

Episode 29

The collection of the Quran and the burning of the copies

Mohamed: My dear viewers, it is our pleasure to welcome you again to our program, "Questions About Faith", and we welcome our honorable guest, Reverend Zakaria Botros. You are most welcome.

F Zakaria: Thank you.

Mohamed: My dear viewers, in the previous episode we talked about the evidences of revelation. In this episode, however, we will be talking about the way the Bible was compiled, and how the Quran was compiled as well. Let me share some verses from the Bible that speak about the word of God: "For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." For our God examines the hearts and intentions. Our first question is: how was the Bible compiled in the form that we now have?

F Zakaria: From the beginning of the Bible, since the time of the Torah, that has been written through inspiration by Moses the prophet, we see that Moses emphasizes a very important fact, which was the reason that kept the Bible preserved. In the book of

Deuteronomy, written by Moses the prophet, it says: “Hear O Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words that I command you today shall be in your heart, you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Mohamed: *Who is meant by “Israel” here? Are we talking about modern day Israel?*

F Zakaria: Well, it is the people of God whom He intended to come through, to save mankind.

Mohamed: *So the word “Israel” here does not indicate modern day Israel?*

F Zakaria: No, not the Zionist State of Israel. Not the Zionists of today. I'm talking about the people of God, the same people that are mentioned by the Quran, the Jews. The Quran mentions them too. He goes on in Deuteronomy 11 to say: “Therefore you shall lay up these words of Mine in your heart and in your soul and bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Do you see

the focus and the emphasis on preserving the word of God and committing it to memory? Also, concerning the king: God commands, “You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses, one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you”, and when that king comes... Let's hear what he says to him: “Also as it shall be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this Law in a book from the one before the priests, the Levites”. So there was a book kept at the temple with the priests and the Levites from which he is supposed to copy, “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this Law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren”, and so on. So keeping the word of God and preserving it is a sure issue. Even the Quran bears witness to this fact. The Quran says about the people of the book, “They know the book just as they know their own children.” The book was always kept at the temple of the Jews. And the priests would read from it aloud to the entire nation. Even when they were taken into captivity, they had a way of keeping it in certain hidden chambers below the temple, so that when they returned from captivity they got it out. Ezra and Nehemiah, the same books. So the Holy Bible has been preserved. Also, in The New Testament, the disciples wrote about Christ certain epistles or letters and Gospels, that is, “Good News”, and copies of these were kept at churches. No one was allowed to tamper with them at all. And that's why the Bible was kept and preserved, even by the testimony of the Quran itself. There is not a single statement in the Quran directed toward the Bible the

Gospel (the Injeel), that it was distorted or altered or tampered with. I'm talking about the Gospel (the Injeel). But about the Torah, there is a verse that says some Jews lift out or distort words from their context. This talks about misrepresenting the meanings. But as to the New Testament, we do not find a single verse to the effect that it went through alteration, replacement, erasing or abrogation, or that any person tampered with it. And this is how God always kept His word unchangeable and unalterable.

Mohamed: So the copy that you are using now, is it identical to the older copies?

F Zakaria: Most definitely. But in order to delve into the subject of the old manuscripts we need an entire episode aside from what we're discussing today. Can we put this off till another time?

Mohamed: Yes, sure, God willing. There is another question; how was the Quran compiled?

F Zakaria: How the Quran was compiled. We know about the Bible, and now we come to the Quran. The Quran, in fact, according to what I read in the encyclopedias and the big reference books, they mention that the Quran has been compiled 4 times. The first time, they say it was compiled at the time of the prophet, during his lifetime. It was memorized in the minds of the companions, and they call this compilation in the minds, not written. But parts of it were written on parchments, and parchments were made of leather. Also on thin white rocks, palm tree fronts, and the shoulder bones of

ostriches. Hence, the Quran was not compiled at the time of Mohamed in book form. There was no Musshaf copy until his death in 632, which is the year 10 after Higura. So it had not been compiled in book form but it was memorized in the hearts or minds. The first compilation ever of it, in book form, was at the time of Abu Bakr Al Seddeek. When many of the memorizers of the Quran died in battles and wars, Omar advised Abu Bakr to compile the Quran in book form. Omar Ibn Al Khattab noticed that a big number of the memorizers of the Quran were killed in the Islamic wars, especially at the battle of Yamama, under Abu Bakr, in the year 11 after Higura. One year after the death of the messenger. Therefore, he rushed to Abu Bakr and requested of him to compile the Quran in one copy, lest it should be lost. Thereupon Abu Bakr assigned Zaid Ibn Thabet to accomplish this task, that is, the compilation of the Quran. This was accomplished, and the whole Quran was compiled in the 7 letters, that is, the different readings. The copy was kept at Abu Bakr's, then at Omar 's after him, then at Hafsa's, the daughter of Omar after he was killed. And it is to this copy that Uthman referred, when he authorized his own copy, and then he returned it to her. After Hafsa's death, Marawan Ibn Al Hakam, the ruler of Medina, seized this copy, which was considered the original reference of the Quran as Mohamed recited it. Then he destroyed it, tore it up, and obliterated it from existence. Who was that? Marawan Ibn Al Hakam. Where is this being told?

Mohamed: Excuse me, what year was that?

F Zakaria: Right after the death of Omar. *After Omar's death. Yes.* And of course, after Hafsa's death. You find this in Saheeh Al Bokhary, chapter of Al Fath, conquest, tradition number 4000. Also in Dala'el Al Nobowa by Al Bokhary, volume 3 page 277. Again in Al Siouty's book, "Al Etqan Fi Ulom Al Quran", volume 1 page 60. And in the book entitled "Al Masahef", by Al Sajestany. The book, "Al Masahef" . This won't be clear because of its glossy cover. So, this was the first instance of compilation of the Quran in a book.

Mohamed: *And it disappeared.*

F Zakaria: Well it was torn apart. It was destroyed by the hands of Marawan Ibn Al Hakam. Now we come to the most important compilation in history, which was carried out at the time of Uthman Ibn Affan's rule. Uthman saw that Muslims were killing each other because of the differences or contradictions among the 7 readings. You know that the Quran had 7 different readings, or letters. So he ordered the Quran to be recompiled, in the year 25 after Higra. So they compiled 7 different Qurans. He gathered the narrators and tried to collect all the different readings of the Quran. They came out with 7 different Qurans. Of course they had to refer to the copy that was gathered by Abu Bakr Al Seddeek, which was kept at Hafsa's before Marawan Ibn Al Hakam destroyed it. So what did Uthman do, confronted with 7 different Qurans or copies, and people were killing each other because of the contradictions therein? He wanted to put an end to the fight. So what did he do? He burned 6 copies, and kept only one copy. A very strange and peculiar act, a huge question mark. How

could 6 copies be burned and one only kept? This is a major issue that must be reconsidered. Now, Uthman's copy has no dots or vowelings;

Mohamed: No vowelings whatsoever.

F Zakaria: No vowelings. And no dots either. You can't recognize the "B" from the "T" from the "N", or from the "Y" or anything at all. You read that in the book by Al Sajestany, page 7. He made copies from this one copy, which was called the "chief copy". And it was sent to all the Islamic capitals at that time.

Mohamed: You say that Uthman burned 6 copies. How many copies were there in all? Were there more than 6 or 7?

F Zakaria: Oh, yes, a lot more. But let me talk about the compilation, and then please, remind me of this question.

Mohamed: O.K.

F Zakaria: Now, the Quran was compiled another time during the Omaiad dynasty. At that time the Arabic alphabet did not have vowels, and therefore the Omaiads in Iraq prepared a new copy of the Quran, fully voweled, in order to avoid reading mistakes. So now there is innovation. There were no vowels before. In the Brief Arabic Encyclopedia, this thick volume here... On page 690, it says, "When there were too many mistakes in the reading of the Quran..." I think if I look it up it would be more effective. Page 690. On this page, it says, "When there were too many mistakes in the reading of the

Quran, he assigned Nasr Ibn Assem to vowel it.” Who is it that? Al Hajaj Ibn Yussef Al Thaqafy. This happened in the year 660 ad, till 714. “And when there were too many mistakes in the reading of the Quran, he assigned to Nasr Ibn Assem to vowel it. And the latter was an eloquent orator who liked to use unfamiliar formidable words and to quote poems of that manner”. So Al Hajaj Ibn Yussef Al Thaqafy wrote up a new Quran with vowelings, with dots, and so on. This is written in the book by Al Sajestany, in all the books actually that have to do with the Quran and the science of the Quran. It says here regarding Al Hajaj Ibn Yussef Al Thaqafy, on page 49: Here, Al Hajaj changed, on page 49. These are very serious matters, and unfortunately, there is no awareness of them. Nobody really knows about them. Here is a chapter on what Al Hajaj Ibn Yussef has written in the Quran. Abd Allah narrated to us, that Al Sajestany narrated to us, that Abbad Ibn Sohaib narrated, that Al Hajaj Ibn Yussef has altered Uthman's copy in 11 instances. He said, they used to be in Surah 2 (Al Baqara). The words “Lam Yastasana” and “Onthor” were replaced by Lam Yastasnaho”. He goes on to list the alterations that he made, 11 letters were altered by Hajaj in the Quran. So, let me ask here, if I may say as a thinking human being, isn't the Quran in the preserved tablet, and wasn't it sent down from the preserved tablet. *It should be so.* And told him, “read”, and he said, “I can not read. Read, and your God is more generous than he who taught through the pen.

Mohamed: Yes, recite by the name of your God, who created...

F Zakaria: O.K., then. How could the letters themselves be altered? How could they be burned? How could they be destroyed? These are things that man must question, these things need to be settled. The Iraqi copy is considered the origin of the copies circulated nowadays throughout the Islamic world. You find this in a book by Al Siouty called “Al Etqan Fi Uloom Al Quran”, page 351. So much for the stages of the compilation of the Quran. It requires a lot of query. It is a subject for many questions. How can this conform to logic and with reason? And how is it compatible to the claim that this Quran is safeguarded in the preserved tablet, unchangeable, and yet we see all this happening to it? As a Muslim, whom would you give your life to? If there is a Muslim who would like to live the right kind of life that guarantees that he is on the right path that leads to eternal life, which he desires, and then he is confronted with all this scribbling. Which version will he follow? Which way to go? All this requires consideration.

Mohamed: *Well, back to the subject. You mentioned that Uthman burned six Musshaf copies. Were there more than six Musshafs, at that time?*

F Zakaria: Yes, to be frank with you, there were many. There were far too many. You find this in this specialized book by Al Sajestany. The author died in the year 613 after Hira. On all the pages of his book until page- all the book is 320 sorry 224, which is the last one, he mentions each Musshaf that was there and he gives us a summary of it. He lists all of the Musshafs that were there at the time. How many does he mention? He listed

26 Musshafs, or copies of the Quran that were in existence.

Mohamed: 26?

F Zakaria: He lists them by name, giving a little note about each one.

Mohamed: Would you please mention some of them?

F Zakaria: Yes, certainly I will. The Musshaf of Omar Ibn Al Khattab and that of Aly Ibn Abi Taleb the Musshaf of Obai Ibn Aby Ka'ab also Salem the slave of Hothayfa, the copy of Abd Allah Ibn Maso'od, the copy of Abo Moosa Al Asha'ary , the Musshaf of Abd Allah Ibn Omar, the Musshaf of Abo Zaid , the Musshaf of Ma'ath Ibn Gabal, and that of Abd Allah Ibn Abbas , Musshaf of Abd Allah Ibn Al Zobair, the Musshaf of Aisha , the Musshaf of Om Salma, the prophet's wife, the Musshaf of Obaid Ibn Omair Al Leithy, the Musshaf of Ayya' Ibn Aby Rabbah, the Musshaf of Akrama, the Musshaf of Mogahed, the Musshaf of Saeed Ibn Jobair , the Musshaf of Al Aswad Ibn Zaid, the Musshaf of Alqama Ibn Qais, the Musshaf of Mohamed Ibn Aby Moosa , the Musshaf of Hattan Ibn Abd Allah Al Raqashy, the Musshaf of Saleh Ibn Keesan, the Musshaf of Taha Ibn Masraf, and the Musshaf of Al A'amash. The funny thing about the whole situation, is that those Musshafs were not copies of the same Quran. No, not at all. Here is the evidence. Here, in the words of Al Sajestany, page 5, he says that Abd Allah Ibn Maso'od, who was a memorizer of the Quran. He memorized 70 Surahs from the messenger. He says that there are more

than 1,700 contradictions. 1,700 contradictions. Was this known or understood? Or was this then hushed up as well?

Mohamed: I wonder what happened to all those copies.

F Zakaria: Simply not there. *Not here any more.* He also cites a lot of the mistakes and contradictions. The 1,700. There are so many examples here. Here is one, for example, I found this in a book that was published in Kuwait. The book is entitled, “Lexicon of Quranic Readings”, “Mo’ogam Al Qera’at Al Qurania”, co-authored by 2 Islamic scholars, Doctor Abd Al Aal Salem Makram, and Doctor Ahmed Mokhtar Omar. The book was published by Dar Al Salasel in Kuwait, and was first printed in 1982, in six volumes. It has been published by the University of Kuwait itself. They say in the book, that a large number of the Musshaf copies had been written till the time of Uthman Ibn Affan, who ordered all variant copies of his authorized version to be burned. Such as the copy of Aly Ibn Abi Taleb and the one of Ibn Maood and Obai Ibn Ka’ab. And then he talks about ways of reading the Quran. There are seven ways, which are called the seven moltens, and three other ways that are called the integral, and four ways, which are called the irregular. He talks about the seven readings, that of Nafe’ and Qaloon, and so on. Now we come to the point, that readings differ in the following way, there are some contradictions here. In this book they even mention the types of differences. Number one: spelling differences. Number two: vowelizing differences. Number three: syntax or parsing differences. Number four: replacement of similar words. Number five: juxtaposition

differences. Number six: the addition or the deletion of certain words.

Mohamed: Reverend Father, before we run out of time, here is a question that says, “You say all things about the Quran and Islam, how about The Gospel? You have four Gospels. How do you answer that?”

F Zakaria: As a matter of fact, we don't call them four Gospels. They are four “Good News”, because the word Gospel is a Greek word that means, “good news”. So the Gospel is one, but the one who told the Good News, he took the Gospel and told it. We call him the evangelist. For example, Matthew. He wrote it originally in Hebrew, the same Gospel to the Jews. Mark did the same thing. Luke also told the Good News, and John told the Good News. But the Gospel itself is one in essence, because the topic is one, the subject is one, that is, the life and works of the Lord Jesus, as well as His vicarious death, and His salvation of mankind from sin, and His blood that was shed for mankind in order to provide a Way for salvation. The subject is only one, but this man went there and evangelized, and the other one went and evangelized somewhere else, and a third, there. So they were called by their names, the same way Surahs in the Quran have names. For example, the Surah of the cow, the Surah of the ants. Was there a cow who wrote up the Surah? Of course not. But this became the appellation of the Surah.

Mohamed: There are some other accusations that say the Gospels have differences among themselves. What do you say about that?

F Zakaria: Well, the accuser has to provide the evidence. If you tell me where the contradiction is, I will explain and clarify it. But let me mention a difference they always ask about - the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. You find it in Matthew in a certain way, that is different from the genealogy mentioned in Luke. Of course, if you read them, you see obvious contradiction. And they shout out loud, "Here is a contradiction!" Hold your peace, and try to understand the background before you pass judgments. Matthew wrote to the Hebrews. So he wrote down the genealogy of Christ in the legal way, because there used to be a law and a rule in the Old Testament, that if someone dies without having male children, his brother would marry his widow and the child born from this marriage would be written in the name of the dead brother, although in fact he is the son of the living one. So here you may have two different names for the father. This one may be his legal father according to the law, and this is his actual or natural father, because he is the one who married his sister-in-law and had this child from her. And there is also a line of genealogy through Joseph and another one through the Virgin Mary. So there are no real contradictions, they only seem apparent. But when you study, you find out the truth about them.

Mohamed: *A final question, and we have only 2 minutes to go. What do you want to say about this? We received so many questions, that the things you say sound very hostile toward Muslims and Islam. What do you have to say about that?*

F Zakaria: I say, well, that... my real motivation is love. There is not even a speck of hostility to any man.

To tell someone, “Please, get to know your way to eternity ...”, am I attacking him? I love him. It would be easy to let them go wherever they are going, but out of love for people so that they may not perish, I tell them to think, nothing more, nothing less.

Mohamed: So what you want to say to the Muslim now, is that you want him to open his eyes to the way to eternal life.

F Zakaria: Exactly. The way to save his own soul, because man is sinful by nature, and he is condemned to eternal death. God provided a Way to salvation and redemption, which is Christ, who came as a Redeemer. Why would you deny yourself the way to salvation? For no reason?

Mohamed: Thank you, Reverend Father. Dear viewers, the Lord Jesus says that: “many will come from the east and west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” My dear friends some of what has been said may be hurting and offensive. But it is really rather very sad, and some of the things we mentioned may sound funny. But sometimes the worst of disasters seems funny. God commands us to search the scriptures and test them. Therefore, my dear viewers, lift up your hearts to God and seek Him, to know the Divine Truth. Thank you. Until we see you again.

F Zakaria: Thank you so much.