The Qur'an in the Words of Imam Sajjad

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This article offers a collection of sayings by Imam Zain al-Abideen al-Sajjad, the fourth Shi'a Imam, regarding various aspects of the Qur'an in his supplication "Upon Completing a Reading of the Qur'an" from his collection of supplications called Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya.

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The Qur’an in the Words of Imam Sajjad[1]

Nafuseh Zarvandi Rahmani[2] **& Javad Zarvandi**[3]

Translated by: Saba Bhimani and Fatima Tavana Kermani

Abstract

The Qur'an is the main text of Islam for the purpose of guiding human beings to perfection and felicity, a book that leads the ignorant to the light. The Qur'an without the Ahlul Bayt and the Ahlul Bayt without the Qur'an cannot enable a person to achieve the highest goal – the two must correspond with one another.

This article offers a collection of sayings by Imam Zain al-Abideen al-Sajjad, the fourth Shi a Imam, regarding various aspects of the Qur'an in his supplication "Upon Completing a Reading of the Qur'an" from his collection of supplications called **Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya**. These sayings revolve around topics such as the Qur'an as a manifestation of God's light, the most beautiful speech, and as guidance for humankind. The Imam also teaches us the importance of familiarizing ourselves with it and reflecting on it.

Introduction

The Qur'an is believed to be the divine immortal miracle and proof of God, the heavenly and revealed word that offers a complete code for people to live a rewarding life and to gain salvation in the next. It sets the guidelines for any person. Every generation of Muslims found new sources of strength, courage, and inspiration from it, and is a compass in the turbulent journey of life.

To become familiar with this comprehensive book needs expression and interpretation by Qur'anic experts. The Prophet Muhammad, who was the trustee of revelation and the real commentator of the Qur'an, on different occasions and with different expressions (such as the Hadith of Thaqalayn) as well as prior to his death, introduced the family of the Prophet (the Ahlul Bayt) as on par with the Qur'an; both are presented as valuable jewels among the Muslims. The relation between this family (*Itrat*) and Qur'an is mutual; on the one hand the Qur'an introduces the Ahlul Bayt as the best people, and on the other, it introduces them as the most knowledgeable about the facts and culture of the Qur'an. Imam Sajjad, the fourth Imam and great grandson of the Prophet, had a deep relationship with the Qur'an.

When we examine Imam Sajjad's words about the Qur'an, it is apparent that he was a manifestation of its teachings, since he followed its guidelines completely.

Imam Sajjad was known to be the ornament of the pious, the master of the worshippers, and one of the bright stars of the divine training. Sahifah al-Sajjadiyyah, a compilation of his prayers, is an ocean of divine knowledge and culture, an instance of divine shafts and Qur'anic light.

Supplication number 42, called "Upon Completion of Reading the Qur'an" is a vast treasure of Qur'anic sciences and facts and a strong proof of the introduction of Qur'an, the one who brought it, its scholars, and qualified educator of the house of its revelation.4 The following offers glimpses of his description of

the Qur'an based on this prayer.

The Qur'an, a Manifestation of God's Light

The manifestation of the Qur'an is like a light that illuminates the hearts of believers. Imam Sajjad introduces it as the Light. In the first phrase of this prayer, he says: "O Allah, You have helped me to complete Your book, which You sent down as a light."

But who is this light intended for? In the third phrase, he says: "You appointed it a light through following which we may be guided from the shadows of error and ignorance."

The Qur'an contains references to itself with the attribute of light:

"And we have sent to you clear light." (***174:4***)

About the immortality of the light of Qur'an, Imam Sajjad says: "And You appointed it a light of guidance whose proof is not extinguished before the witnesses."

Also in the seventh phrase of this supplication, he says: "They acquire light from its lamp, and beg not guidance from any other."

The Qur'an, a Guidance for Humankind

The Qur'an is the book for leading human beings to perfection and felicity, and that leads the ignorant from darkness to the light.

In the third phrase of the prayer, Imam Sajjad says: "And a guidepost of deliverance, so that he who repairs straight way to its prescription will not go astray and he who clings to its preservation's handhold will not be touched by the hands of disasters."

In the seventh phrase, he says: "O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household and make us one of those who hold fast to its cord, seek haven from its ambiguities in its fortified stronghold."

In the third phrase, Imam Sajjad continues: "A light of guidance whose proof is not extinguished before the witnesses. O Allah, just as You have appointed our hearts as its carriers.so also bless Muhammad, its preacher, and his Household, its guardians, and place us among those who confess that it has come from You, lest doubt about attesting to it assail us."

If we look carefully at these words that have originated from the Ahlul Bayt, we find that it is the secret of sending down the Qur'an, the reason of its legitimate continuity, its proof to certify the Prophet Muhammad, and at last the proof of Qur'an's continuity and immorality from the viewpoint of knowledge and guidance. It is obvious that there is no knowledge without scholars, as Allah says in the Qur'an:

".and most surely you are made to receive the Qur'an from the wise, the knowing God." (***27:6***)

So it is God who preserves, protects, and sustains the Qur'an:

".nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed."(***53:3-4***)

The Qur'an is the best source for the truthfulness of the Prophet's claim. It originated from the natural knowledge of God. It expresses the truth and enables one to gain knowledge, develop into a better human being, and attain closeness to God. Furthermore, it is the separator of speech (a separator which separates the right from the wrong); it is not idle talk, it has an appearance and a reality, its appearance is order and its reality is knowledge, its outside is beautiful and refreshing and its inside is deep, its wonders are innumerable and its marvels are not exhaustible. It is a text in which there are lights of guidance and bright torches of wisdom, and for who is familiar with the attributes (Qur'anic truth) it is the guide of the (right) culture.5

The Qur'an, the Best Word and the Most Beautiful Speech

Imam Sajjad says: "O Allah, You have helped me complete Your book, which You sent down as a light and appointed as a guardian over every book You have sent down, preferring it over every narrative which You have recounted."

The Qur'an is the God's word and the manifestation of His knowledge, so it is superior to all the words and speeches:

"Allah has sent down the best of discourses, a scripture [***composed***] ***of similar motifs".*** (***39:23***)

As stated by the Prophet: "The superiority of Qur'an over other speeches is similar to the God's superiority over His creatures."6 In this case Imam Ali says: "The Qur'an is the best narrative."7

The Qur'an, the Cure of Pains

God says in the Qur'an:

".and we reveal of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers." (***17:82***)

But for whom and when? In the 3rd phrase of his prayer Imam Zayn al- Abideen says: ".a healing for him who turns ear toward hearing it with the understanding of attestation."

In the eighth phrase, the Imam says: "O Allah,. make the Qur'an our mediation to the noblest stations of Your honour, a ladder by which we may climb to the place of safety, a cause for our being repaid with deliverance at the Plain of Resurrection, and a means whereby we may reach the bliss of the House of Permanence."

The Greatness of the Qur'an

Imam Sajjad quotes from the Prophet: "If a person who has received Qur'anic knowledge from God thinks that God has given a better one to somebody else, in fact he has taken a great truth small, and a small thing great."8

In the ninth phrase Imam Sajjad notes the greatness of the Qur'an and says: "O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household, lessen for us through the Qur'an the weight of heavy sins, give to us the excellent qualities of the pious, and make us follow the tracks of those who stood before You in the watches of the night and the ends of the day, such that You purify us from every defilement through its purification and make us to follow the tracks of those who have taken illumination from its light."

The Qur'an, the Scale of Justice

Imam Sajjad considers the Qur'an as a criterion of justice: "...and a just balance whose tongue does not incline away from truth."

The Qur'an points to this subject:

"O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably, act equitably, that is nearer to piety, and be careful of your duty to Allah, surely Allah is aware of what you do." (***5:8***)

Addressing the Prophet, it says:

"...and say: I believe in what Allah has revealed of the book, and I am commanded to do justice between you."(***42:15***)

With respect to justice as the basis for forming a family the Qur'an says:

"But if you fear that you will not do justice (***between them***)***, then marry only one."*** (***4:3***)

It is also the base of the economic relations:

"And give full measure and weight with justice." (***6:152***)

And also ask for justice to settle conflicts:

"Make peace between them and seek justice, surely Allah loves those who act equitably." (***49:9***)

The Status of Revelation

In relation to sending down the Qur'an to the Prophet's heart, Imam Sajjad states: "..a revelation which

You have sent down, a sending down, upon Your Prophet Muhammad (Your blessings be upon him and his Household). You appointed it a light through following which we may be guided from the shadows of error and ignorance." The very place of the settling and manifesting the light nature of Qur'an was the open and pure heart of the Prophet.

Imam Sajjad says in another part: "...a book which You have distinguished very distinctly for Your servants, a revelation which You have sent down, a gradual sending down, upon Your Prophet Muhammad (Your blessings be upon him and his Household)."

And in the Qur'an:

"...and most surely this is the revelation from the Lord of the worlds." (***Shuara, 26:192***)

The Occult Sciences of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the word of God and its truth originates from the pure essence of God based on His essential knowledge.

The fifth phrase of the prayer points to this subject: "O Allah, You sent it down upon Your Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and his Household) in summary form, inspired him with the science of its wonders to complement it, made us the heirs of its knowledge as interpreters, made us to surpass him who is ignorant of its knowledge, and gave us strength over it to raise us above those not able to carry it."

Furthermore, in the second phrase Imam Sajjad says: "...a separator through which You have separated Your lawful from Your unlawful, a Qur'an through which You have made plain the approaches to Your ordinances."

According to Imam Ali the Qur'an is the manifestation of God, so we can see the tracks of God's power and knowledge in it: "So the pure God is manifested for them in His book, while they cannot see Him as well as what He has showed them from His power in His book."9

The Necessity of Reflecting Upon the Qur'an

Zohri says: "I heard that Imam Ali ibn-al Husayn said: The verses of Qur'an are a hidden treasure; hence, whenever the treasure is opened it is appropriate to look at whatever is inside it.'"10 The Qur'an is the book of life and is full of innovative points; thinking about its verses is central to gaining from it.

In this relation Imam Sajjad says in the tenth phrase of the prayer: "And for what negligence has caused to roll up of the scrolls of self-scrutiny an unfolder, until You bring to our hearts the understanding of the Qur'an's wonders and its restraining examples which mountains, despite their firmness, were too weak to carry!"

Also in the fourth phrase he says: "Place us among those who observe it as it should be observed, serve You by adhering in submission to its univocal verses, and seek refuge in admission of both its metaphorical passages and its manifest proofs."

Familiarity with the Qur'an

Zuhari quotes from Imam Sajjad: "If all the people between the East and the West die, I will not fear because Qur'an is with me."11

In different places he pointed about the Qur'an as a companion: "O Allah, just as You have appointed our hearts as its carriers and made known to us through Your mercy its nobility and excellence, so bless Muhammad, its preacher, and his Household, its guardians, and place us among those who confess that it has come from You, lest doubt about attesting to it assail us, or deviation from its straightforward path shake us." (6th phrase)

In another place he says: "O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household and appoint the Qur'an for us an intimate in the shadows of nights and a guardian against the instigations of Satan and confusing thoughts, for our feet an obstruction from passing to acts of disobedience, for our tongues a silencer without blight preventing a plunge into falsehood, for our limbs a restrainer from committing sins." (10th phrase)

The Necessity of Pleasant Recitation

Imam Sajjad emphasizes on the importance of correct recitation of the Qur'an as well as performing the duties. In the 6th phrase he says: "O Allah, since You have given us help to recite it and made smooth the roughness of our tongues through the beauty of its expression, place us among those who observe it as it should be observed."

Recitation of Qur'an must be followed by a deep reflection on its verses. In this case Imam Zain al-Abidin says: "Make me stand in awe of Your threat, take precautions against Your leaving no excuses and Your warning and tremble at the recitation of Your verses!"12 God says:

"...and recite the Qur'an in a measured tone." (***73:4***)

Imam Sajjad was a model of good recitation as said by Naufili: "In the presence of Imam Musa bin Ja'far, I was talking about sound and voice. The Imam said: "During the recitation of the Qur'an by Ali bin Husayn, if someone would pass by, he would become unconscious by hearing his sweet voice. And if the Imam revealed something from its real beauty people, would not be able to bear its beauty."

Naufeli says, "I asked the Imam: Did not the Prophet say his prayers with people? Or did he not recite the Qur'an in a loud voice?' And the

Imam replied, The Prophet dealt with the people and his followers according to their capacity.'"[13]

In another hadith Imam Sadiq says, "Of all people Ali ibn Husayn had the best voice in reading the Qur'an. People carrying water while passing by his house would always stand at his door and hear his recitation. Imam Baqir was also known for his pleasant voice during recitation.

With respect to commentary on *tartil*, Imam Sadiq said, "Tartil is that when you read the Qur'an, you halt and when you recite it, and you recite in a beautiful voice."[14] To comment on this verse Imam Ali says, "It means you read it clearly; neither read it like poetry with speed nor like a novel slowly."[15] Regarding this, the Prophet says: "There is an ornament for everything and nice voice is the ornament of the Qur'an."

Reading the Qur'an properly is one of the ways of understanding its meaning. It also motivates a person to reflect on its verses. Only when it is read beautifully its benefits appear and profit is gained from the moral of its stories. Qur'anic stories and its speeches are only prolific when it is recited in a proper manner.[16]

The Extent of Reciting the Qur'an

When the first verses were sent down, the Prophet was appointed to recite them, and in another command God asks the Prophet and the believers:

"...therefore read what is easy of the Qur'an." (***73:20***)

Zuhari says, "I asked Imam Sajjad: Which practice is the best?' He said: The entrant who leaves again.' I asked: A leaving entrant?' He said: Starting the Qur'an and completing its reading, starting again and completing it (like a traveller who arrives in a place in the middle of his way and leaves again and continues.)'"[17]

The Qur'an and the People of the End of Time

When Imam Sajjad was asked about Tawhid, he said: "God knew that at the end of time people will come who will think a lot, therefore God revealed Surah al-Tawheed and the verses of Surah al-Hadid until and He knows best what is in the breasts'. So whoever attempts to go outside this boundary will perish."[18]

Conclusion

Imam Sajjad has expressed different aspects of the Qur'an eloquently in his Supplication on Completing a Reading of Qur'an. The Qur'an is the book of revelation sent down by Divine message on the Prophet's heart over a period of 23 years, and he introduced it to people by its reciting and reading.

It is the highest word of God based on the basis of its content it has been emanated from the infinite knowledge of God. It is the most authentic source of Islamic sciences, an eternal miracle of Prophet and the only heavenly book which has remained immune from distortion. Humans are incapable of bringing even the smallest chapter like it.

1. Bayyinat, vol. 7, Issue 68, pp. 38–50.
2. M.A. in Management.
3. M.A. in the Qur'an and Hadith Studies.
4. Tawzeeh Duaye 42 Sahife Sajjadiyeh ba nigahi be kamal ilmi Qur'an, Ahmed Reza Gha'yi, Magazine Safineh, 58/6.
5. Same, quoted from Mulla Mohsin Faiz Kashani, 1.
6. Bihar al–Anwar, Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, 92.
7. Sharhe Nahjul Balagha, Abdul Majid bin hebatulallah ibn Abil Hadid Motazali, 153/7,8.
8. Al–Kafi, 605/2
9. Nahj al–Balaghah, Sermon 145.
10. Al–Kafi, 609/20.
11. Ibid., the chapter of Fadl al–Qur'an, volume 13.
12. Sahifa al–Sajjadiyyah, 122/47.
13. Al–kafi, 615/2.
14. Tafseer Safi, 45/1.
15. Imam Ali az nigahe Qur'an, Muhammad Rahmani, Magazine Bayyenat, no. 4/151, quoted from Khoi, Sharhe Nahjul Balagha, 7/8
16. Sharhe Nahjul Balagha, ibn Maisam Bahrani 3, the translation of Qurban Ali Muhammadi Muqaddam, Ali Asghar Nawayi, Yahya Zade, Abdul Ali Sahebi, Muhammad Sururi Majd.
17. Al–Kafi, chapter Fazl Hamil Qur'an, Volume 7.
18. Tafseer Safi, 866/2.

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[3] https://www.al–islam.org/person/nafuseh–zarvandi–rahmani
[4] https://www.al–islam.org/person/javad–zarvandi
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[10] https://www.al–islam.org/library/general–quran–hadith
[11] https://www.al–islam.org/journals/vol–16–no–1–spring–2015

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