



**Learning
The Holy Qur'an
by Heart**





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Learning the Holy Qur'an by Heart

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Foreword by Ayatollah Khamenei, the Eminent Leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful the Compassionate

It is one of the blessings of God to make a group of the best youths of this God-seeking and mature nation be attracted to the holy Qur'an. Properly appreciated, this would be the key to many closed gates and barred ways. Familiarity and intimacy with, contemplating, knowing by heart, and seeking guidance from the Book of God are the successive stages of holding fast to the Qur'an. Now that one of the successful youths- after choosing this way- has written, with the aid of God, a booklet for helping others, I thank God and express my sincere gratitude to this dear youth. May Allah favour him and all dear youths with His grace and guidance.

Sayyed Ali Khamenei
The Sacred Muharram 1413

A Glance at the Life and Character of Shahriyar Parhizgar

Shahriyar Parhizgar was born in Tehran in 1343 A.H. and brought up in a religious family. From the early childhood he eagerly listened to the sweet melody of the holy Qur'an, and his parents always encouraged him to participate in the sessions of Qur'anic recitation. He learned reading the holy Qur'an in a short time, and afterwards he found his way into the circles of the great teachers of the Qur'an.

Parhizgar- besides learning the method of reciting the Qur'an and the science of *tajwid*- simultaneously learned Arabic grammar and also began learning the holy Qur'an by heart, and in less than four years succeeded in memorizing the whole Qur'an.

In 1362 A.H. wherein the International Contest of Memorizing and Reciting the holy Qur'an was held in Tehran, Parhizgar was awarded the first prize for memorizing fifteen parts of the holy Qur'an. Moreover, he won the first prize for memorizing the whole Qur'an in the International Contest of Memorizing and Reciting the holy Qur'an in the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1366 A.H. The last Contest in which he

participated was the International Contests of Memorizing and Reciting the Qur'an in Saudi Arabia held in Mecca in 1371 A.H. In these contests he won the first prize for memorizing the whole Qur'an, which brought much honour to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Among the invaluable and enduring works of Mr Parhizgar is a complete recitation of the holy Qur'an, which is in *tartil* manner (reading the Qur'an in a slow and distinct manner) and has been broadcasted by the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Radio Qur'an many times. His method of recitation is now followed by thousands of people who know the holy Qur'an by heart.

Introduction

It is for some time that we have witnessed the rising of a Qur'anic wave in the expanse of our Islamic society. The sweet melody of this auspicious wave is very promising, and if continued it will no doubt have endless blessings in its wake. The frequent enthusiastic visits that young people and adolescents in love with the Qur'an pay to the experienced memorizers and reciters of the Qur'an and their humble requests concerning memorizing and reciting the holy Qur'an bring the glad tidings of the animating breeze blowing from the Qur'anic orchard. It is for a few years now that the number of the calls made to me for explaining the method of learning the holy Qur'an by heart has increased so considerably—each time, of course, out of duty I explained some points to my dear visitors—that I thought it would be better to have something written in this concern, as it might be of some use to the travellers of this luminous way.

What makes the prospect of the Qur'anic movement in this country more promising is the special

attention that the eminent leader gives to this holy subject, especially that he recently has repeatedly emphasised the importance and necessity of memorizing the holy Qur'an. It is due to the exceeding attention that his eminence gives to this subject that the present treatise is honoured by the invaluable foreword of this grand teacher of the holy Qur'an, may God safeguard him, which no doubt will be a great encouragement for all the learners in this splendid path. May God support him with His added confirmation and make us grateful of the grace of his blessed presence.

Meanwhile, I have to express my gratitude to Ayatollah Khaz'ali, who himself is a great knower of the holy Qur'an by heart, for his kindness and invaluable suggestions; I ask the Bountiful God to add to his achievements.

At the end I would like to thank the honourable publisher and also my dear brother Reza Najafi who accepted the trouble at different stages of publishing this book. I dedicate this treatise to the epoch-making troops of the Mobilisation, the guardians and defenders of the sanctuary of the Word of Allah.

Shahriyar Parhizgar

In the Name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate

The Virtues of Memorizing and Reciting the Qur'an

Praise is to God who sent down the Qur'an in which there is a healing and a mercy for the believers though it increases the wrongdoers only in loss. God's blessings and greetings are due to His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in God and His Words, and to his chosen righteous household, the people of remembrance who have the knowledge of the Book. May God bless them all.

Concerning the holy Qur'an as well as the holiness, importance and virtue of reading it much has been said and many books have been written, but no doubt the best statements about the Qur'an have been delivered by the Prophet of God (whose blessed heart has been the centre of the revelation of the Qur'an), may God bless him and his household, the infallible Imams and the owner of the true knowledge of the Qur'an. Therefore, there is indeed no need on our behalf to write a few lines explaining the merits of this glorious Book, for what they have said in this regard would be sufficient. Concerning the recitation of the holy speech of God, certain verses in the Qur'an itself emphatically stress the necessity of the constant reading and

intimacy with the speech of God. Consider, for example, and think a little about the last verse of the blessed Sura *Muzzammel*, where we read, "Recite of the Qur'an so much as is feasible. He knows that some of you are sick ... So recite of it so much as is feasible". That is, the Exalted God knows that some of us would be afflicted with illness and disease, and some others- to gain their livelihood- have constantly to be on a journey, facing problems and difficulties, while some others who are fortunate enough would be busy defending the sanctuary of Islam and fighting the enemies of the religion for the sake of God (and people in all of these states would, in one way or another, be in pain and trouble). However, none of these problems should hinder us from intimacy and companionship with the Word of God, and in all these circumstances we should recite the Qur'an as much as we can.

Indeed in difficult situations mentioned in the verse, man's need of the Qur'an and his intimacy with its splendid verses would be more than that in normal and ordinary conditions. Note that the emphasis of the sacred verse is on the word 'recitation'. In the holy Qur'an no subject is so much emphasized or encouraged, and this manifests the virtue of the Qur'an in its best way. It suffices here to know that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his household, has said, "The Qur'an is superior to

everything other than Allah,” and we should look at the holy Qur'an from such a point of view. One of the issues to which the infallible Imams, peace be upon them, have given a special attention in their speech is that of learning the Qur'an by heart, which is the subject of our discussion here. It would be very appropriate to bless our writing by relating some traditions in this regard.

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his household, has said, “Whoever knows the Qur'an by heart and then imagines that Allah would not forgive him, he would be one of those who mocks the verses of Allah.” This splendid speech of the holy Prophet, peace be upon him and his household, is indeed the loftiest statement of the virtue of learning the Qur'an by heart, and has an amazing and constructive message for those who know the speech of God by heart.

The next tradition is given by Imam Jafar bin Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace be upon him. He states, “Recite the Qur'an and learn it by heart, for certainly Allah would not chastise a heart that has contained the Qur'an.” He also declares “He who learns the Qur'an by heart and acts according to it is among the honoured righteous ambassadors [of God]” (*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 441)

The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, has said, “The number of the grades of paradise is equal to the number of the verses of the Qur'an. Therefore,

when the man of the Qur'an enters the paradise he is told to recite and to ascend, for there is a grade for each verse; however, there will be no higher grade than his who has learned the Qur'an by heart."

Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, in his invocation of God states, "O Allah! Endear to us the beauty of its recitation and learning its verses by heart" (*Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 417).

The above holy traditions show most clearly the value and importance of the Qur'an for the household of the Prophet, peace be upon them.

Perhaps observing these traditions, the respected reader would ask, "Why is all this emphasis on knowing the holy Qur'an by heart?" Of course, we do not claim that we know the real answer to this question. It is very likely that the immaculate Imams, peace be upon them, who are immersed in the sea of the truths of the Qur'an, have certain knowledge and wisdom, and know of some secrets which are imperceptible to our intellects.

However, the point which comes to mind in this concern is that the Imams of guidance, peace be upon them, are the most familiar with and aware of the spiritual diseases and afflictions of the human beings; on the other hand, it would be very hard to the same Imams, who are the most concerned with the well-being of all people in general and the faithful in

particular, to see the believers afflicted, in pain and ill. Therefore, to relieve their followers from worries, anxieties and spiritual agonies, and to bring to their soul and mind confidence, tranquillity and peace, they ask them to make their hearts a clean place and container for the luminous verses of the Qur'an. And is not the Qur'an a remembrance—"and this is a blessed Remembrance that We have sent down" (*Anbia*, 50)—and does not the peace of the hearts lie in remembrance—"verily in the remembrance of Allah the hearts are at rest" (*Raad*, 28)—and turning away from the remembrance of God entails a difficult life filled with miseries and problems—"and whosoever turns away from My remembrance his shall be a life of narrowness" (*Taha*, 124)? Is it not that the holy verses of this invaluable Book, into which falsehood cannot penetrate from any side, a healing and well-being for the afflicted hearts—"O people, now there has come to you an admonition from your Lord, and a healing for what is in the breasts" (*Yunus* 57)? Therefore, the chest which contains the Qur'an and observes the limits assigned by the Qur'an will be immune from contracting such diseases and will always have a way out of the difficulties. He who possesses this divine gift deserves to be happy and cheerful, for it is better and superior to all other things which men gather to bring themselves welfare and prosperity, as they would like to assume: "Say in the bounty of God, and His mercy-

in that let them rejoice; it is better than that they amass”(Yunus,58).

The other issue is that the existence of the memorizers of the Qur'an in every age is itself one of the noticeable factors in preserving and maintaining the holy Qur'an and keeping it safe from the manipulation, corruption or alteration of its sacred words. For were the Qur'an only written on paper and not preserved in the chests of the Muslims in each age, the enemies of Islam would have dared gradually and over generations to change some of its letters or words, or at least they could have induced some differences among the different editions of the Qur'an, which would result in disagreement and disunity in the Muslim community. However, the existence of certain individuals who have received the Qur'an transmitted heart by heart from their ancestors, and in turn they transmit it to future generations, is itself a strong guarantee for the infallibility of this divine Book, as the Exalted God Himself has promised to preserve it from any alteration or corruption. No doubt, were there no such risk of corruption, such a promise would not have been necessary: “It is We who have sent down the Remembrance, and We watch over it”(Hijr,9). The existence of the memorizers of the Qur'an is one of the means for realizing this divine promise and law, for the All-Wise God has determined that everything has to be realized through certain means and instruments. It is also

important to know that though the ultimate goal of knowing the holy Qur'an is to put its humanitarian orders into practice, it is one of the urgent duties of the Muslims to consider the appearance of this glorious Book and its eloquent and miraculous words. On the other hand, it can be said that the highest manifestation of any Muslim's interest in and concern for the speech of the Exalted God is shown in memorizing it and giving its bright and sacred words a place in the heart and soul. In this respect nothing can replace learning the Qur'an by heart. This is the least benefit that the memorizer of the Qur'an will gain. The intimacy and familiarity of the memorizer of the Qur'an with the speech of God are often more than that of others, and the joy the former experiences in being close to the Qur'an and from its recitation is less experienced by others.

It is important to point out here that knowing the holy Qur'an by heart would manifest its bright effects and would become the medicine to all pains, while making its owner achieve unimaginable degrees mentioned in the traditions, only when it is done with a pure divine intention and with due understanding of the speech of God. Such a memorizer, according to traditions, may even intercede for others, and by reciting each verse would ascend a higher level in paradise. May God make us one of them.

Imam al-Baqir, peace be upon him, in one tradition divides the carriers of the Qur'an into three groups.

Some recite the Qur'an and make it a means to gain their living, approach the kings, and boast to people. Some others among the carriers of the Qur'an only consider its letters and ignore its laws. May God not increase the number of such people. The third group of the carriers of the Qur'an cure their intellectual and spiritual illnesses with its healing orders, enjoy reciting the Qur'an during night and day, and it is their source of inspiration in the scenes of life, and because of their intimacy with the Qur'an they leave their comfortable beds. It is because of the blessed existence of this group of reciters and carriers of the Qur'an that God removes misery from societies and sends down the rain of His blessing. Indeed if learning the Qur'an by heart induces such characteristics and aspirations, it is worth spending the whole life memorizing and reciting it. This is why in the life of the eminent Prophet of Islam, peace be upon him and his household, we come across certain episodes which show his wonderful consideration and respect for the memorizers of the Revelation (See *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2). One of these episodes is that when the battle of Uhud ended and the Muslims began burying their martyrs, the Prophet ordered those martyrs who knew the Qur'an by heart to be buried in front of other martyrs. In this strategy of the Prophet there is a subtle point whose meaning is evident to the respectable reader.

On another occasion we read in the history of the

beginning of Islam that the Prophet prefers a leader for the Muslim troops who knows the Qur'an by heart to other people, and on another he chooses Musaab ibn Umair as the first preacher of Islam in Madina because of his good knowledge of the Qur'anic verses. Finally our leader Ali ibn Abi Talib, the talking Qur'an, is the first memorizer and compiler of the Qur'an, who was and is and will be the exemplary leader of all true memorizers of the Qur'an. Muhammad Amin Nawawi, the famous Sunni scholar, says, "Ali, peace be upon him, learned the whole Qur'an by heart, and understood its secrets; it blended with his flesh and blood, and the reader can see that in *Nahj al-Balaghah*."

Here we have to refer to a certain point. The truth is that unlike the question of the recitation of the Qur'an which by the bounty of Allah is being treated well in our dear Islamic country, and wonderful progress has been made in this field, unfortunately the important subject of learning the Qur'an by heart has not given its due consideration, though there are many considerably and even highly talented people in our country. On the other hand, everybody recognises the significance of learning the Qur'an by heart, which results in intimacy and familiarity with the assuring speech of the Exalted God, and the vital significance of this discourse for the society and especially the young generation, and in the present conditions in particular. For according to the

holy verse “they desire that you should also err from the way”(Nesa'44) and “Satan promises you poverty and bids you unto indecency”(Baqara, 268). The devils are definitely seeking the corruption and the destruction of the soul and the mind of the Muslim youths. Hence, there is the necessity of taking serious and immediate measures and actions, and the composition of this treatise is perhaps a small step in the way of reaching such a great goal.

And you dear brother and sister who read these lines! No doubt, considering the issues mentioned here and the traditions narrated from the household of the Prophet on the virtue of learning the Qur'an by heart, you will have a strong and pure motivation to attain this great bounty of God, but at this moment you may ask how you can learn the Qur'an by heart. The treatise you have in hand deals with this question. In different parts of this treatise we will discuss certain points, which will make memorizing the Qur'an for the interested learners, much easier, God willing.

Can a Person with Common Intelligence and Talent Learn the Qur'an by Heart?

Before beginning to discuss the main subject, it is necessary to mention certain points, which most likely come to the mind of every reader. Can people with common and average intelligence and talent manage

learning the Qur'an by heart, or the task perhaps needs an extraordinary memory and talent and it is not the business of every body to achieve this goal? In answer we must say all those with common memory and talent can achieve this goal and memorize the Qur'an. For both in our dear Islamic country and in other places of the Islamic world we see countless people, and I personally know many of them, who have learned the Qur'an by heart, and almost all of them have average intelligence and memory, and in this respect are not extraordinary individuals. This is why I say it is possible for every ordinary individual to learn the Qur'an by heart.

It is also narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, that "Whoever tries to learn the Qur'an and because of his weak memory learns it with difficulty has a double reward." This indicates that despite the differences among people in respect of the strength of their memory, all people can learn the Qur'an by heart, and the person who has relatively a weaker memory can memorize the Qur'an by enduring more difficulty and exerting more effort, and as a result he will be doubly rewarded.

Is There an Age Limit for Learning the Qur'an by Heart?

The other question is that is it possible to begin learning the Qur'an by heart at any age, or there is an

age limit in this regard? In reply we must say that though the power of human memory in adolescence and childhood is greater and more prepared than what it is in middle or old age, this does not mean after one's prime there is no possibility of learning the Qur'an by heart. It is not so at all. The presence of certain individuals who started learning the Qur'an by heart at an older age, and by their strong will overcame all the obstacles, and with great love and interest found their way to this treasure shows that for man there is no age limit, especially when there is a divine motivation behind his endeavour. Of course, we always emphatically recommend that learning the Qur'an by heart should start in childhood or adolescence, for then man's memorized material will be greatly firm and permanent and will persist to the end of life, and this has been proved by experience. Here we should have a reference to the following point.

I personally know many people, who with a great interest aim at learning the Qur'an by heart, and some of them have been engaged in this work for sometime, and even some have learned a considerable part of the Qur'an by heart. However, unfortunately those who aimed at learning did not achieve much, and those who achieved something has stopped in the middle of the way and did not go any further, and failed despite their willingness. Why could not these interested friends

manage going on with learning? Perhaps it is because they did not commit themselves to following a definite programme for learning the Qur'an by heart. And why did not they commit themselves to following a daily programme for learning the Qur'an by heart? This could be due to different reasons. First, it is likely that they could not believe their ability for learning the Qur'an by heart, and think this is beyond the limit of their capacity. Imagining the great magnitude of the holy Qur'an causes some to think that learning it by heart is impossible. My recommendation is that these people should not consider the magnitude of the work to be done, nor should they expect to accomplish learning the Qur'an by heart in one or a few nights. Many of the learners of the Qur'an by heart at the beginning of their carrier were not confident that one day they would succeed in memorizing the Qur'an (though they really intended doing this tremendous job). However, instead of considering the huge magnitude of the work, and consequently becoming disappointed, with great hope and interest and having their trust in the Exalted God, they began to memorize the assigned verses, though not many, for each day, and waited eagerly for the coming of another day to learn new verses, and with much endeavour and persistence in this way finally they accomplished the task successfully.

The other reason could be that they were not familiar with the systematic method of learning the Qur'an by heart, and as a result, despite much effort and spending a lot of time, they felt that they had not accomplished much in this regard, and this in turn led to their disappointment and finally to their abandonment of the rest of the work.

The other reason is related to the degree of interest in learning the Qur'an by heart. Some people are interested in memorizing the Qur'an, but not to the extent of devoting a part of their best time seriously and daily to this invaluable work, but they give it perhaps the same value they give to other works or sometimes even less. So they do not give a useful or a definite time to this subject; rather they engage in this work now and then and erratically, and therefore we should not expect complete success.

However, when a person begins learning the Qur'an by heart without apprehension of the magnitude of the work, or rather with self-confidence and by following a correct method, spending enough time, and at the same time persist in this work for some time, he will find confidence and much interest in this task, and God willing he will succeed in memorizing the Qur'an with determination and enthusiasm to the end.

Prerequisites for Learning the Qur'an by Heart

Having mentioned the above points, we discuss here some other points, which in fact are the spiritual and intellectual preliminary requirements for memorizing the Qur'an, and it is very important to consider them.

1. Intention

No doubt, the value of any righteous deed is determined by the intention of doing it. Therefore, the importance and necessity of having a pure intention and purpose, devoid of any association or hypocrisy is clear and evident, and needs no further clarification. Considering the virtue of learning the Qur'an by heart and the excellence of the memorizer of the Qur'an which has been explained repeatedly in various traditions, the desire to reach a treasure of light, an endless ocean of truths and subtle points, seeking the pleasure of continuous intimacy and companionship with the speech of God, and understanding the lofty otherworldly stations which traditions promise the true memorizers of the Qur'an can be effective in inducing a divine intention and a pure motivation in this concern. Of course, we should take care that we should then not fall into obsession, nor should considering the dubious things prevent us from this virtuous deed, namely learning the glorious verses of the speech of God by heart.

The other point is that this issue as we understand it does not apply to children and adolescents, and we should remember that giving them a strong motivation for learning the Qur'an by heart should be done in another way. There is nothing wrong with giving them their favourite prizes and gifts to encourage and motivate them, and even these methods sometimes become completely necessary. Of course, as these dear ones grow up they might be acquainted gradually and in an appropriate way with the aim of learning the Qur'an by heart.

2. Determination

Some people may show much interest in learning the Qur'an by heart and even intend to begin this work, but they neither have the required determination nor the firm will to pursue this subject. Determination and will are not equal to interest and intention. Intention only means the desire to do something, but determination is certainly followed by ability, and in fact it is the mobilization of all one's powers and abilities to realize a certain matter. The distinguishing sign of determination and will is seriousness in practice and giving the work its due priority.

3. Trust in the Divine Eternal Power

Every true believer knows he is never independent

of the help and support of God, and that in all concerns his success is dependent on His kindness and bounty. Such an attitude and dependence on this Power no doubt make the accomplishment of such a task easy. Of course, trust in God and waiting for the divine support come in the wake of man's determination. The Qur'an states, "When you are resolved, put your trust in God"(*Al-o-Imran*, 159).

4. Supplication

The Exalted God says in the Qur'an, "Say: My Lord esteems you not at all were it not for your prayer"(*Forghan*, 77) To succeed in learning the Qur'an by heart, calling for the attention and the special care of the Exalted God, or, in other words, supplication is very good and helpful.

In this regard a lofty supplication has been related from Jafar bin Muhammad al-Sadiq, peace be upon him which if it is read with due attention to its high concepts, it will have a great effect in uplifting man's spirits in memorizing the Qur'an. This sublime prayer is related in the fourth volume of *Usul al-Kafi*, the 'Book of Prayer', the first tradition of the chapter 'Supplication for Learning the Qur'an by Heart'.

Before treating the main subject of this book it is necessary to remember that adequate knowledge of the

recitation of the holy Qur'an, fluency in reading it, and to a certain extent knowledge of *tajwid* (art of reciting the Qur'an) even in an introductory level, are the most preliminary requirements for learning the Qur'an by heart.

If the learner does not have enough knowledge of the correct recitation and fluency in reading the Qur'an, the difficulty of memorizing the verses would be multiplied. Moreover, some of the words would enter the memory in an incorrect form, which is undesirable, while correcting them later on will cause many problems. What is certain is that if the memorizer of the divine verses besides learning the Qur'an by heart knows *tajwid* and has a sweet tone, or in other words he can recite the Qur'an beautifully and pleasantly, he will not only have deeper effects on his society but also gain more personal benefits. In fact, the acts of memorization, recitation and reading are supplementary, and each of them without the others will be inadequate and will have weaker effects. Therefore, listening carefully and deeply to the cassettes of Qur'anic recitation, and especially slow and melodious recitation (= *tartil*), is seriously and emphatically recommended to the learners of the Qur'an by heart.

Which Edition of the Qur'an should We Use to Learn the Qur'an by Heart?

Choosing an edition of the Qur'an with good printing and appropriate in all respects is an effective factor in facilitating and accelerating the memorization. The chosen Qur'an should be simple, provided with beautiful calligraphy, perfectly readable, along with precise grammatical inflections, less ornamented, yet without error, and that its letters and words should not be badly written. Moreover, for those who are not familiar with the meaning of the Qur'an, it would be better to have a fluent and an eloquent word-by-word translation. The credibility of the verse numbers of this Qur'an is also important. Editions with colourful and decorated pages should be avoided as much as possible. Moreover, editions with completely white papers exhaust the eyes. Finally it is recommended to have different volumes in different sizes of the Qur'an you have chosen, so that besides memorizing the Qur'an at home, you may use your time in the best way by employing the smaller Qur'an in suitable places outdoors.

It is important to note that during the time you are engaged in learning the Qur'an by heart you should not use different editions of the Qur'an at all, for in that case certain problems will gradually be created for the mind, and the pictures of the verses, the pages and the

places of the words in the different editions will mix with each other, and in consequence some verses will not find their definite and certain place in the page of the mind. This will no doubt cause some problems; therefore, try to memorize the verses by using only one edition of the Qur'an.

The Necessity of Careful and Exact Planning for Learning the Qur'an by Heart

After choosing the right edition of the Qur'an, one of the most important and necessary tasks of the learner is to plan an organized and calculated daily programme, while taking into consideration the level of his ability, the readiness and the time at his disposal and thereafter one should assign a certain number of verses to memorize every day. However, it should be noted that the learner himself should specify the appropriate time and conditions rather than wait for them, and he should never feel helpless or unable to plan for himself because of the difficulties of life. Considering the change in the amount of the useful time at his disposal due to the increase or decrease of daily activities, in some days the learner's free time may be as many times as that of other days; therefore, limiting oneself to a single definite programme would end in losing valuable hours. Similarly, lacking in order or a programme will no doubt hinder his progress in learning. Therefore, it is

worthwhile to plan a programme with defined minimum and maximum limits; that is, on one hand the learner would be committed to learning by heart a definite number of verses, and on the other hand when he finds more free time he can memorize some more verses. However, it should be noted that the maximum amount should not be too much or too exhausting. In other words, the learner should never memorize to satiety, or rather should always hunger for and wait forward for the next programme. Basically for learning the Qur'an by heart, it is better to proceed mildly and gradually. Having heavy programmes for this purpose for most people ends with loss of enthusiasm and interest and in consequence failure, and it is then very important to observe this point. Evidently it would be better to make the number of the pages the basis of our planning rather than the number of the verses, for the length of different verses differs considerably. We have both a 130-word verse and a one-word verse, but the pages of the Qur'an in regard to the number of the words are more or less equal. We may also memorize the verses on the basis of the sections (=rukuaat) of the Qur'an. In some editions of the Qur'an the mark “ع” is inserted at the end of some verses, which indicates the end of a single section (*ruku'*) of the verses of the Qur'an. The size of different sections [*rukuaat*] of the Qur'an is almost the same. For example, you may plan

to memorize half or one page or one section (*ruku'*) of the Qur'an you have chosen. Naturally if the learner continues following this plan, the process of memorization will proceed successfully. Of course, what is important is that he should not miss or divert from his programme even for one day, for disorder in this kind of work may cause the disintegration of the whole action.

The Role of Concentration in Preparing the Mind

The total concentration of the mind and clearing it from all kinds of intellectual engagement while learning the verses of the Qur'an by heart is one of the essential and very important factors for succeeding in this field. When a person spends one hour memorizing the holy verses of the Qur'an with an empty and disengaged heart, he would be much more successful than a person who tries for hours with a disconcerted heart and ideas that take him to different worlds. Concentration means fixing the attention and focusing on a single particular subject (for example, learning the verses of the Qur'an by heart), and preventing one's attention from diverting to other subjects; in other words it is to stop the external thoughts from penetrating or occupying the mind. Naturally when other thoughts enter the mind, the subject of our concern will necessarily leave it. Indeed this

concentration of the mind is the most important question in memorizing the Qur'an and in general in all other intellectual activities.

Of course, this task will be difficult somehow at the beginning and needs practice and exercise. The clear example of the distraction of the mind can be seen sometimes in performing the daily prayers, which happens due to the absent-mindedness, so much that some people cannot maintain the presence of their heart for more than a few moments during the whole prayer, nor prevent other thoughts from entering the mind. In fact, the presence of the heart throughout the prayers is itself a kind of concentration, and it means the complete attention of the mind that it is standing in the presence of the Exalted God, a state which needs much effort to achieve. As regards learning the Qur'an by heart, such concentration and attention are also very necessary.

What to Be Done to Have Concentration during Learning the Qur'an by Heart?

A. Eliminating Factors that Cause Mind Distraction

All natural factors which can distract the mind, such as hunger and thirst, should be eliminated, since usually a person who feels very hungry or thirsty and his body needs water and food cannot concentrate his mind well

to memorize the Qur'an; similarly if he has eaten too much he cannot do that, or rather memorization in this case will be more difficult. Besides hunger and thirst there are other factors which may lead to distraction, such as fatigue, anxiety, and anger. Therefore, the learner should never try to memorize the Qur'an in such states. In any case, eliminating such factors will affect the quality of learning the Qur'an by heart, and observing this requirement is necessary for the learner of the Qur'an by heart.

B. Suitable Place

The memorizer of the Qur'an needs a solitary and silent place. Crowded and gaudy places that are frequented by many people are one of the factors of distraction. In general silence, solitude, simplicity and plainness are among the fundamental characteristics of the place of recitation and memorization. If -while working- the learner has to listen to the radio for a few seconds, speak to the persons who enter the room, leave the room to drink water, answer the telephone now and then, look at the surroundings through the window, look at the yard or even his room, evidently he will have no concentration. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce these factors to minimum so that he can memorize the verses easily. Considering the effect of oxygen on the brain cells, and in consequence on intellectual activities, we

should avoid memorizing the Qur'an in places whose air is polluted, dusty, smoky or humid, and as much as possible we should possess an environment with healthy and fresh air.

C. Suitable Time

As a general rule, dawn is the best time for memorization, that is, early morning before or after morning prayers. For in respect of readiness for beginning an activity the mind will then be in its most suitable state when the person has already had some hours of perfect rest, and naturally this rule also applies to memorizing the Qur'an. Of course, the time of memorization should not be limited to morning or dawn; rather, all favourable mental conditions at any time of the day or night may be used. Psychologists believe it would be better to memorize the material during fixed hours of the day, because if this work is done at fixed and definite hours, the mind will get used to doing the recording and registering at these special hours, and as a result it will memorize the material more quickly and easily, and this is proved by experience. Of course, it should be noted that the learner should never try to memorize the Qur'an after a heavy intellectual and mental activity. Another important point associated with learning the Qur'an by heart is that before memorizing the Qur'an, the learner

should always give a few minutes to clear the mind from diverting issues and thoughts, and he must not engage himself all at once and with no preparation in memorizing the Qur'an. The religious orders regarding daily prayers are the same; it is recommended that before beginning the prayers, certain preliminary supplications are to be read which are very effective in making the worshipper ready to start the ritual prayers.

The other important point is dividing the time of memorization throughout the day. It is proved scientifically and experimentally that if we memorize the subject at different temporal intervals, we will gain better results in comparison with doing the work all at once and continuously. Therefore, if for example you assign two hours to memorizing the Qur'an every day, these two hours should not be continuous and all at once, but rather you had better divide them into two one-hour sessions with a convenient interval between them. In that case you will have better results from your time. It is necessary to note, however, that the stated temporal and spatial characteristics, in fact, depict an ideal and perfect state and situation for memorizing the Qur'an, and providing these conditions will certainly have noticeable effects in the success of the interested person. However, we do not mean that in the absence of some of these conditions the work of learning the Qur'an by heart should be abandoned. Basically there is

no absolute limitation in time or space for this work, though such limitation relatively exists, in the sense that depending on the presence or absence of the ideal conditions the degree of progress of the work will be different.

D. Performance of Ablution at the Time of Learning the Qur'an by Heart

Performing ablution in all times is good and recommended, and observing this ritual at the time of reciting and memorizing the holy Qur'an is extremely valuable and itself is one of the causes of concentration. The Qur'an is a light—as God states, “We sent down to you a manifest light for you” (*Nisa* 174), and because ablution itself is also a light, it can to a certain extent prepare the bowl of man's soul for receiving and accommodating the luminous verses of the speech of God.

Moreover, try as much as you can to memorize the Qur'an while your face is towards Mecca, for besides its inherent virtue, basically being in the same direction and especially in a definite place at the time of memorization has some benefit. Here we relate a part of a tradition narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, which explains the necessary conditions of the reciter and the carrier of the Qur'an. Imam al-Sadiq announces that “The reader of the Qur'an needs three things: a soft or humbled heart, a free body, and a

solitary place.” No doubt a person who gathers all these three conditions will gain the desired results from the light of the speech of God, and the moments of recitation will be enjoyable for him. Now that we have understood to a certain extent the factors effective in inducing concentration and the way to use opportunities, it is time to become familiar with the correct method of memorizing the verses.

The Method of Memorizing the Verses of the Holy Qur'an

To memorize a medium-length Sura of the Qur'an and especially a long one it is better to divide that Sura first into some groups of verses, and second memorize each group separately, and finally attach it to the preceding group of verses. Of course, there is no need to memorize the whole verses of one group in one session; what is important is that you put them in one group in your mind. In this way the size of the Sura will appear smaller, and you will have a better command and power over it. Try as much as possible to choose the related verses for learning by heart. For example, to memorize the Sura *Naba*, you can divide the Sura into three groups of verses, so that the first group will be verses 1 to 16, which mainly deal with the explanation of the natural phenomena, and the second group, verses 17 to 30, which describe the Resurrection and the state of the

people of chastisement, and finally the third group, verses 30 to the end of the Sura.

Now let us suppose that according to a well-planned programme and after observing all the points mentioned so far you intend to memorize some verses. For a preliminary and a general familiarity with the verses, you initially must recite the assigned verses several times carefully and slowly. Those who can read the Qur'an with due consideration for rules of *tajwid* and with a beautiful tone, they may especially recite the verses inquiringly and may look carefully and deeply into the words and the diacritical marks. For besides preventing any subsequent mistake in memorizing the words and the diacritical marks, this gives a general idea of the assigned verses to the reader, which in itself is an important factor in facilitating the memorization.

Learning by heart is indeed nothing other than looking carefully and attentively into the individual words and letters and accommodating them in the mind. A person who recites the Qur'an goes through the words quickly and successively, but a person who learns the Qur'an by heart pauses and thinks over each word to settle and fix it in the storage of his mind.

To memorize a short verse, you must recite it several times, each time focusing perfectly on every letter and word of it. Of course, the number of the times of repeating the verse differs according to the power of

the learner's memory and the difficulty or simplicity of the verses. Some people memorize a short verse perhaps only by reading it thrice, while some others need more repetitions. Naturally by reading a verse several times (of course with the intention of memorizing it and accompanied with due consideration and meditation rather than a regular reading) a large quantity of its words will settle in the mind, but still the verse itself may not be completely fixed in the mind. Now the verse must be read with the help of the memory and without further looking into the Qur'an.

Perhaps now you may face some difficulties due to inability to remember some words or letters. In each section that you stalk and cannot find the intended word in your mind, consult the Qur'an and look for that word and try to attach it to your memory and repeat it several times by heart, and do the same with the rest of the verse, until you can recite the whole verse by heart easily and perfectly. Now recite the verse at least five times by heart to become sure that you have memorized it. What is important is that you should be able to recite the memorized verse fluently and easily rather than with difficulty and problems.

Our very important recommendation is that unless you memorize the verse perfectly and securely, you should not go for the subsequent verse. Neglecting this point will definitely cause some trouble. Basically

Islamic teachings prevent man from performing the tasks and duties superficially, hurriedly, carelessly or without accepting the challenges and the difficulties.

Now that you have finished memorizing the first verse and are certain of its correctness and firmness, you can go for the next verse and memorize it in the same way mentioned already. After completely memorizing the verse, now you return to the first verse and recite it by heart to see whether you still can read it well and fluently or in this interval some problems have happened. If there is a problem, you should solve it first and then recite both the first and the second verses by heart.

After that you should start memorizing the third verse, and once that is done, as was said above, recite the second and the third verses together and attach them to your memory. You apply the same method in regard to other verses until the assigned verses come to an end.

Now it is necessary to recite by heart all the assigned verses together considering their order and sequence, and if you come across some difficulties you should consult the Qur'an to remove them, and again by repeating the verses try to memorize them. In fact, memorizing a verse is like carving an image on a stone. The more fundamental and deeper the memorization is, the deeper and more secure this image will be, and it will last for a longer time as well.

In other words, each repetition for memorizing a verse or a part of it should leave a deeper image or effect on the mind, and only in that case the repetitions and reviews would be useful; this, however, would be possible only by total concentration and attention of the mind, which was discussed in detail before. This point also exactly applies to reviewing the verses, which is important to consider and we will discuss later. We should also keep in mind that it is necessary that the exact image of the place of each verse and even each word of the verse on the page should be transmitted to the mind, and for this purpose the learner at the time of memorizing or reviewing the verses should have a close look at the printed words of the Qur'an, and this point should be taken seriously.

We emphasised that besides memorizing each single verse, the order of the verses should also most carefully be kept in mind. For you may learn each of the verses by heart but still you may not be able to read them in order and successively; the point mentioned before, namely reading the first, the second, the third, and the fourth verses together after learning them by heart refers to this matter.

It is important to note that to memorize the order of two successive verses we can do one of the following two things:

The first is to memorize carefully the initial part of the two verses and their succession so that only by referring to our memory at any time we know the verse that follows the verse in question; here the work depends only on the mind and the memory. The second is- by linking the last part of the verse in point to the beginning of the next verse and repeating those two parts- to establish an association between the two successive verses, so that on reading the ending part of the verse automatically the beginning of the next verse will be suggested. It seems the first method is more certain while the second method is easier, and no doubt combining the two methods would be more substantial. The case would be the same in regard to memorizing only a single verse. That is, there are two kinds of memorization: memorization which is purely mental and another kind which is based on repetition.

Two Common Methods of Memorizing the Verses of the Qur'an

Basically there are two main methods to memorize and review the holy verses of the Qur'an which might be useful to explain here.

Some ground their method on the successive, frequent and naturally quick repetition of the verses, as some learners are seen reviewing up to ten parts of the Qur'an every day, or they repeat each verse quickly

tens of times to memorize it. In that case the power of the memory will have no important role, and the main factor in memorizing and reviewing the verses would be the successive and very frequent verbal repetition; evidently in this method the learner does not show much care or attention to the individual words.

In the second method, there is no much repetition; the learner need not repeat a verse more than five times to memorize, but in each time he concentrates and focuses intensely on every word and verse; in reviewing the verses he does the same thing. I believe that the second method is better, surer and more fundamental. Of course, in both methods the repetition of the verses is necessary, but they differ in the amount of repetition and the emphasis and attention they give to the words. If the person who uses the first method to memorize the Qur'an stops this work for a short while, he will lose much of the memorized material, whereas in the second method the state of the same material will be much deeper and more permanent. Evidently it would be much better and more useful to combine both methods, that is, the learner combines his considerable care and concentration in memorizing each verse with frequent repetition; this would certainly lead to much better results.

Of course, we can learn the short verses all at once by the method mentioned already, but medium-length

or long verses should be divided into some sections, each of which may be memorized separately by following the mentioned method. For example, in memorizing medium-length or long verses each three or four words should be memorized independently, and then each section should be attached to previous sections until the verse ends.

To explain further, we employ the above method to memorize a medium-length verse. It is verse 23 of *Jathiya*:
 أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ قُوِيَةً ...
 “Have you seen him who has taken his caprice to be his god...”

First we memorize the first part by repeating it with adequate attention and concentration:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ قُوِيَةً ...

“Have you seen him who has taken his caprice to be his god...” (We repeat it until it is learned by heart).

Now we move to the next section:

وَ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ ...

“And Allah led him astray out of a knowledge...” (We repeat it until it is learned by heart).

Now we repeat the first and the second parts together several times:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ قُوِيَةً وَ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ ...

“Have you seen him who has taken his caprice to be

his god, and Allah led him astray out of a knowledge”
(We repeat it).

Now the third part:

و خَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَ قَلْبِهِ ...

“And set a seal upon his hearing and his heart...”
(We repeat it)

We join the third part to the preceding parts and repeat:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوِيَهُ وَ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَ خَتَمَ عَلَى
سَمْعِهِ وَ قَلْبِهِ ...

“Have you seen him who has taken his caprice to be his god, and Allah led him astray out of a knowledge, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart...” (We repeat it).

Now the fourth part:

وَ جَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً ...

“And laid a covering on his eyes...” (We repeat it).

We join this part to the preceding parts:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوِيَهُ وَ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَ خَتَمَ عَلَى
سَمْعِهِ وَ قَلْبِهِ وَ جَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً ...

“Have you seen him who has taken his caprice to be his god, and Allah led him astray out of a knowledge, and set a seal upon his hearing and his heart, and laid a covering on his eyes...” (We repeat it).

The fifth part:

فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ ...

“So who shall guide him after Allah...” (We repeat it).

We join it to the preceding sections and repeat it.

The last part:

أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ .

“What, will you not remember?” (We repeat it).

Now we recite the whole verse easily.

Evidently we can repeat each section after memorizing it with the immediately preceding section, and then join it to the preceding ones. After finishing memorizing the assigned verses, we may try to recite them by heart reversed (that is, first we read the last verse, and then the one before the last, and so on until we come to the first verse). If we manage reading the verses in this way, this will be a sign of our attention in memorizing the order of the verses and shows the firmness of what we have memorized. What we mean, of course, is not to memorize in a reversed way, but if the learner memorizes the verses carefully, he will automatically learn to read the verses reversed.

Here again we emphasise that in all these stages concentration, attention and looking carefully into the words are the main requirements for succeeding in learning the Qur'an by heart; they also help greatly with the act of memorization.

The method that has been explained is a general one for learning the Qur'an by heart, which has also

been tested and used by the writer.

Of course, as the learner advances in the work of memorization, naturally he will discover certain methods which are particular to him; they are, in fact, pertinent his personal and especial experience and perhaps would not be useful to others.

Inventing Conventional Symbols for Facilitating the Memorization of Some Verses

As gradually the bulk of the memorized material increases in the process of memorizing some parts of the Qur'an, which are similar to other parts, some problems may emerge. The learner here must be inventive and by considering certain conventional symbols and signs make their memorization easy. Evidently these conventional signs might be meaningless or may appear strange to others, but the truth is that they are quite useful for the learner.

As an example, at the end of three successive verses in Al-Imran, namely verses 176-178 there are three similar sentences which differ only in one word as follows:

Verse 176 "and there awaits them a mighty chastisement." وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

Verse 177 "and there awaits them a painful chastisement." وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Verse 178 “and there awaits them a humbling chastisement.” *وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ*

Memorizing the order of these three sentences is somehow time -consuming.

If we want to memorize the correct order of these sentences in each verse, we can consider the initial letters of the three words ‘mighty’, ‘painful’, and ‘humbling’ which in Arabic together make the word *aam*, which means year. Certainly we have nothing to do with the meaning of the symbolic word. When the learner recites these verses, he will remember their order as soon as he remembers the symbolic word.

The Question of Similar Verses

As the learner continues memorizing the Qur'an, he may come across verses that somewhat differ from the verses he had already memorized. This little difference in similar verses may gradually cause problems and it is necessary to have special care in these cases.

Similar cases could be similar subjects (a group of verses which deal with a special subject and are similar to verses discussed in other places), similar verses or similar sentences. To explain the nature of this similarity, we give some examples of these three cases.

The First Case (Similar Subjects)

The first example: Verses 11-16 of *Aaraf* are similar to verses 30-39 of *Hijr* and verses 72-82 of *Sad*, all of which are about the creation of Adam and are very similar to each other.

The second example: Verses 80-84 of *Aaraf* are similar to verses 54-58 of *Naml* and verses 28-29 of *Ankabut*, all of which are about the people of Lot and in a general way are very similar with each other.

The Second Case (Similar Verses)

The first example: Verse 55 of *Tawbah*, "So let not their possessions or their children please you; God only desires thereby to chastise them in this present life, and that their souls should depart while they are unbelievers", is similar to verse 85 of the same Sura, "And let not their possessions and their children please you; God only desires thereby to chastise them in this present world, and that their souls should depart while they are unbelievers."

The second example: Verse 48 of *Baqara*, "And fear a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any counterpoise be taken, neither shall they be helped", is similar to verse 123 of the same Sura, "And fear a day when no soul for another shall give

satisfaction and no counterpoise shall be accepted from it, nor any intercession shall be profitable to it, neither shall they be helped.”

The Third Case (Similar Sentences)

The first example: Verse 11 of *Al-o-Imran*, “Like Pharaoh’s folk, and the people before them, who cried lies to Our signs; God seized them because of their sins...,” is similar to verse 52 of *Anfal*, “Like Pharaoh’s folk, and the people before them, who disbelieved in God’s signs; God seized them because of their sins...” and verse 54 of the same Sura, “Like Pharaoh’s folk, and the people before them, who cried lies to the signs of their Lord, so We destroyed them because of their sins.”

The second example: Verse 37 of *Anaam*, “And they said why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?” is similar to verse 20 of *Yunus*, “And they say why has no sign been sent down upon him from his Lord?” verses 7 and 27 of *Raad*, “And the unbelievers say why has a sign not been sent down upon him from his Lord?” and verse 50 of *Ankabut*, “And they said why have signs not been sent down upon him from his Lord?” and countless other examples.

As is seen, each of the above cases shows many similarities in words, and the learner might confuse those cases with each other. Therefore, more attention

should be given to such verses. Moreover, using the concordance to the verses (=al-Mo'jam al-Mofahras or verse-index), which lists similar verses under one common entry, writing the verses down, and comparing such similar verses with each other and finding the differences can be effective in better memorization of such cases.

What should Be Done in Order not to Forget the Memorized Verses?

Memorizing the verses is the first stage of the task and should not be difficult; however, what is important is to retain those memorized verses in the storage of the mind and to keep them away from forgetfulness in the passage of time, which brings to the fore the question of reviewing and repeating the verses. Besides increasing the quantity of the memorized verses, the learner of the Qur'an by heart should try to keep the quality of his previously memorized material intact and integrated. Therefore, it is necessary to plan a programme for daily or every-few-days review of the memorized verses. In addition, as the time passes and the quantity of the verses he keeps in memory increases, it becomes necessary to spend more time for retaining them. Obviously planning for review depends on the bulk of the memorized material, the amount of the problems the learner thinks he would probably have, and the power of his memory as well.

Some need much practise and repetition, while some others solve their problems by a little practice and review of the verses. When a beginner does not hurry, and works with much care and attention, he will certainly have no much difficulty or problems in reviewing them. However, it is evident that with the increase of the memorized verses more review would be necessary. In the first days, because the quantity of the memorized material is not much, all the verses of preceding days can be reviewed easily every day, but as the number of the verses increases gradually this becomes difficult and it will be necessary to review only a limited and a definite number of verses every day. For example, if you have planned to memorize half a page of the Qur'an a day, review five pages of the preceding verses so that once a while you will review all the preceding verses, and you will ward off the risk of error and forgetfulness. As for the verses you have memorized today, for instance, you must review them again tomorrow before beginning to learn new verses. This would be better than reviewing the memorized verses the same day. Observing this point would definitely have a desirable effect in consolidating the memorized material.

Our important recommendation is that you should try to recite the verses during the review and not to go over them only in your mind. Going over the verses in

the mind without pronouncing the words and the letters would induce premature exhaustion and boredom in the mind. Certainly it would be useful also to recite sometimes the verses slowly and melodiously (in *tartil* manner) to have variety and avoid monotony in reviewing the verses. In this way you will become less exhausted in reviewing the verses.

The Correct Method of Reviewing the Verses

The correct method of reviewing the verses is reading them by heart without consulting the Qur'an. Whenever you forget a word or a letter and cannot go any further, you should refer to the Qur'an and solve the problem, but then repeat the problematic part several times until it settles in the mind well. Of course, it is good once a while to have a review by consulting the Qur'an and looking carefully at the words and the verses, so that besides the eyes having their portion of joy, you may keep the exact place of the verses in your mind.

Moreover, it may be very helpful to ask a friend, familiar with reading the Qur'an, to listen to your recitation of the assigned verses and to remind you of any problem. To have another person asking you about the memorized material is the best method of reviewing the verses, for it puts less stress on your mind [memory].

It is important to note that in reviewing the verses, as soon as some learners have a problem, they usually consult the Qur'an at once, which is wrong. The correct way is that in case of any problem you should wait a little and think and try to find out the word or the verse in question, and if you are not aided by your memory, consult the Qur'an. In this way that particular case will settle in the mind very well. Sometimes the review of the verses is done mechanically despite the learner's carelessness and mind distraction, and the verses run on his tongue without due consideration or attention; like a person who says his prayers unconsciously, the words coming to his tongue automatically. It should be noted, however, that such kind of review is worthless. The good review is that which leaves a deeper impression on the mind in the wake of each repetition of the verse, and this requires the careful attention of the mind at the time of review.

The Role of Listening to the Cassettes of Qur'anic Recitation

Sometimes the learner may not have the ability to make a proper and direct use of his memory, and the mind is not in a good condition to review the verses. Then to use the time properly and to avoid too much pressure, it is good to make use of the cassettes of reciting the Qur'an in slow and distinct manner (*tartil*),

so that the learner may listen carefully to the slow and distinct recitation of the assigned verses, and simultaneously review them in his mind. His errors, of course, will be corrected immediately by the cassettes. Experience shows that this method puts less pressure on the learner's memory; however, reviewing the verses directly by applying the memory and following the method explained before would be more effective and would have better results. Therefore, we do not recommend using the cassettes, or the method of reviewing the verses through listening as the main and constant method of memorizing or reviewing the verses; rather we think it could be used as a secondary or a subsidiary method. The main method should be one in which the learner exerts his memory and use its power, whereas in the method of listening, the mind is not so active, and the verses are memorized by too much listening. Of course, exerting the mind and thinking would be a little difficult at the beginning, but with a little patience and persistence the power and the capacity of the memory will increase day by day, and travelling the rest of the way will be possible and easy. This is why the holy Prophetic tradition states that memorizing the Qur'an is one of the ways of boosting the memory. Certainly when the learner besides the mentioned visual and mental memorization also applies the aural method, namely listening to the cassettes of the recitation of the Qur'an, he will have the advantage

of knowing the way of beautifully reciting the Qur'an, namely the art of intonation, the melodies and the tone of the verses, and in this way he will enjoy reviewing the Qur'an more and will be less exhausted. Moreover, the melody or the tone of each verse is one of its distinctive features that distinguish it from other verses, and the melody is indeed an indicator for each sentence or verse. Therefore, by remembering the melody of each verse the learner may come closer to that verse and remember it, and this can be especially effective in case of dealing with similar verses.

The Effect of Understanding the Meaning of the Verses in Memorizing the Qur'an

Although different materials are memorized through the activity and the exertion of the mental faculties, we should not put all the pressure of memorization on the power of the memory. There are always certain factors that might be employed to help the memory and thus reduce the pressure put on it; one of these secondary factors, as was mentioned before, is using and listening to the cassettes of the Qur'anic recitation. Here we refer to another factor that can reduce the problems and difficulties of memorizing the Qur'an, namely considering the meaning of the verses or taking into account their meaning at the time of memorizing the verses.

Understanding the significance and meaning of each verse not only makes its memorization for the mind easy, but also sets the order and sequence of the verses in the mind. In general, the human mind can memorize meaningful material much easier than ambiguous or meaningless words (of course, meaningless for the individual). In the holy Qur'an each verse is usually connected to the next verse by meaning (though this is not always the case), and understanding this connection may have a positive effect on memorizing the Qur'an. There are two ways to find the meaning of the verses and to understand their significance. One is to use those editions of the Qur'an with an absolutely correct and fluent translation and as much as possible a word-by-word translation. By using this translation, the learner would consider the significance of each verse and understand the way it is related to the following verse, and thus he might memorize them more easily, and at the same time he links the different sentences of a longer verse with each other. The second way, which is the more fundamental one, is that by acquiring brief but useful knowledge of the morphology and syntax of Arabic language and familiarity with the words of the Qur'an the learner may directly understand the apparent meaning of the verse. In that case the meaning of the verses would be always present with the learner, and usually as soon as

he considers the meaning of the verse, he will remember its words by association. In any case, this makes the memorized material more stable and firmer, and the passage of time will have less effect on weakening it. Evidently, as was said, in case the verses have no apparent relationship, the learner should seek directly the assistance of the memory or invent certain conventional symbols.

Where should We Begin to Memorize the Qur'an?

Considering what was said about the role of concentration on the meaning of the verses and its significant effect in memorizing the Qur'an, I may suggest to begin memorizing the Qur'an with the stories of the Qur'an. As you know, the verses of the stories always follow a definite and at the same time interesting and sweet subject, and finally they end with the conclusion and the result of the story. Therefore the learner is encouraged to follow the act of memorizing the verses until the end of the story; this encouragement is an important factor in memorizing the Qur'an. It is certain that in respect of memorization, the verses of precepts and convictions do not have the simplicity of the narrative verses of the Qur'an. Then, if the learner at the beginning chooses to memorize some of the stories of the Qur'an, besides gaining some familiarity with the

general methods of memorization, he will find the encouragement to memorize the rest of the verses too.

In the same way, we can attract the attention of the reader to reflect on the occasions and causes of the revelation of the verses. Some verses are revealed on certain occasions, and knowing the story and the occasion could be of much help in memorizing those verses.

Moreover, to begin with, the learner may choose to memorize the short Suras of the thirtieth part of the Qur'an, for considering the good familiarity which most people have with these Suras, they are easily memorized; on the other hand, these Suras can be used in obligatory and recommended prayers, and in this way the joy of memorizing the Qur'an would be felt to a certain extent. It should be noted, however, that random memorization is basically undesirable and could only be an introduction to a systematic and calculated memorization from the beginning of the Qur'an. For we can have an organised programme for memorizing the Qur'an only when it starts from the beginning of the Qur'an and continues until its end.

The Role of Learning Arabic Grammar (Morphology and Syntax) in Helping with Memorizing the Qur'an

We have already hinted briefly at the advantage of learning the grammar of Arabic language in helping with memorizing the Qur'an. One of the things which has to be taken into consideration in memorizing the Qur'an is learning the grammatical inflection and the diacritical signs of the letters.

It is clear to the learner of the Qur'an by heart that memorizing the diacritical signs may cause some problems such as the inflections of the letter ت 'taa' in the words جنات ('jannatun'), جنات ('jannatin'), and the inflection of the letter 'taa' in the words رحمة ('rahmatan'), رحمة ('rahmatun'), and رحمة ('rahmatin'), and the difference in the structure of the words (morphology) such as لن يتمنونه ('lan yatamannawhu') and لا يتمنونه ('la yatamannawhu'), or وما الله بغافل عما تعملون ('wa ma Allahu bighafilin amma taamalun') and وما الله بغافل عما يعملون ('wa ma Allahu bighafilin ama yaamalun'), and many other examples which because of brevity we do not mention here.

With a little knowledge of Arabic grammar the learner can easily understand most of these cases fully, without the need to memorize them one by one. Especial care should be given to words which come at the end of the verses or are placed where there is a

pause, and usually the inflection of their last letter is not considered. Thus with the help of these and other factors we can reduce the pressure put on the memory and transfer the heavy load of memorization to other factors.

Memorizing the Qur'an with the Number of the Verses

Besides memorizing the verse, you may also memorize its number, that is, when you read and repeat in order to memorize the verse, try to mention its number, too. It is clear that the number of the verse comes at the end of it rather than its beginning, and for this purpose you have to use an edition of the Qur'an whose verse numbers are absolutely correct and authorised. Although memorizing the number of the verses could be a little difficult, it has nevertheless certain advantages. For example, if the learner at the time of recitation forgets a verse, he will usually remember it by recollecting its number. However, it is important to note that the learner should never make his memorization dependent on factors like these, but rather he should rely on the firmness and strength of the memorized material. It is also important to avoid as much as possible memorizing unnecessary things such as the number of the pages, the number of the words and letters of the Suras, and so on, which have recently

become fashionable and have led to the deterioration of the quality of the main subject, namely memorizing the verses, and have caused some problems.

The Effect of Writing the Verses in Learning the Qur'an by Heart

In order to memorize the verses some people write them down carefully and try to memorize each word they write. You may also test this method, and if you find it successful, you can go on with it. Again I emphasise that this is a secondary method, too. A tradition is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, which may refer to this point. He states, "Write, for unless you write you will not memorize."

Founding the Society of the Memorizers of the Qur'an

Founding a society made of a few people interested in memorizing the Qur'an, with daily or at least weekly sessions for this purpose, along with a constant communication among the members can be very useful and appropriate for facilitating and giving speed to memorizing the Qur'an.

Usually it is difficult to begin memorizing the Qur'an alone and without the companionship of at least one determined and serious friend, for in that case there

will be no strong commitment for going on with this task. The companionship, therefore, of at least two people in this work can induce constancy and order in the programme, and itself is a good guarantee for the continuity of learning the Qur'an by heart. For this purpose, the group of the learners interested in memorizing the Qur'an can have an organized programme throughout the week and plan for the meeting of the members at a certain day and hour to ask each other about the verses assigned for memorization. It is important to be serious in following this programme. It is equally important to observe the harmony among the members of the society, that is, they should belong as much as possible to the same age group and meet the same intellectual conditions, so that they can proceed with learning the Qur'an by heart with the same order and harmony. Moreover, I suggest that when two learners, for example, who are memorizing the Qur'an together intend to ask each other about the assigned verses, the first learner should recite the first verse by heart and the second learner should carefully listen, and then the second learner recites the second verse and the first learner listens attentively; when the verses end, again they should ask each other about this same section, but this time the second learner should recite the first verse and the next verse should be read by the first learner. This makes the review more effective and more enjoyable.

At the end I attract your attention to the following point. Perhaps some people believe that memorizing the Qur'an is an absolutely heavy and difficult mental activity, and compared with the holy skill of reciting the Qur'an which is blended with art and beauty to the highest degree, they think memorizing the Qur'an is devoid of this beauty; however, the case is entirely unlike that. The art of memorizing the Qur'an well is an art in the real sense of the term. For example, a person who intends to learn the Qur'an by heart in such a way that his learning would be easy, his memorized material as much as possible would be equally more permanent and firmer should have the art to establish a link either, a real and genuine relationship (in verses clearly interrelated by meaning), or a conventional one (in verses apparently not much connected with each other) among successive verses. When a learner establishes a strong link with such relationships among his memorized material, and as a result can memorize the verses more easily and be less worried about forgetting them, he will enjoy this work, or to use a better word, this art of learning the Qur'an by heart correctly. Indeed this is the secret of memorizing the Qur'an, that is, the learner should enjoy the time he spends doing this, for only then he will persist in learning the Qur'an by heart, and persistence in the work as is known is among the stipulation of achieving the goal.

Moreover, the ability to concentrate the intellectual and mental powers at the time of memorizing the Qur'an is no doubt a great art, which needs considerable effort and determination to achieve. When a learner by total concentration of the mind throughout his work feels he is able to memorize the most difficult holy verses and Suras (which in the absence of this mental concentration, memorizing them can prove very time-consuming and difficult) in a relatively short time and easily, he will indeed relish and will be happy with his art, and memorizing the Qur'an will no longer be merely performing a difficult and troublesome duty. Here I think it could be worthwhile to stress this important point that if in a family the parents themselves are interested in and are as much as they can engaged in memorizing the Qur'an, and at the same time they try to provide a pleasant environment for this invaluable matter at home, undoubtedly they will have an undeniable effect on their children and will encourage these dear ones to pursue eagerly and without a sense of difficulty or boredom the memorization of the Qur'an. In fact, in such environment memorizing the Qur'an becomes a holy and at the same time a pleasurable and enjoyable occupation for the members of the family, and this fact has been proved by experience many times.

The last point I may mention is that sometimes it is

said such a Sura is a difficult one to memorize or review, or such Suras are the most difficult or the easiest ones to memorize. I believe, however, the difficulty or simplicity of different Suras with respect to memorization is more related to the way the learner treats them than the Suras themselves or their words and sentences (which to a certain extent they are). To explain further, I must say if a person- with total preparation and by bringing about the desirable conditions for memorizing the verses, and especially with a complete mental concentration- occupies himself with memorizing the verses, he not only will succeed more easily in memorizing them, but also at the time of reviewing them will have no problem; otherwise he will experience more pressure when he begins to memorize them and at the time of reviewing may have to memorize the verses again. Such a person, nevertheless, will imagine that the cause of those problems is the difficulty of that Sura or those particular verses. The evidence I can give is the fact that I have repeatedly heard that one of the brothers who is learning the Qur'an by heart is complaining of the difficulty of a certain Sura, whereas another learner believes it is one of the easiest Suras to memorize.

A Note

In Islamic traditions some kinds of food and practices are thought to be effective in boosting the mental faculties and invigorating the memory. For example:

Eating raisins before breakfast, sesame seeds, Arabian gum, honey, lintel, gourd, melon, tooth brushing, abstaining from eating cheese alone, and many other things, which, if practiced, would certainly be effective in strengthening the memory. I have also heard from an elderly and wise knower of the Qur'an by heart that observing truthfulness in all states and practising God-fearing are highly helpful in boosting the memory and broadening the mind. No doubt this is true. May the Bountiful God adorn us with the beauty of truthfulness. Amen. And our last recommendation to the learners of the Qur'an by heart is that they should not forget recreation, sports, or at least the daily exercises, and should consider this point seriously. For the person who seeks to memorize the Qur'an, seclusion, torpor, reclusion, and listlessness are not desirable at all, and generally those who deal with the divine speech should be the most energetic people of the society. The Qur'an says, "And forget not your portion of the present world" (*Qasas*, 77)

Here our discourse concerning the method of memorizing the holy Qur'an comes to an end. Perhaps

there have been some weaknesses and defects in presenting this subject, or we may have neglected some points, all of these of course are the natural consequences of a human work, and I would be grateful if the experts in learning the Qur'an by heart, the respected memorizers and teachers, help us with their suggestions. I ask the Exalted Allah to accept this little work by His bounty, make us the guardians of the words and the domain of His speech, grant us the honour of keeping and guarding the sanctuary of the Qur'an, make us relish the joy of intimacy with the holy Qur'an, and on the Day of Judgment put us in the same place with the Qur'an and the household of infallibility and purity. May Allah add to the degrees and the lofty position of our dear Imam [Khomeini] and the great martyrs of Islam and the invaluable Islamic Revolution, and safeguard and protect its eminent Leader.

And our last word is praise to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,

Wasalam aleikum wa rahmat Allah wa barakatuh
Shahriyar Parhizgar