



# JUMU'AH LECTURE: SCRIBES OF THE QUR'ĀN



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## Jumu'ah Lecture: Scribes of the Qur'an

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِیْنُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنُؤْمِنُ بِهٖ وَنَتَوَكَّلُ عَلَیْهِ وَنَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ شُرُوْرِ اَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ اَعْمَالِنَا مَنْ یَهْدِهِ اللّٰهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهٗ وَ مَنْ یُضِلِّهٗ فَلَا هَادِیَّ لَهٗ وَنَشْهَدُ اَنَّ سَیِّدَنَا وَ مَوْلَانَا مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَ رَسُوْلُهٗ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَ عَلٰی اٰلِهٖ وَ اَصْحَابِهٖ وَ بَارَكَ وَ سَلَّمَ تَسْلِیْمًا كَثِیْرًا اَمَّا بَعْدُ فَقَدْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰی اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّیْطٰنِ الرَّجِیْمِ بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ

### Introduction

The Glorious Qur'an is the greatest miracle of Allah ﷻ on earth and the most outstanding proof of the genuineness and authenticity of Islam. The existence of Islam depends on the preservation of the Glorious Qur'an and the advancement and progress of Muslims depends on their level of attachment and adherence to the Laws of the Qur'an. As such, Allah ﷻ has assumed responsibility of the preservation of every aspect of the glorious Qur'an.

اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ

*Verily We have revealed the reminder (Qur'an) and indeed, We are its preservers.*<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the passage of time, Muslims—especially the scholars and pious—have awarded the study, recitation, and propagation of the glorious Qur'an utmost importance. From a young age, boys and girls across the globe learn to recite the Glorious Qur'an in the language it was revealed in, despite their mother tongue being different. Thousands, rather millions, of individuals of this Ummah have memorised the Qur'an and the Ummah takes great pride in this miraculous achievement.

The preservation of the written script of the Qur'an to date is a manifestation of Allah's ﷻ promise and the Ummah's focus to preserve the Qur'an. We are truly indebted to all those who played a part in this mammoth task. Today, we discuss briefly the preservation of the Qur'an and focus on the scribes who were selected for this lofty mission.

### Preservation of the Glorious Qur'an in the Prophetic Era

The Glorious Qur'an was revealed verbally upon Rasūlullāh ﷺ over a period of twenty-three years. Whenever he received revelation, he summoned one of the scribes of the Qur'an to write down what was revealed. They would write the verses on stones, hide, leaves, tree barks, bones, and pieces of paper, which would then be stored away. Thereafter, Rasūlullāh ﷺ would present the revealed portion to the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم, some of whom would memorise the revealed portion. In this manner, the Qur'an was preserved both by memory and in writing.

Among the scribes of revelation were Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, 'Alī, Zayd ibn Thābit, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Mu'āwiyah, Khālid ibn al-Walīd, Abān ibn Sa'īd, and Thābit ibn Qays رضي الله عنه. Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه is recognised as the main scribe.

### Compilation of the Glorious Qur'an in the Era of Abū Bakr

The Qur'an was not compiled in a single book during the era of Nubuwwah. Allah ﷻ selected the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم to accomplish this task. In the Battle of Yamāmah, 12 AH, many ḥuffāz of the Qur'an were martyred which concerned Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه as he feared that portions of the Qur'an may get lost if the ḥuffāz are martyred at this rate. He suggested to Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, the khalīfah, to compile the written script of the Qur'an at one place.

Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit رضي الله عنه was selected for this task. It was his responsibility to join the verses to form complete

1 Sūrah al-Ḥijr: 9.

Sūrah. He relied on the orthography and script written on various articles during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh ﷺ strengthened by the testimony of two Companions. He did this and wrote down each Sūrah in a separate book.<sup>1</sup> This master manuscript was kept in the care of Sayyidunā Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, and later passed on to Sayyidunā ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and then Sayyidah Ḥafṣah bint ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا.

### Compilation of the Glorious Qur’ān in the Era of ‘Uthmān

By this time, Islam had spread far and wide. As the Muslim armies conquered new lands, more and more people entered the fold of Islam. Since the Qur’ān has been revealed in different qirā’āt, the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ taught the people according to the qirā’āt they knew. The result was that different qirā’āt were recited in different areas.

When Muslims from one area heard the recitation of those from another area, having no knowledge of the Qur’ān being revealed in different qirā’āt, they started quarrelling as to whose Qur’ān was correct and whose was not. In the Battles of Azerbaijan and Armenia in 25 A.H., Sayyidunā Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ took note of the growing difference amongst the masses in their modes of recitation, together with their disputes and disparagement. He carried his observations and concerns to Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and pleaded to him to intervene.

Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ realised that if the evil side of this division is not quelled with tact, it will lead to a disastrous end. He pondered over the solution and gathered the well versed and great Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. They looked into this issue and agreed that the best way forward would be to prepare manuscripts of the Qur’ān based on the master copy of Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and send these manuscripts to the different cities. These manuscripts will serve as a concrete answer to their differences and a resolve to their disputes, since they will be written in a manner that will incorporate and include the various qirā’āt.

Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ deputed Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit, ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ, and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ to compile the Qur’ān. The four began this colossal task using the manuscript of Sayyidunā Zayd as the master copy. They wrote down the Qur’ān according to the same orthography. This time, they wrote the Qur’ān in one book and gave sequence to the Sūrah as determined by Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Thus, the first ever complete and sequenced Qur’ān was compiled under the auspices of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and with the approval of the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. This manuscript is called the ‘Uthmānī script of the Qur’ān since Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ ordered its compilation.

Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ sent the manuscripts to the different cities of the Muslim empire including Makkah, Shām, Baṣrah, and Kūfah.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ sent an eminent, well-read, and proficient Qārī with each manuscript to teach the people the Qur’ān according to that manuscript.<sup>3</sup>

### The Ummah’s Obligation

The Ummah is indebted to the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ for their amazing accomplishment. We regard their accomplishment a major favour to the Ummah and are in total agreement with their decision. Rasūlullāh ﷺ has stated:

فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الرَّاشِدِينَ الْمَهْدِيِّينَ، عَضُّوا عَلَيْهَا بِالتَّوَاجِدِ

1 *‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, pg. 136.

2 Some details of this compilation appear in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Hadith: 4987.

3 Zayd ibn Thābit رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was to recite according to the Madanī manuscript; ‘Abd Allāh ibn Sā’ib was sent with the Makkī manuscript; Mughīrah ibn Shihāb with the Shāmī manuscript; Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī with the Kūfī manuscript; and ‘Āmir ibn Qays with the Baṣrī manuscript. (*Tārīkh al-Muṣḥaf*, pg. 60.)

Hold firm to my way and the way of the Rightly Guided Khulafā'. Cling to it firmly.<sup>1</sup>

It is high time we focus upon those individuals whom Allah ﷺ selected for this exalted and blessed task viz. Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ﷺ.

### Zayd ibn Thābit

Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit ﷺ is an Anṣārī from the Banū al-Najjār, the family of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He could not participate in Badr and Uḥud due to his tender age. He participated in Khandaq and every subsequent battle during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

He memorised seventeen Sūrahs before Rasūlullāh's ﷺ arrival in Madīnah. He recited these Sūrahs to Rasūlullāh ﷺ when the latter arrived in Madīnah which pleased Rasūlullāh ﷺ greatly. He memorised the entire Qur'ān during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He wrote revelation for the Nabī ﷺ and was his main scribe in Madīnah.<sup>2</sup>

During the March to Tabūk, Sayyidunā 'Umārah ibn Ḥazm ﷺ was carrying the banner of the Banū al-Najjār. Rasūlullāh ﷺ gave the banner to Sayyidunā Zayd ibn Thābit ﷺ with the reason, "The Qur'ān deserves precedence."<sup>3</sup>

Sayyidunā Zayd was an intelligent youth who mastered the Syriac language in just seventeen days. He was famed for his honesty, chastity, trust, knowledge, and understanding of Islam. Rasūlullāh ﷺ stated, "Zayd ibn Thābit is the most proficient in the laws of inheritance from my Ummah."<sup>4</sup>

He issued fatwā during the lifetime of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. During the khilāfah of Sayyidunā 'Umar and Sayyidunā 'Uthmān ﷺ, he was the authority in Madīnah in passing judgements, issuing verdicts, qirā'ah, and the laws of inheritance. He remained in this position until his demise in 45 AH.<sup>5</sup>

### 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr

Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr ﷺ was the first child born in Islam to the Muhājirīn after the hijrah.<sup>6</sup> His mother is Sayyidah Asmā' bint Abī Bakr, Dhāt al-Niṭāqayn, and his father is Sayyidunā Zubayr ibn al-'Awwām ﷺ, the Ḥawārī (Special Disciple) of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and his first cousin. After his birth, Rasūlullāh ﷺ performed his taḥnīk. The first thing to enter his stomach was a piece of a date mixed with the saliva of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. At a tender age, he pledged allegiance to Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He was nine at the demise of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.<sup>7</sup>

He memorised aḥādīth from the Nabī ﷺ while he was still young. He narrates plenty aḥādīth from him. He also narrates from his father Zubayr, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, his aunt 'Ā'ishah, Sufyān ibn Abī Zuhayr, and others ﷺ.<sup>8</sup>

He is one of the brave Ṣaḥābah. He participated in the Battle of Yarmūk. He was present at the Conquest of Africa and the Conquest of Constantinople. He defended Sayyidunā 'Uthmān ﷺ from the rebels. He thereafter participated in the

1 Al-Arba'ūn al-Nawawīyah, Ḥadīth: 28; Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Ḥadīth: 4607; Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī, Ḥadīth: 2676.

2 Al-Iṣābah, vol. 2 pg. 491; Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, pg. 31.

3 Al-Iṣābah, vol. 2 pg. 490.

4 Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 2 pg. 309; al-Iṣābah, vol. 2 pg. 492.

5 Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 2 pg. 309, 310; Tadhkirat al-Ḥuffāz, pg. 32.

6 Rasūlullāh ﷺ named him after his grandfather, 'Abd Allāh, and gave him the agnomen of his grandfather as well, Abū Bakr. [Al-Iṣābah, vol. 4 pg. 79; al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 6 pg. 474]

7 Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, vol. 6 pg. 474; Al-Iṣābah, vol. 4 pg. 79, 80; Musnad Aḥmad.

8 Al-Iṣābah, vol. 4 pg. 78; Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā', vol. 3 pg. 364.

Battle of Jamal alongside Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها and was in charge of the infantry. He suffered over forty wounds in the battle.<sup>1</sup> His father, Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه, told him, “You have the closest resemblance to Abū Bakr from all people.”

He is celebrated for his devotion in ṣalāh. Mujāhid reports, “‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr would stand in ṣalāh like a pillar. This is *khushū*’ (concentration/devotion) in ṣalāh.” ‘Amr ibn Dīnār acknowledges, “I never seen someone performing a more perfect ṣalāh than Ibn al-Zubayr.” While rocks were being catapulted from Abū Qubays, Ibn al-Zubayr would be performing ṣalāh by the Maqām like an unwavering tree, without moving an inch. Miraculously, no rock would strike him.<sup>2</sup>

After the demise of Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah, people pledged allegiance of khilāfah to him. Most of the lands, including Madīnah, Baṣrah, Kūfah, Egypt, and Shām came under his rule, except a portion of the people of Shām. He ruled from Makkah (as khalīfah) for nine years, from 64 – 73 AH. He was martyred on Tuesday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 73 AH.<sup>3</sup>

Sayyidunā Ibn al-Zubayr رضي الله عنه is the first and only person of this Ummah to rebuild the Ka’bah on the foundations laid down by Sayyidunā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He is the first to cover the Ka’bah with silk.<sup>4</sup>

Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr رضي الله عنها, his mother, supplicated for him before he was martyred, “O Allah, have mercy on the lengthy qiyām during the extended nights, the weeping and thirst in the midday heat of Madīnah and Makkah, and his kindness to his father and to me. O Allah, I submit to You in his matter. And I am pleased with whatever decision You make regarding him. Reward me with the reward of the patient and grateful concerning ‘Abd Allāh.”<sup>5</sup>

### Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ

Sayyidunā Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه is from the Banū Umayyah. He had the great fortune of sitting in the blessed company of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. At the demise of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم, he was 9 years of age.<sup>6</sup>

He was from the elite Muslims and the famous magnanimous individuals. He was a tolerant and dignified gentleman. He had superb conduct and a magnificent heart. Sayyidunā Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه says, “The generous individual of Quraysh was Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ.” A woman came to the Nabī صلى الله عليه وسلم with a garment and said, “I vowed to give this to the most noble Arab.” Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم instructed her, “Give it to this boy,” pointing to Sa’īd.<sup>7</sup>

Sa’īd was one of ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه governors over Iraq. He was instated as governor by Sayyidunā ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه over Kūfah. He conquered Ṭabaristān and Jurjān. In his army were Ḥudhayfah and other Ṣaḥābah. He passed away in his palace in ‘Aqīq in 53 AH.<sup>8</sup>

Sayyidunā Sa’īd ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه proposed for Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Alī’s hand in marriage after the demise of her husband Sayyidunā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He sent to her 100 000 dirhams. Sayyidunā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه was happy with the proposal while Sayyidunā Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه disagreed with it. Due to this, Sa’īd did not get married to her declaring, “I will not enter into

1 *Al-Iṣābah*, vol. 4 pg. 81, 82.

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 6 pg. 483, 500, 501; *al-Iṣābah*, vol. 4 pg. 81.

3 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 6 pg. 481, 486, 487, 500.

4 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 6 pg. 488, 489.

5 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 6 pg. 503.

6 *Al-Iṣābah*, vol. 3 pg. 90; *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, vol. 4 pg. 49.

7 *Al-Iṣābah*, vol. 3 pg. 91, 92; *al-Bidāyah*, vol. 8 pg. 84 – 87.

8 *Al-Bidāyah*, vol. 8 pg. 84; *Al-Iṣābah*, vol. 3 pg. 90, 91.

something he (Ḥusayn) dislikes.” He did not take any of the wealth back.<sup>1</sup>

### ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith was ten years old at the demise of the Nabī ﷺ. His father passed away in the Plague of ‘Amwās in Shām in 18 AH. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ thereafter married ‘Abd al-Raḥmān’s mother Fāṭimah bint al-Walīd. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān thus grew up in the care of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and would say, “I never saw a guardian superior to ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb.”<sup>2</sup>

He was a noble, generous gentleman. Ibn Sa’d says, “He was one of the nobles of Quraysh.” He reports aḥādīth from the Nabī ﷺ but he did not hear directly from him. He participated in Jamal. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا would say, “Had I remained in my home rather than travelling to Baṣrah would be more pleasing to me than having ten children from Rasūlullāh ﷺ, each of them like ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām.”<sup>3</sup>

There is a difference of opinion on whether he saw Rasūlullāh ﷺ or not. Ibn Ḥajar prefers the first opinion. [Al-Iṣābah, 4/250]

### Conclusion

Before we conclude, let us present two statements of Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, appreciating the services of the Khulafā’ in compiling the Qur’ān. Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ states, “The one to receive the most reward in the compilation will be Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. May Allah ﷻ have mercy on Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, he was the first to gather the Book of Allah.” Sayyidunā ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ warned, “Do not speak with regards to ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ except that which is good. His act of copying the manuscripts was through our consensus. We applauded his opinion.”<sup>4</sup>

May Allah ﷻ reward the Ṣaḥābah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ who were instrumental in preserving the script of the Qur’ān with a most gracious reward and unite us with them in the Gardens of Paradise.

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العالمين

1 *Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’*, vol. 3 pg. 295.

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 7 pg. 6.

3 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, vol. 7 pg. 6; *al-Iṣābah*, vol. 5 pg. 24.

4 *Al-Itqān*, pg. 130, 133; *al-Maṣāḥif*, pg. 11, 12, 33.