is Sharia Compatible With American Law and Values?

- It allows rights to personal property, mutual consent to contracts, the presumption of innocence in criminal proceedings, and the right of women to initiate divorce proceedings.
- If and when religious laws conflict with American law, the Free Exercise and Establishment Clauses of the First Amendment prohibit American government, including the courts, from substituting religious laws for civil law or following religious laws that violate civil law. This prohibition applies to all religions equally.

What about stoning and amputation?

- These penalties are not allowed in 52 countries that make up the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, encompassing most countries with a Muslim-identified government. (Egypt, Turkey)
- But, extreme interpretations of Sharia are applied, in countries like Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Somalia and 12 states in northern Nigeria, stoning and amputations for adultery and theft are enforced in some cases.
Islam and The Ultimate Reality

• The god of Islam, Allah, is presented in the Quran as an eternal being, transcendent and almighty.
• He is Monad
• Radical Monotheism

• In the 112th Surah it is stated:
  – *Say, He is God, the One! God, the eternally Besought of all! He neither begets nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him.*

  – Quran equal with Allah (Co-eternal)

• The Qur`an also talks about Allah as one who is unknowable and a non-personal deity.
• He cannot even be spoken of as knowing Himself, “since self-knowledge implies a distinction between knower and known.”
• He is very remote, transcendent but not immanent.
  – This begs the question, why would Allah who is unknowable even have any attributes which are knowable by Humanity?
• Allah seems to have the same attributes as God the Father of the Old Testament, since the influence of the Old Testament on the Quran is more than probable.

• However, the Triune God of Christianity is considered to be a heresy, both in Judaism and Islam, a threat to monotheism.
  — Surely, unbelievers are those who said, "Allah is the third of the three [in a Trinity]". But there is no god but One God. And if they cease not from what they say, verily, a painful torment will befall the unbelievers among them (Quran 5,73).

---

Important differences between God of the Bible and Allah:

• **First**, the revelation given to Muhammad does not identify Allah’s essence, character, and personhood, but rather only his divine will and commands.

• **Second**, there is no allowance for any plurality within Allah’s one divine nature.

• **Third**, in Islamic theology, either Allah is viewed as wholly transcendent or there is less emphasis upon God’s immanence.
Islam and the Human Condition

- The Quran presents the creation and fall in a way similar to the Judeo-Christian tradition.

- Humans and angels were created to worship Allah (Quran 51,56).

- However, there is a major difference from the biblical account. Allah created Adam and commanded that he be worshiped by all angels. Satan (Iblis) opposed this command and only then was he banished from heaven.

- After this episode Iblis planned to deceive humans and make them disobedient to God, which he accomplished in a similar way to the biblical account (see Quran 7,20-21).

- However, in Islam there is no such thing as original sin.

- Although Adam and Eve sinned, they repented and were forgiven, so that their sin had no repercussions for the rest of the human race.

- The Quran tells us: “No soul will be questioned about what another soul has done...” (Chapter 17, Verse 15) Instead, Muslims believe we inherited choice from Adam (pbuh) and Hawwa.

- Why were they expelled from the paradise (Garden)?

- For each individual are appointed two angels who record all sins and good deeds that are performed during his or her life, and these records will be revealed at the final judgment.
• **The Source of Sin**

• **In Islam**, the origin of sin is Allah. Islam claims that humans were created in a state of equilibrium; sinless at birth (Sura 16:78; Pickthall 30:30 & 98:5) and with pure Islamic faith (Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith No. 597).

• The Qur’an makes it perfectly clear that no person is really free to choose good or evil, Allah leads people astray.
  – Sura 7:178, ‘Whomsoever Allah guides, he is the guided one, and whomsoever He sends astray, those! They are the losers.’ (see also Sura 7:179; 13:31 95:4-5; 4:142; 39:57).

• Thus, in Islam, Adam did not bring sin into the world. Indeed Allah had destined Adam to sin—40 years before he created him (Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith No. 611; see also Sura 9:51).

• **Definition of Sin**

• **In Islam**, sin is sometimes intention of heart (except unbelief) (Sura 33:5; Bukhari, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 1; cf 2:284); but other times it is only wrong actions (Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith 498).

• The Qur’an recognizes that all living persons are inherently good, and it is their actions and devotion to Allah that enables them to obtain salvation. Even demons (Jinn) are capable of regaining salvation (Ibn Kathir on 55:71)
Islam and Salvation

• Islam teaches that all people are sinners (Quran 16:61) and that salvation can be attained through observing the Five Pillars of Islamic practice: Islam offers guidance, but not salvation.

• In Islam, there is no broken relationship and no need of a mediator.

• Atonement is something you do to atone for sin (such as broken, intentional oaths, having sex during a fast etc), usually a “payment” of some nature, including punishment imposed by others who caught you.

• Thus atonement is limited to this world, so if you are punished now, or provide your own atonement via some payment, Allah will not punish you in the hereafter (Bukhari, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 17; Muslim, Vol. 3, Hadith No. 4235).

• So, for a sinless, innocent prophet like Jesus [Isa] to atone for your sin is an insult to Allah and forbidden in the Qur’an (Sura 4:112; 17:15 etc).
• By performing these works, a Muslim hopes that at the judgment day the **recorded good deeds will exceed the bad ones**, and so he or she will reach the paradise of material and sensual delights (56,16-41).

• Faith in Allah and belief that salvation is by his grace (merited) and mercy is also encouraged.

• Yet, despite all one's deeds, **Allah reserves the absolute right to send the deceased to wherever he pleases, paradise or hell**. Those who do not conform their lives to the demands of Islam will surely be thrown into hell, a place of extreme physical pain (56,42-45; 94-95).