

HIFZ – MEMORIZATION OF THE
QUR'AN

Dr. Safwat M. Halilovic



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Translation from Bosnian:

Tajib Pasanbegovic

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A WORD OF GRATITUDE

In one of his sayings, recorded in relevant hadith literature, Muhammad (saws) says:

« مَنْ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ النَّاسَ لَمْ يَشْكُرِ اللَّهَ .. »

“One who is not grateful to people (for the good he has seen from them), neither will be grateful to Allah (for the benefits He bestowed him).”

Guided by the prophetic advice as well as by the words of Allah the Almighty from the Holy Qur`an:

« هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ »

“Is there any Reward for Good – other than Good?” (Al-Rahman, 60), on the occasion of translation and publishing my book in English language, I sincerely express my gratitude to its translator Tayib-efendi Pasanbegovic, Imam and pedagogue in an Islamic-Bosniak Centre in distant Toronto (Canada), who has managed along with all of his regular duties to translate this book in English and by that means make it available to a significant number of people. I wish

nothing but good to our agile Tayib-efendi and I pray to the Almighty Allah to bestow him with His reward.

Likewise, I express my gratitude to dear colleague Muhammad Pasanbegovic, Tayib – efendi's son, who actually suggested translation of this text in English, and was the bearer of this project, and who has finally reviewed the last version of the translation. Brother Muhammad is proficient both in Bosnian and English language and at the moment he is preparing master's degree thesis in the field of English language and literature, and I wish him a lot of success, health and everything he desires during his studies and afterwards in his work and life.

I pray to the Almighty Allah to make this publication useful to all of its readers, and I ask them to remember the author and interpreter with a prayer.

Bosnia, December 2005

Author

FOREWORD

Praise be to Allah who has revealed to His servant the Book, not corrupted, but correct, in order for it to be a warning, guidance, healing and mercy to the worlds from their Lord. May the most beautiful and complete blessings and salams be on the prophet Muhammad (saws), the bearer of the glad tidings and the trustworthy conveyer of the last revelation to the whole mankind. May the mercy of Allah be on *ahl al-bait*, the virtuous companions and all those who guard over the Message of Allah, finding in it tranquility for their soul and inspiration for exemplary life on this world.

No book in the history of mankind has had such a dominant impact in profiling human thought as the Qur`an has. No book has been so much transcribed, studied, memorized or translated into all relevant world languages like the noble Qur`an has. No book is able to arouse a delight to such an extent, so as to stir up such a desire and unquenchable thirst for more, to bring

so much pleasure to the soul and to offer such a healing power.

For Muslims the Qur`an is the Word of Allah revealed to Muhammad, peace be upon him, and communicated to people in Arabic language. Its expression is imbued with the power of the Divine word; from it comes the exaltedness of its messages and style, which is neither poetry nor prose. That is why the Qur`an is the greatest phenomenon (*mu`jizah*) of the Prophet of Allah and the basic source of Islam. From its perfect tenets millions of Muslims, on a daily basis, take their inspiring strength in their pursuit of the goals of this life and the Hereafter, just as the Prophet and his companions did.

Reading the book of Allah is counted among the most meritorious acts of worship for which the most Exalted One has promised extraordinary rewards: *“Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a commerce that will never fail...” (Fatir, 29).*

The prophet (saws) also left behind so many of his sayings in which he commended reading of the Qur`an. The most noticeable is the one in

which he said that *“the most valuable act of worship of his ummat is reading of the Qur`an.”*

The basic reason for its reflective reading is to organize the life in this world, in all of its domains. Therefore, whoever believes in truthfulness of the Qur`an, is on the right path. Whoever judges according to it, is the most just judge, and whoever lives according to its teachings, he will certainly succeed.

The Glorious One has said: *“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).”* (*al-Hijr*, 9). The word *guard* in this verse, has the meaning of guarding over the authenticity of the Revelation of Allah. This guarding is evidently expressed through several forms, and one of the most explicit is reciting the Qur`an by heart. The practice of reading the Qur`an by heart goes back to the time of the prophet (saws), who was motivating people in different ways to memorize it, promising for that a great reward of Allah. The first rulers especially, and also those who later succeeded them were extending support to such a practice. Today as well, all over the Islamic world faculties, schools and special hifz sessions are founded, and the world competitions among the readers of the Qur`an are organized, all with the

goal of increasing the interest for its reading and learning by heart. Praise to Allah, the practice of reading the Qur`an by heart is deeply rooted among the Bosnian Muslims too. The *huffaz* (sing. *hafiz*) have always been especially respected, probably due to the importance of their role among Muslims and the effort they had invested on the path of hifz.

According to some sources, today there are hundreds of thousands of *huffaz* in the world. Thanks to that, the entire text of the Qur`an has been preserved even after more than 14 centuries, free of any faults, completely identical to the text that was revealed to the Messenger through the angel Jibril, and as result of that circumstance a certain Qur`anic sura is read the same way by a reader from Philippines as is read by the one from Egypt, America, Arabia or any other place in the world. Originality of the Revelation of Allah and its safeguarding guarantees sameness of every copy of mushaf, regardless where it was copied or printed. Perseverance in reading and studying the Revelation of Allah is certainly one of the essential reasons of its safeguarding and remembering in hearts and mushafs.

Allah the Glorious has chosen the chests of some of His slaves and stored His Revelation in

them. Those slaves are the ones who excel within the ummah of the messenger of Allah, and as such, in the words of Fudail ibn 'Iyad, *“they should be in no need of somebody, be it rulers or those of lower rank, but the needs of the creatures should be directed towards them (the huffāz).”* Also he said: *“A bearer of the Qur`an is at the same time a bearer of the banner of Islam and he should not entertain with those who entertain, should not neglect himself with those who neglect themselves, should not sin with those who sin, and all this out of respect towards the right (haqq) of the Qur`an.”*

It should be kept in mind that the khaliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, r.a., used to take in the state's council (*shura*) huffaz, irrespective of their age, expressing that way his respect towards those who were keeping and carrying the Revelation of Allah in their memory. Imam al-Ghazali, rahmatullahi alaih, mentions in his *Ihya`* a tradition from Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, r.a., an honorable companion, a devoted lover of the Qur`an and great expert in the sciences of the Qur`an, in which he said: *“Hafiz of the Qur`an should be recognized by how he uses his night, while others sleep; by how he spends his day while other people are heedless, by his worries*

while others are worry free, by his weeping while others rejoice and smile; by his silence while others are talkative and by his humbleness while others are arrogant. A hafiz should be submissive and gentle, and should not be impolite, a quarrelsome person and a ruffian.

In the last five centuries, in which Islam has existed on its soil, Bosnia and Herzegovina has given numerous and notable huffaz and people skilful in the Qur`an. Nevertheless, according to the data which is available to us, no satisfactory written traces about hifz are found. In the Bosnian language few writers have left something about hifz. Those were Mehmed-ef. Handzic, hafiz Mahmud Traljic, and in the last 10 years a book on hifz and methods of memorizing the Qur`an has been translated by a renowned Islamic activist Dr. Yahya al-Ghawthani. Worthy of attention is also an effort of the two Bosniaks: Mustafa-ef. Omerdic who wrote about the huffaz of Visoko, and prof. Husein Cepala who wrote about the huffaz of Donji Vakuf.

It is particularly fortunate that we are now able to read in the Bosnian language a new material on the topic of hifz written by a young, yet already known expert in the field of Qur`anic sciences doc. Dr. hfz. Safwat Halilovic, professor

of Tafsir at the Islamic Pedagogical Academy in Zenica. Prof. Halilovic writes in a very appropriable way in his first book in Bosnian language¹ “*Hifz – reciting the Qur`an by heart*” about merits of reading the Qur`an by heart, about reasons of its memorization, about tradition of memorizing the Qur`an in our country, as well as about some undesirable practices which are associated with the honorable title of hafiz.

What gives a special value to the book are the recommendations of the author to all those who took courage to embark upon the paths of hifz. He became a hafiz while he was still a student of the Gazi Husrev-beg's Madrasa in Sarajevo. The author offers to readers and students of hifz important and abundant

¹ Professor Halilovic is the author of several articles and studies which have been published in our (Bosnian) Islamic periodicals and some Arabic magazines. Up to now he has published, in Arabic language, two books from the field of Tafsir and Qur`anic sciences: 1) “*Al-Tafsir bi al-ma'lur: ahammiyyatuhu wa dawabituhu; dirasah tatbiqiyah fi surah al-Nisa'*” (Traditional Tafsir: Its Importance and Regulations; Applicable Critical Study in sura *al-Nisa'*), Dar al-nashr li al-jami'at, Cairo, 1999; 2) “*Al-Imam Abu Bakr al-Razi al-Jassas wa manhajuhu fi al-Tafsir*” (Methodology of Commenting the Qur`an on the Example of a Renowned Scholar Abu Bakr al-Razi al-Jassas), Dar al-Salam, Cairo, 2001.

experiences in terms of learning new and preserving the memorized text, providing them with useful recommendations to ease that demanding and extraordinarily noble task. In the book advices of Dr. Al-Ghawthani are briefly introduced, and that represents additional help to future huffaz.

Certainly, it is impossible to bring the glorious work of memorization of the Qur`an to its conclusion without the help of Allah Almighty. That is why hafiz Halilovic mentions in this book the need of practicing an appropriate *salat* and prayers which, according to the reliable traditions, are recommended at certain times, in the course of hifz, for the purpose of more effective memorization.

To future hufaz this book will, undoubtedly, represent a great help; to all those who are interested in learning about the importance of the Book of Allah it will come handy as useful reading material, and it will be a helpful contribution to the study of the Qur`an and Qur`anic sciences in our circles. In addition to the above, the author's effort invested in this work should be understood as a starting point for more extensive research into this scientific field,

which can be utilized as a solid foundation for a magisterial or doctoral project.

The Book of Allah is, in words of Mustafa Mlivo which he expressed in his translation of the Qur`an, like an ocean which can never be exhausted. Those less knowledgeable collect on its shores shells and sand as children do. Scholars and thinkers, like divers in search of pearls, find in it a supreme philosophy, wisdom and rules for a perfect way of life.

Our Lord, we pray to you to make the Qur`an the spring of our hearts, to increase our love towards it, to make it our guide in this world, a companion in the grave, and an intercessor in the life to come. Make its remembering easy to all those who have embraced it with sincere heart and help those who strive for implementation of its perfect principles, o Most Merciful.

Zenica, May 14, 2003

13 Rabi`al-awwal, 1424

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

One of the specific features of the honorable Qur`an is that it is a Book that can be committed to memory. In Arabic this process is termed *hifz al-Qur`an* and the person who memorizes the Qur`an in its entirety is referred to as *hāfīz al-Qur`an*, which could be translated as the *guardian of the Qur`an*. In Bosnia the process of memorization of the Qur`an is termed *hifz* or *hafizluk* and a person who commits the entire Qur`an to memory receives a noble title of *hafiz*.

Have you ever asked yourself?

- Why does one memorize the Qur`an?
- Who was the first hafiz of the Qur`an?
- Do the people who have memorized the Qur`an possess some special characteristics?
- What are the obligations of the hafiz towards the Qur`an and the ummah?

- How can one become a hafiz and how much time does he/she require to accomplish that?
- Does the method of memorization in Bosnia differ from the method practiced in other parts of the world?
- What are the advantages of our method of learning?
- How does one retain everything he/she has memorized?
- What strengthens and what weakens the power of memory?
- Is there a prayer or a particular du'a that improves the power of memory?

The answers to these and many other questions, along with specific advices and examples, you will find on the pages of this book.

A BRIEF LOOK AT
THE INSTITUTION OF
HIFZ IN ISLAM

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE INSTITUTION OF HIFZ IN ISLAM

Qur'an in the lives of Muslims

The Holy Qur'an occupies a pivotal position in Islam. According to the teachings of Islam the Qur'an is Allah's eternal speech, in terms of its meaning as well as its letter and sound. It is the Book of Allah; the book that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (saws) as the last revelation to mankind.

The Qur'an is the principal source of Islam and the essence of Islamic living in an ideological, legal and moral respect. That is why the Qur'an is the core of Islamic way of life. The life of a Muslim is focused on the Qur'an, which is present in all of its phases. From the very first moment, as he is given birth by his mother, a shehadah – the essential message of the Qur'an - is recited into the ear of a newborn Muslim. A Muslim, even while he is a child, recites passages from the Qur'an so that he might memorize them and continuously repeat them while in prayer. Passages from the Qur'an are recited when a Muslim enters marriage and it is also

recommended that the Qur`an be recited to him when he is dying. In short, the Qur`an is the fabric that makes up the life of a Muslim; its verses are like the thread from which the substance of his soul is weaved.

One of the most beautiful definitions of the noble Qur`an is contained in the following saying of the Prophet, in which He said about the Qur`an:

« فِيهِ نَبَأُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ ، وَخَبْرُ مَا بَعْدَكُمْ ، وَحَكْمٌ
مَا بَيْنَكُمْ ، وَهُوَ الْفَصْلُ لَيْسَ بِالْهَزْلَ ، مَنْ تَرَكَهُ
مِنْ جَبَّارٍ قَصَمَهُ اللَّهُ ، وَمَنْ ابْتَغَى الْهُدَى فِي
غَيْرِهِ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ ، وَهُوَ حَبْلُ اللَّهِ الْمَتِينُ ، وَهُوَ
الذِّكْرُ الْحَكِيمُ ، وَهُوَ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ ، هُوَ الَّذِي
لَا تَزِيغُ بِهِ الْأَهْوَاءُ ، وَلَا تَلْتَبِسُ بِهِ الْأَلْسِنَةُ ، وَلَا
يَنْتَبِعُ مِنْهُ الْعُلَمَاءُ ، وَلَا يَخْلُقُ عَلَى كَثْرَةِ الرَّدِّ ، وَلَا
تَنْقُضِي عَجَائِبُهُ ، هُوَ الَّذِي لَمْ تَنْتَهِ الْجِنُّ إِذْ سَمِعَتْهُ
حَتَّى قَالُوا : « إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا يَهْدِي إِلَى
الرُّشْدِ فَأَمَنَّا بِهِ » ، مَنْ قَالَ بِهِ صَدَقَ ، وَمَنْ
عَمِلَ بِهِ أُجِرَ ، وَمَنْ حَكَمَ بِهِ عَدَلَ ، وَمَنْ دَعَا إِلَيْهِ
هُدَى إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ »

In it (the Qur`an) is an information about what was before you, and an information about what will come after, as well as solutions pertaining to the matters between you. It is a

*clear speech – not a jest. Whoever abandons the Qur`an out of arrogance – Allah will shatter him! And whoever seeks guidance in something else, Allah will leave him straying. The Qur`an is Allah's firm rope, it is a wise reminder and the right way. Neither passion can divert it, nor can tongues change it. The knowledgeable can not satisfy their appetite for it neither can it be spent out through continuous repetition. There is no end to its splendiddness. Even the jinns, when they heard the Qur`an, could not resist without saying: 'Verily, we have heard a wonderful Recitation (this Qur`an), which guides to the straight path.' Who speaks according to the Qur`an, speaks the truth; who work by it, will be rewarded; who judges according to it, he is just; and who invites to it, he is guided to the straight path."*²

The above-mentioned Prophet's words have been a permanent inspiration to Muslims in the past to devout themselves to a wholehearted study of the Qur`an and to mold this world according to

² This is a part of a longer hadith transmitted by al-Tirmidhi and al-Darimi, who recorded it in their respected *Sunans*, both from Harith al-A'awar, r.a. See: al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, v.5., page 172, hadith #2.906; Al-Darimi, *Sunan*, Dar al-Rayyan, Cairo, 1st edition, 1987, vol. 2., p. 526-527., hadith #3.331 and 3.332.

the teachings of the Qur`an. That is why we can rightfully say the following about the Qur`an: “one of the greatest religious delights in history of mankind was inspired by its pages, and that its pages gave an incentive to the codex of Muslim’s life and conduct, its internal and external culture of dwelling, characterized by sunny balconies and rooms full of light, with the rising minarets which testify to a man’s soul eternal desire to reach to the secrets from the dept of the blue sky; with shadrwans and water fountains built in the places and in front of the mosques, from which water - that strange liquid, is continuously rushing, and is needed for the maintenance of life itself and for cleansing of the human body; with the cities throughout the Mediterranean and the Islamic East taking delight in the sun - the cities which grew around one central spot telling symbolically that it is at the same time the one and only headquarter of the endless universe!”³

Qur'an, the Book which is memorized

According to the Islamic teachings, the Qur`an is the last revelation of Allah, the

³ See: Enes Karic: *The Qur`an with Bosnian translation, Preface to the translation*, Bosanska knjiga, Sarajevo, 1995, p. 1233.

Glorious. The Qur`an itself emphasizes that its preservation in competence of the One Who revealed it: “*Verily, We it is Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur`an) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption).*” (*al-Hijr, 9*)

From the very beginning of its revelation the Qur`an was faithfully recorded and written. It was done by the people whom the Prophet Muhammad (saws) put in charge to write down precisely every Qur`anic word and letter. Those people are called *Kuttāb al-wahy* (Writers of the Revelation) in the Islamic tradition.

Besides cautious guardianship over every Qur`anic verse and word through the technique of writing, another method of looking after authenticity of the noble Qur`an and protecting it from any change is by way of its memorization, because that is the book which is possible to commit to memory. Thanks to that, Muslims have the text of their sacred book preserved, because it was being committed to writing and memorized at the same time as any sura or portion of it would be revealed to the Prophet (saws). Inspired by the Prophet (saws), who was himself hafiz, as well as by his sayings which commend memorization of the Qur`an, Muslims were simply competing in learning by heart as much from the Qur`an as possible.

One of the aspects of the I'jaz of the Qur`an is also manifested in the fact that it is the book which is possible to memorize entirely. Commenting on the 17th verse of sura al-Qamar: “*And We have indeed made the Qur`an easy to understand and remember, then is there any one who will remember (or receive admonition)?*”, the well-known mufassir of the Qur`an from (the Islamic) Spain Imam al-Qurtubi said: “We made the Qur`an easy for memorizing and We help the one who desires to memorize it, by making it easier for him.”⁴

Muhammad (saws), first hafiz of the Qur'an

Tradition of memorizing the Qur`an goes back to the time of the Prophet (saws). He himself knew Qur`an by heart and encouraged others to memorize of it as much as possible. Many traditions testify to that and those are recorded by authors of the famous collections of ahadith.

⁴ See: al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li ahkam al-Qur`an*, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1986., part 17, p. #130.

Imam Bukhari recorded in his *Sahih*⁵ from Ibn ‘Abbas r.a. that the Prophet of Allah, when he would receive a new revelation through the angel Jibril, would move his lips, repeating what the angel was communicating to him, and was doing it out of fear that he might miss something. Such a state of the Prophet’s concern is registered in the Qur`an, in sura *al-Qiyamah*, where he is ordered not to do that any more, because the One Who is bringing Allah’s message to people, have a guarantee from the Most High that all that is revealed to him will be preserved in his chest and his mind the way it came down: *“Move not your tongue concerning (the Qur`an, o Muhammad) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to give you (o Muhammad) the ability to recite it (the Qur`an). And when We have recited it to you (through Jibril), then follow its (the Qur`an’s) recital. Then, it is for Us to make it clear (to you).” (Al-Qiyamah, 16-19)*

The quoted verses speak about the Prophet’s strong desire to commit to memory literally all that has been revealed to him from the noble Qur`an. The first hafiz of the Qur`an was, as already mentioned, Prophet Muhammad himself,

⁵ See: al-Bukhari, *al-Jami’ al-Sahih*, Dar al-rayyan li al-turath, Cairo, 2nd edition, 1987., v.1, p. 39., hadith #5.

to whom, according to the quoted verses, has been guaranteed that the verses which were being revealed to him would be preserved in his memory.

In the works of hadith it is stated that the Prophet read the Qur`an before the angel Jibril every year. That process is known in the Islamic literature as *mu`aradah*, which could be translated as *collective recitation or exposition*. In the year in which he departed to the eternal life, the Prophet (saws) read the Qur`an before this honorable angel two times. To this testifies a tradition recorded by Al-Bukhari from `A`isha, who narrates:

“Once, Fatima r.a. came with the way of walk similar to that of the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger, (saws), welcomed her with the words: ‘Welcome, my daughter’, then he sat her down on his left or right side. Thereafter, he told her something in a low voice, and she started crying. I said: ‘Why are you crying?’ A moment later, he told her again something confidential, which caused her to smile. I said: ‘I haven’t seen you like today, to be cheerful and sad at the same time.’ ‘I am not of those who would give away the secret of the Messenger of Allah she answered. After the Messenger of Allah (saws) left this world I asked her once again, and she told me: ‘On that occasion the Messenger had told me in

*confidence: 'Every year Jibril checks my entire reading of the Qur`an one time. This year he checked me two times. I think this is a sign that my appointed time of death is near. You are the first one from my family who will join me.' Upon hearing these words, I started weeping. Then, he said to me: 'Are you pleased to be a leader among the women of Paradise and the women of the believers?' When I heard that, I smiled."*⁶

Keeping in mind the fact that the Prophet (saws) did not know how to read or write, on which all the relevant historic sources agree, and the Qur`an⁷ itself speaks about it, it is obvious that during those *mu`aradah* sessions he relied on his hifz, that is to say, he was reciting by heart before the angel.

Anyone who studies the life of the Prophet (saws) will notice that his life was filled with constant close touch with the Qur`an. The Prophet was with the Qur`an in all situations. He used to read day and night, when at home or on a journey. In fact, his life represented a model of practical implementation of the Qur`anic norms and principles, to the extent that his wife

⁶ See: Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalani: *Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar al-rayyan, Cairo, v.7, p. #132 .

⁷See #48th verse of sura al-`Ankabut.

'A`ishah, r.a., when asked about his character (*akhlaq*) said:

« كَانَتْ خُلُقُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
الْقُرْآنَ »

“The Messenger’s character was the Qur`an itself.”⁸

Why is Qur'an memorized?

The Prophet (saws) paid an enormous amount of attention to memorization of the Qur`an, and that was for many reasons. One of the essential ones is that committing Qur`an to memory is one of the most dependable ways to protect it from any change or deformation. In spite of the fact that the Qur`an was entirely committed to writing by the official scribes (*kuttab al-wahy*) of the Prophet (saws) during his lifetime, preservation of the authenticity of the Qur`an by way of memorization, when done by a larger number of people, represents a far more practical and effective way, particularly if we take into consideration the fact that literacy was not widespread at that time. Arabs were known as people who possessed very developed ability of

⁸ The hadith is transmitted by al-Nasa`i in his *Sunan*. See: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur`an al-`azim*, Jam`iyya ihya` al-turath al-islami, 1st edition, 1994, v. 3, p. 319.

memorization. They kept in their memory their genealogy, they were able to tell from their mind and sing songs (*qasidahs*) which were comprised of hundreds of verses (bayts). In correspondence with others, they largely relied on their unique power of memory.

Qur`an is a major source of Islam, be it in case of doctrinal, legal, moral or any other regard. That is why committing its text to memory (*hifz*) is of vital importance.

Qur`an has to be committed to memory, or at least some of its parts, also because of worship (*'Ibadah*). It is well known that every believer is obliged to practice the prescribed daily prayers regularly. In the course of those prayers it is a must that something from the Qur`an be recited by heart. Because of that, it is necessary that every believing man and woman have some smaller or larger parts of the Qur`an memorized.

If we also take into account the fact that, in addition to the five prescribed (*fard*) prayers (in one day and night) there are also prayers established by the Prophet's practice (*sunnahs*), as well as voluntary (*nafl*) prayers whose performance is connected particularly to night time, when it is recommended that as much from the Qur`an should be recited as possible, then it becomes clear how huge is the believer's need to know by heart as much as he can.

Nevertheless, main reasons that have motivated people to commit the whole Qur`an by heart should primarily be sought in the following:

First - love towards that Book, because even since the time of the companions, who witnessed the process of the Qur`anic revelation, until today, the Muslims throughout the world have related to the Qur`an with the utmost respect and appreciation. For them, Qur`an was something sacred, something which originated from the Divine source. Therefore, in their eyes every Qur`anic letter and every word looked as one heavenly treasure. Each Muslim kept that treasure at the most meritorious place, in the most intimate portion of the inside of his heart. For that book the Muslims were ready to go to the most difficult battle, and in order to acquire its inspiration and guidance, they sacrificed their properties and lives, their houses and homeland. Finally, they were leaving and sacrificing all that they had held dear and valuable in their life. Every succeeding Qur`anic verse that would come down, would breathe in their being a new kind of life. The highest and the most sublime goal of every Muslim was - to know and memorize every verse of the Qur`an.⁹

⁹ See: *Memorization of the Qur`an*, text of from the book *Ra`is Jamaludin Causevic, educator and reformer*,

The second reason is that the Prophet (saws) encouraged others to memorize the Qur`an, and in that respect left behind many sayings which speak about the merits of that deed. In these sayings great rewards and honors are promised in the next world to those who know Qur`an by heart. We'll mention some of those.

The ahadith (sayings of the Prophet saws) which encourage to hifz of Qur'an

Generally, it can be stated that all the sayings in which the Prophet (saws) recommends the reciting of the Qur`an and promising a reward for it, indirectly point to the fact that it is commendable to recite it by heart, because these sayings aim at encouraging believers to be always in touch with the Qur`an.

In one of those sayings the Prophet (saws) has promised for each Qur`anic letter (*harf*) the reward of ten *hasanat* (good deeds):

« إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ حَبْلُ اللَّهِ ، وَالنُّورُ
الْمُبِينُ ، وَالشِّفَاءُ النَّافِعُ ، عِصْمَةٌ لِمَنْ

prepared by Enes Karic and Mujo Demirovic, Publishing House Ljiljan, Sarajevo, 2002, v. 2, p. 37 and 38.

تَمَسَّكَ بِهِ ، وَنَجَاةٌ لِمَنْ اتَّبَعَهُ .. فَاتْلُوهُ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُجْزِيكُمْ عَلَى تِلَاوَتِهِ بِكُلِّ حَرْفٍ
عَشْرَ حَسَنَاتٍ ! أَمَا إِنِّي لَا أَقُولُ : أَلَمْ ،
وَلَكِنْ بِأَلْفٍ وَوَلَامٍ وَمِيمٍ «

“This Qur`an is Allah’s rope, a clear light and useful medicine. It is a protection to the one who accepts it wholeheartedly and salvation to the one who follows it...Recite the Qur`an, for, indeed, Allah will reward you ten times more for each letter that you recite. I am not telling you that Elif Lam Mim is one letter, but (am telling you that) Elif is separate, and so is Lam and Mim.”¹⁰

The quoted hadith and those similar to them point to the need of reading the Qur`an by heart, because whoever desires to become a hafiz al-Qur`an and then preserve his hifz from forgetfulness-the only way to accomplishing such

¹⁰ This is a part of a hadith transmitted by al-Darimi in his *Sunan* from Abdullah ibn Mas’ud as a *mawkuuf* transmission. But, al-Hakim and al-Tabarani transmitted this hadith with the sanad which reaches to the Prophet (*marfu’* transmission) Shaikh Nasiruddin al-Albani says that the hadith is *sahih*. See: Al-Darimi, *Sunan*, Dar al-rayyan, Cairo, 1987, verified by Fawwaz Ahmad Zimirli and Khalid al-Sab’, vol. 2, pp. 523-524.

an objective is its constant reading and keeping connection to it.

Besides the quoted sayings of the Prophet, which directly commend reciting the Qur`an by heart, there are also sayings that speak about committing Qur`an to memory. Here are some examples of such sayings:¹¹

¹¹ Criteria at the selection of ahadith was: limit oneself to the ahadith which were transmitted in the relevant hadith works such as the nine known collections (*al-Kutub al-tis'ah*), Hakim's *Mustadrak*, Tabarani's *Mu'jam* and Haylami's *Majma' al-zawa'id*. In fact, the collections mentioned here represent the relevant literature which contains so-called *ahadith al-usul* (the ahadith which deal with the basic Islamic doctrines). Also, the authenticity of transmissions which are used in those works, can be easily verified. Not included are the transmissions mentioned in certain works which do not possess a character of the collections of ahadith, such as for example Suyuti's work *Bushra al-ka'ib bi liqa' al-habib* (Joy of a sorrowful one in meeting with dear one), where it is mentioned that the prophet (saws) supposedly said that "the one who starts learning the Qur`an by heart, and then does not complete it during his lifetime, will have an angel visit him in the grave to help him complete his hifz in order to be able to appear before Allah as hafiz." A hadith of such content was not transmitted in a single collection of the collections just mentioned. Besides, in its sanad mentioned by al-Suyuti the name of 'Atiyyah al'Awfi is listed, and the renown experts for critique of transmitters of tradition all considered 'Atiyyah unreliable. See: al-Dhahabi, *Mizan*

1. In order to develop in the hearts of his followers love towards memorizing the Qur`an, the Prophet (saws) said:

« إِنَّ الَّذِي لَيْسَ فِي جَوْفِهِ شَيْءٌ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ كَالْبَيْتِ
الْخَرِبِ »

“Surely, the one who has nothing of the text of the Qur`an in his chest is like a demolished house.”¹²

The words *al-bayt al-kharib* mentioned in the hadith, and that literally means *a demolished house or a monument, which is, because of its condition, abandoned and uninhabited* is used to present figuratively a person who knows nothing from the noble Qur`an. The message of the hadith is that each believer should memorize a part of the Qur`an so that he should not be like a

al-I'tidal fi naqd al-rijal, Dar al-ma'rifah, Beirut, 1963, vol. 3, pp. 79-80.

The ahadith contained in this study are authentic and we think that what is mentioned in them in terms of rewards and honors which shall be extended to the huffaz in the next life is quite sufficient as an incentive for learning the Qur`an by heart and perseverance in that path.

¹² The hadith is recorded by al-Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*, narrated by Ibn Abbas and is considered to be *hasan-sahih*, that is to say it is authentic. See: al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, the year of publishing not mentioned, vol. 5, p. 177, hadith # 2913 .

demolished building of no use, which is avoided by all.

2. Stressing the importance of knowing the Qur`an by heart, which implies its correct understanding as well as living according to its rules and principles, the Prophet of Allah, may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, said the following:

« إِنَّ لِلَّهِ أَهْلِينَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ! قِيلَ : مَنْ هُمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ؟ قَالَ : أَهْلُ الْقُرْآنِ هُمْ أَهْلُ اللَّهِ وَخَاصَّتُهُ »

“Allah has His kinds of people. ‘Who are they, o Messenger of Allah?’ somebody asked.

They are the ones who are always with the Qur`an (ahl al-Qur`an). They are Allah’s ahl (household members) and His favorite ones’- answered the Messenger of Allah.”¹³

The notion *ahl*, which is used in this hadith, has several meanings: *family, wife, household members...* In the opinion of a distinguished scholar of the Qur`an Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abu Shahba from Egypt, this hadith can be understood as follows:

“Among His creatures Allah has two categories of people whom he especially looks

¹³ The hadith is recorded by Ahmad in his *Sunan* from Anas ibn Malik.

after and gives them honors. He esteems them extraordinarily and extends to them a special attention as a ruler looks after and esteems his family and close associates. Here we are being presented with an allegorical expression and figurative paradigm. The quoted hadith, as well as the other ahadith which relate to merits of memorizing the Qur`an - does not refer to the people who memorize Qur`an but do not know its content and do not adhere to its injunctions.

Those who are *Ahl a-Qur`an* memorize it, understand it correctly and, of course, live according to its principles. That was the attitude of the companions and first generations of this ummah.”¹⁴

3. The next hadith speaks about great honors which will be made available to the huffaz of the Qur`an in the next life. Al-Hakim and al-Tirmidhi have recorded from Abu Hurairah, r.a., that the Prophet of Allah, (saws), said:

« يَجِيئُ صَاحِبُ الْقُرْآنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيَقُولُ : يَا رَبِّ حَلِّهِ ، فَيَلْبَسُ تَاجَ الْكَرَامَةِ ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ : يَا رَبِّ زِدْهُ ، فَيَلْبَسُ حُلَّةَ الْكَرَامَةِ ، ثُمَّ يَقُولُ : يَا

¹⁴ See: Dr. Muhammad ibn Abu Shabha, *al-Madkhal li dirasat al-Qur`an*, Maktabah al-sunnah, Cairo, 1st edition, 1992, p. 357 .

رَبِّ ارْضَ عَنْهُ ، فَيَرْضَى عَنْهُ ، فَيُقَالُ لَهُ :
اقْرَأْ وَارْقَ ، وَتُزَادُ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ حَسَنَةٌ «

“The one who was carrying the Qur`an (that is hafiz) will come on the Day of Judgment, and the Qur`an will say: ‘O Allah, honor him!’ Then, on his head the crown of honor shall be placed. Again, the Qur`an will say: ‘O Allah, increase for him!’ Upon that, the robe of dignity shall be put on him. Once again, the Qur`an will say: ‘O Allah, be pleased with him!’, and Allah will be pleased with him. Then, it will be said: ‘Recite and be uplifted!’ And, with every recited verse, he will be raised for one degree.”¹⁵

At-Tirmidhi recorded a similar tradition from Abdullah ibn 'Amr, according to which the Prophet (saws) said:

« يُقَالُ لِصَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ : اقْرَأْ وَارْتَقَ وَرَتَّلْ كَمَا
كُنْتَ تُرْتَلُّ فِي الدُّنْيَا ، فَإِنَّ مَنَزَلَتَكَ عِنْدَ آخِرِ آيَةٍ
تَقْرَأُ بِهَا «

¹⁵ The hadith is recorded by al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak*, vol. 1, p. 553, with a designation that it is *sahih*, and is approved by the famous critic of the transmitters of tradition al-Dhahabi in his *Talkhis* of Hakim's *Mustadrak*. It is also recorded by al-Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*, chapter on merits of the Qur`an, vol. 5, p. 178, hadith number 2915, where it is marked as *hasan-sahih* (authentic).

“It will be said to the one who committed the Qur`an to his memory: Recite and be uplifted! Recite fluently and clearly as you had recited it on Dunya. Indeed, your level (in the Paradise) is on the last verse you recite.”¹⁶

It is probable that the quoted sayings of the Prophet (saws) and those similar to them gave incentive to the Islamic scholars to conclude that the Paradise has as many levels as number of the Qur`anic verses.¹⁷ This view is supported by the following statement of the renowned companion Amr ibn al-‘As, r.a.:

“Each verse in the Qur`an is one level in the Paradise and a light in your houses.”¹⁸

4. Benefits of memorizing the Qur`an will also be extended to the parents of the one who reads the Qur`an and lives in its spirit. We find reference to this in a hadith recorded by Imam al-Hakim, in his famous work on Hadith *al-Mustadrak*. The hadith is narrated by

¹⁶ See: al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan*, vol. 5, p. 177, #2914. Al-Tirmidhi considers the hadith to be *hasan-sahih*.

¹⁷ ‘Ali Mansur Nasif, *al-Taj al-Jami’u li al-usul fi ahadit al-rasul*, Pamuk Yayinlari, Istanbul, 1962, vol. 4, p. 5.

¹⁸ See: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Tajne ucenja Kur`ana (Secrets of reading the Qur`an)*, Travnik, p. 19.

Buraidah r.a., who narrates that the Prophet (saws) said:

« مَنْ قَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ ، وَتَعَلَّمَهُ وَعَمِلَ بِهِ ، أَلْبَسَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَاجًا مِنْ نُورٍ ، ضَوْءُهُ مِثْلَ ضَوْءِ الشَّمْسِ ، وَيُكْسَى وَالِدَاهُ حَلَّتَيْنِ ، لَا تَقُومُ لَهُمَا الدُّنْيَا ، فَيَقُولَانِ : بِمَ كَسَيْنَا هَذَا ؟ فَيُقَالُ : بِأَخْذِ وَلَدِكُمَا الْقُرْآنَ »

“Whoever reads the Qur`an, studies it and acts by it, on the Day of Judgment a crown of light shall be put on his head, and it will shine as the Sun shines. His parents will be dressed with two robes, unlike any in this world, and they will say: ‘Why are we dressed like this?’ They will be told: ‘Because your child was always reciting the Qur`an’.”¹⁹

One of the basic requirements necessary for one to become a hafiz of the Qur`an is the readiness to continuously rehearse it. That is why those who have acquired a noble name of hafiz of the Qur`an should be a personification of vigilance over the Qur`an. The hadith quoted

¹⁹ See: al-Hakim, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 1, p. 568. About this transmission al-Hakim says that it corresponds to the scientific criteria adhered to by a renowned authority in the hadith Imam Muslim, a al-Dhahabi is agreeable with such qualification.

earlier commends those who regularly take the Qur`an to read it, and announces to them a great reward in the next life. That reward will include their parents too, because they also made their contribution, because they were properly raising their children and teaching them the Qur`an.²⁰

5. Evidence of high honors that will be extended to those who were huffaz of the Qur`an can be found in a tradition recorded by Imam al-Tabarani in his *Mu`jam*, in which it was said:

« حَمَلَةُ الْقُرْآنِ عُرَفَاءُ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ »

*“Those who knew Qur`an by heart shall be the leaders among the dwellers of the Paradise.”*²¹

6. The following hadith also points to the extraordinary honor which will be extended to those who know Qur`an by heart. It has come to us through al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad,

²⁰ In connection to reward awaiting parents in the next life, the Imam al-Haythami reports a tradition which says that the said reward is prepared for parents who thought their children the Qur`an.

See: al-Haythami, *Majma' al-zawa' id wa manba' al-fawa' id*, Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, Bairut, 1998., vol. 7, pp. 165-166.

²¹ Reported by al-Tabarani in *Majma'*. Quoted according to: Dr. Muhammad ibn Abu Shahba, *al-Madkhal li dirasat al-Qur`an*, p.357 .

that 'Ali r.a. quoted the Prophet (saws) as having said:

« مَنْ قَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ ، فَاسْتَنْظَرَهُ ، فَأَحَلَّ حَالَهُ
وَحَرَّمَ حَرَامَهُ ، أَدْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ الْجَنَّةَ ، وَشَقَّعَهُ فِي
عَشْرَةِ مِنْ أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ ، كُلُّهُمْ قَدْ وَجِبَتْ لَهُمُ النَّارُ »

“Whoever was learning the Qur`an and memorized it entirely, adhering to its permitted and prohibited injunctions, Allah will admit him to Paradise and allow him to be the intercessor for ten members of his family from among those who deserved to enter the Paradise.”²²

* * *

After these sayings of the Prophet (saws), which promise such rewards and honors to those who know Qur`an by heart, it is logical to expect that they will be taken by Muslims, wherever they may be living and in whatever time, as incentives to pursue the objective of committing the text of the Qur`an to memory.

The first generation of Muslims excelled in this. They considered reading of the Qur`an as the best good deed and were ready to sacrifice anything to devote their time to it. When

²² See: Dr. Muhammad ibn Abu Shahba, the quoted work, p. 360. Also, consult: *al-Taj al-jami' li al-usul fi ahadith al-rasul*, vol. 4, p. 6.

somebody made an objection to Abdullah ibn Mas'ud that he was not fasting a sufficient number of days outside of Ramadan, he responded:

“When I fast, that weakens my ability to read the Qur`an, and reading the Qur`an is dearest to me!” Along with learning portions of the Qur`an by heart, the companions also studied its content and injunctions, striving to apply all that in their practical life. It has been transmitted that Ibn 'Umar studied only sura al-Bakarah for eight years, committing to memory its verses in the process, and thus increasing the level of understanding of its messages. Some Islamic scholars hold the opinion that learning Qur`an by heart, without understanding its injunctions, could be considered an innovation (bid'ah). Abu al-Walid ibn Rushd tells us in his work *Jami' al-bayan wa al-tahsil* that Abu Musa al-Ash'ari wrote to the khalif 'Umar r.a. that in Basra many people had learned the Qur`an by heart. 'Umar ordered him to give to them from the state treasury adequate rewards. When the following year Abu Musa wrote the khalif that the number of huffaz had doubled, he replied:

“Leave them, because I am afraid that the people may get too preoccupied with memorizing the Qur`an and neglect its understanding.”²³

Memorization of the Qur`an in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Committing entire Qur`an to memory is not something that has been a preoccupation of Arabs only, in whose language the Qur`an was revealed. Other nations, which came into the fold of Islam, also adopted the practice of memorizing the Qur`an and that has become inseparable from their tradition and cultural legacy.

Memorization of the Qur`an in the region that has been populated by the Muslims of Bosnian origin has been practiced since the very beginning of Islamic presence there. That means that in what constitutes Bosnia and Herzegovina, that we know today, the tradition of hifz has had a five hundred-year long history. Moreover, it can be assumed that tradition of memorization of the Qur`an among Bosniaks has been notably nurtured, considering that it is a small nation and that Arabic, the language of the Qur`an, is not

²³ See: Mehmed Handzic, *Selected works, Book 2, Topics from general and cultural history*, publishing house Ogljedalo, Sarajevo, pp. 267-268 .

their mother tongue. This assumption is supported by a study conducted by a renowned Bosnian ‘alim Mehmed-ef. Handzic, rahmatullahi alaih, in his article on *hifz al-Qur`an* written at the beginning of the fourth decade of the twentieth century.²⁴

In that study he points out that only from the year 1878 Sarajevo alone had over 160 of the huffaz of the Qur`an. He presents us with their names and a short biography.²⁵

The institution of hifz on the soil of Bosnia and Herzegovina has always represented an honor and extraordinary privilege. The title of a hafiz was decorating many known names in our religious and cultural life. It can be said that there has been no place populated with an average Muslim populace without a hafiz. Rarely it was the case that in the mosques of those places traditional muqabalahs were recited by readers who did not know Qur`an by heart. There were cases, and we find them in this time as well, that in a single family the tradition of hifz was carried on uninterruptedly from father to son.²⁶ Also, even though it is rarity, we find in some places of

²⁴ This study was published in the year 1942 in *al-Hidaya*, issue #8-10, pp. 193-196 .

²⁵ See: Mehmed Handzic the quoted work, pp. 265-290 .

²⁶ See: Enver Mulahalilovic, *Religious customs of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, 1998, p. 99.

Bosnia the families, whose all members are huffaz. One such family is the family of hafiz Fadil Porca from Sarajevo, in which, besides him, the title of a hafiz is held by his wife, son and daughter.

Du'a's upon acquiring the title of hafiz

Upon completing hifz before a mentor (*muhaffiz*), it is customary in Bosnia that a candidate recites the entire Qur`an by heart under the supervision of a special committee of experienced huffaz, formed for that occasion by the competent service of the Islamic community.

Following that, comes pronouncement and promotion of a new hafiz. That is organized within the public gathering traditionally known as Du'a` for a hafiz (*hafiska dova*).

During these ceremonial du'a`s, which are held exclusively in mosques, a great number of Muslims from Bosnia and beyond take part in the du'a. This, in its special way, speaks of the importance and the significance of the institution of hifz as a part of the tradition of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Another thing that shows how much attention in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been devoted to hifz is the fact that the Muslims from this part of the ummah had even their qurra-

hafiz. A qurra-hafiz is a person who, besides committing to memory the entire Qur`an, completed a special study for reading the Qur`an in seven or ten approved ways or variations. These variations are known among the sciences of the Qur`an as *al-qira`at al-sab`ah* or *al-qira`at al-`ashara*. Such a study can be mastered only by extraordinarily talented people. For this kind of extraordinary people also public promotions known as qurra`s du`a`s were convened upon their becoming qurra` huffaz. In a book devoted to religious customs of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its author wrote about these du`as the following:

“Besides learning and memorizing the whole Qur`an, which has been marked in our tradition by a special du`a` for a new hafiz, in Sarajevo we had a separate and additional study for learning how to read the Qur`an in seven approved variations. A candidate, who had to obtain a title of a hafiz as a precondition for entering into this program, would have obtained a diploma and title of qurra-hafiz upon completing this study before his professor. Identical study for learning how to read the Qur`an in seven variations was offered in the city of Banja Luka, and it was occasionally conducted by a haji-hafiz Ibrahim-ef. Maglajlic (b.1861, d.1936), well known hafiz and qari`, who served as a mufti in

Tuzla and Banja Luka and later as a Rais (grand-mufti). Still fresh in memory of many is the qurra`s du`a` held in the Beg`s Mosque (full name Gazi Husrev-begova) in Sarajevo in 1931/32 school year, on the occasion of promotion and pronouncement in qurra`s of one group of huffaz from among the students of the Ghazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo. They completed the seven variations study before the professor and the qurra` hafiz Hamdi-ef. Berberovic (b.1888, d.1934), hafiz Ibrahim Trebinjac (b.1912, d.1983), hafiz Ibrahim Proho (b.1909, d.1968) and hafiz Akif Handzic, all from Sarajevo, belonged to that group.²⁷

Period of stagnation and progress in hifz

Tradition of acquiring hifz of the Qur`an in Bosnia and Herzegovina was notably affected during the era of the communist regime. Considering the fact that the communist regime was educating and bringing up many generations,

²⁷ See: Enver Mulahalilovic, the quoted work, p. 101. Now, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is quite a small number of qurra` huffaz. Among those who acquired that honorable title is the qurra-hafiz Dzevad Sosic and qurra-hafiz Fadil Bektas, both graduates of the Islamic University in Medina, where they accomplished this skill.

rather successfully, in the spirit of its slogan “religion is a narcotic for people”, the tradition of hifz stagnated in a large measure. The number of huffaz decreased significantly, because the huffaz from older generations were gradually passing away, and within the new generations there was a very small number of those who even contemplated a dream of hifz, let alone completed it.

Such a condition lasted, approximately, till the 80’s of the twentieth century, when the students of the Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa in Sarajevo, motivated by the group of the professors of this institution, started to memorize portions of the Qur`an with more enthusiasm and zeal.²⁸

The result of this was that in the generation of the 1987 graduates of Gazi Husrev-beg

²⁸ From among the professors who particularly encouraged the students to memorize the Qur`an we feel indebted to mention primarily: the professor Abdullah Celebic (died as a martyr during the aggression in 1992), professor Hamdi Begic, who was teaching Qira`at and was a muhaffiz to number of those who had pursued hifz (before him hifz was acquired by hafiz Dzevad Sosic and hafiz Safvet Halilovic), dr. Acif Skenderovic, prof. Mahmut Karalic and others. Prior to that, a significant contribution to affirmation of hifz was given by hafiz Ibrahim Trebinjac, hafiz Kjamil Silajdzic and Kasim Hadzic, rahmatullah alaihim.

Madrasa six huffaz were produced²⁹, and in the following year that number increased. That year promoted into a hafiz was Halil Mehtic, renowned Imam and khatib of Sultan Ahmad (commonly known as a Market's) Mosque in the city of Zenica. He completed his hifz in the federal prison of Zenica, where he was put as a victim of the totalitarian communist regime.³⁰

Aggression on Bosnia and Herzegovina contributed, in certain measure, to national and religious awakening of Bosniaks, so that the number of those wishing to memorize the entire Qur`an increased. A significant number of students of the madrasas in Bosnia and Herzegovina are pursuing hifz, and some of them succeeded in completing it and being promoted in huffaz before finishing Madrasa. It is fascinating that in Elci Ibrahim-pasa Madrasa in Travnik, in the year 2001, from among 34 graduates, 9 of

²⁹ Those are: Aziz Alili (who had memorized the Qur`an even before he enrolled the Madrasa), Dzevad Sosic, Salem Aletic, Selver Iseric, Abdurahman Ademi and Safvet Halilovic.

³⁰ It is interesting to mention that on the day in which the hifz du`a` was organized for hafiz Halil Mehtic (on August 13, 1988) in Sarajevo salat al-janazah was offered to the renown Bosnian `alim prof. dr. Ahmed Smajlovic, rahmatullah `alaih, the man who had loved Qur`an dearly and who encouraged his students to memorize as much as possible of it.

them committed the entire Qur`an to memory as a part of their Madrasa's education. In spite of the fact that not all of them obtained their title of hafiz officially before the special board, they certainly deserve to be commended for the effort they put in, together with their professor of the Kira`at course, the hafiz Fadil Bektas, who coordinates very successfully the section of hifz in that Madrasa. In other madrasas too similar sections are put in place to facilitate memorization of the Qur`an. Indeed, this has to please every believing man and woman.

In the ranks of Bosniaks one finds individuals who, even though they did not attend religious school and universities, and were not holding any religious position, pursue hifz or have already become huffaz. It should be stated that cases like these existed before as well. A beautiful example of that is prof. dr. Faris Gavrankapetanovic, the son of Munir Gavrankapetanovic, rahmatullahi alaih, who, in the year 2003, was holding a position of the general director of the Clinical centre of the University of Sarajevo. Besides a doctorate in the field of medical sciences, he completed hifz and has been actively participating in reading so-called muqabalah in the Beg's mosque in Sarajevo as one of the huffaz. He completed his hifz before a famous Sarajevo hafiz Halid

Hadzimulic, the Imam and khatib of Careva (King's) Mosque, before whom the same title was obtained by a significant number of huffaz.

A special joy is presented in the fact that among the young Bosniak population there exist individuals who start and finish hifz while still being in the elementary school. In October of 2001, a hafiz du'a` was performed for the thirteen years old Muhammad Fetic from the ancient village of Vranduk, and in March of 2003 in Zupca (municipality of Breza) Haris Corbo, the ten-year old boy and the student of elementary school, was promoted into hafiz. In both cases enormous credit for success of the young huffaz belong to their mentors, who were not huffaz themselves, which is an interesting phenomenon, but they still succeeded, after years of work and effort with these boys, to lead them to the goal of a hafiz of the Qur`an.³¹

³¹ Muhaffiz of Muhamed Fetic was Ismail-ef. Jusufovic, who is presently working as a local Imam in the jamat Pojske (Zenica). While he was serving as an Imam and khatib in the dzemat Vranduk, this hard-working Imam, after having noticed Muhamed's intelligence and talent, taught him first Arabic letters and correct reading of the Qur`an, and then encouraged him to start memorizing its suras. That lasted for several years. What is especially important is that, even after having been transferred to another place Ismail-ef. Did not abandon his student. He traveled for tens of kilometers every week for purpose of

Learning of the noble Qur`an on the soil of Bosnia and Herzegovina is significantly present among the female population too. In the year of 1987, a noble title of *hafizah al-Qur`an* was acquired by Amina Porca, and two years later (in 1989.) the same title was awarded to Dzamila Barcic, both the students of Gazi Husrev-beg Madrasa. In the year 2001 the title of hafizah was first awarded to Senaida Karalic from the village of Klopce near Zenica, the student of the Islamic Pedagogical Academy of Zenica and the Philosophical Faculty of Sarajevo, followed by another hafizah Medina Ceric from Gracanica near Visoko, a graduate of the Osman-ef. Redzovic Madrasa. In 2002 the noble title of

leading that boy on his way to hifz. The boy became hafiz of the Qur`an when he was 13 years old. Indeed, this is a remarkable example which can serve as a beautiful model to other Imams how to be active in their dzema`at in promoting hifz.

Muhaffiz to the young Haris Corba was Dzihan Bukvic, the renown Sarajevo professor and the owner of a small press, who guided in the last few years a number of huffaz (among them few women as well). He also put enormous effort in teaching Haris, who started hifz in his sixth year, to be promoted in the youngest Bosniak hafiz in his tenth year, after having read the entire Qur`an in front of the official board of the Riyaset of the Islamic community of BiH .

Let these bright examples give incentive to all of us to be active in encouraging others to learn the Qur`an by heart.

hafizah was acquired by Azra Cica, the student of the Faculty of Islamic Studies.³²

It would be very useful and purposeful to initiate in the period ahead of us an establishment of a School of hifz as a special institution in Bosnia. That would provide an opportunity to gather in a single place (under the roof of one institution) candidates, particularly young people from different parts of our homeland and from wider area, who would be able to memorize the Qur`an within a certain length of time, supervised and led by verified experts. Furthermore, it can also be ensured that the future huffaz attend some courses relevant to the basic Islamic sciences, which would provide them with the needed education in the domain of the Qur`an and Sunnah. That would represent a very significant contribution to further affirmation of Islam in this part of ummah, especially among those who are not connected to Islam professionally.

³² Complete data about all those who know the whole Qur`an by heart are conducted by the Educational bureau e of Rijaset of the Islamic community. Here are mentioned only some names of huffaz, not all, and just as examples.

Some forms of abuse of the noble title of hafiz

We think that it is very essential to point to one negative practice regarding hifz and some of the huffaz in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is well known that all the sayings of the Prophet (saws), in which he encourages memorization of the Qur`an and commends that act and those who do it, refer directly or indirectly to the fact that those who know the Qur`an by heart are expected to be before all the people of high moral qualities. The noble title of *hafiz al-Qur`an*, which means *keeper of the Qur`an*, is truly great and honorable, because it indicates a person who is a paradigm of safeguarding over the last revelation of Allah to mankind. That is why the title of hafiz al-Qur`an is at the same time a great honor, but also an enormous responsibility for the one who carries it in his chest. This is not just because of a possibility that something might be forgotten, but because a hafiz carries with himself Allah's message to people and the people should recognize in him embodiment of faith, righteousness, taqwa, honesty etc. For that reason those who know Qur`an by heart should be careful how they behave in their private and especially in their public life, otherwise their hifz may be a witness against them, instead of being a

witness for them. Therefore, each hafiz must live in the spirit of the Qur`an and in conjunction with its commandments and principles.

In recent years we are witnessing this trend of big concerts being organized in some places of our homeland, where religious songs and qasidahs are performed by performers who introduce themselves as those who know Qur`an by heart. At such concerts many famous names from the entertainment world, a great philharmonic orchestras and various interpreters of folk and modern music take part. In such a constellation the performers of religious songs, who are announced and presented as huffaz in such an aggressive marketing campaign, look more and more like entertainment artists. If this continues so in the future, there is a reasonable concern that ordinary people will start to understand that the title of a hafiz refers to the entertainment performers who sing the songs of pious content and not to those who learnt Qur`an by heart and who guard not only over the text of the Qur`an but also over its content and essence. For this reason precisely it is known that in Islamic tradition those who know Qur`an by heart have always been considered and called *ashraf al-ummah* (the leaders of the Ummah), because such people are supposed to be

embodiment of the religious knowledge, piety, taqwa, etc.

In fact, we are not opposing performance of religious songs and qasidahs, particularly those of a beautiful content which stimulate religious feelings and which are not instrumentally followed by a kind of music that belongs to coffee bars or too loud (rock) music. But, what must not be left unanswered here is the possibility of placing the noble title of hafiz on the same level as concerts, which often, in the words of one TV host, contain, besides “spiritual music” also elements of “rock”, “pop” and other forms. Indeed, it is sad to watch those performers of religious songs being introduced with a title of a hafiz, who look like people who confuse ordinary listeners, while performing with guitarists, drummers and other performers of modern and folk music. Nevertheless, there are those who returned to their principle and refuse to participate any longer at such gatherings, which is very commendable.

As for those who continue to use the noble title of *hafiz al-Qur`an* to attract more guests to such concerts, they should rethink their attitude. Truly, Islam does not demand from us, as our respected alim Yusuf Qaradawi pointed out, to support the Truth (*al-haqq*) with falsehood (*al-batil*).

I pray to Allah Ta'ala to guide us and
make us firm on the path of Truth.

HOW TO BECOME A
HAFIZ OF THE
QUR'AN?

HOW TO BECOME A HAFIZ OF THE QUR`AN?

In the first part we dealt with the reasons for which Qur`an is learnt by heart, as well as great honors awaiting the huffaz in the Hereafter, provided that they constantly followed the teachings of the Qur`an in this life. The question which arises is: How to become a hafiz of the Qur`an? How does one commit to memory the Book containing over 600 pages of highly condensed text?

As we continue, we will bring forward concrete recommendations and instructions in connection to this.

Allah, may He be exalted, says in the Qur`an that He revealed It (the Qur`an) and that He will protect It: *“Verily, We, it is We Who have sent down the Dhikr (i.e. the Qur`an) and surely, We will guard It (from corruption).” (Al-Hijr, 9)*

Consequently, preservation of authenticity of the Qur`anic text is the prerogative of the One Who revealed it. The quoted verse contains a promise of Allah and His decree that the Qur`an

will be guarded against any change or deformation. That promise has been fulfilled because every Qur`anic word has been preserved and transmitted in the special way which is called in Islamic sources mutawatir transmission. That is the transmission in whose chain of transmitters (*sanad*) in each generation there is such a great number of the reliable people that it is impossible, from a scientific standpoint, to have any doubt as to the authenticity of what is transmitted.

One of very significant factors of preservation of the Qur`anic text from any change is contained in the fact that Qur`an is the Book which is possible to memorize entirely. Thanks to that, the Muslims have had fully preserved originality of their sacred Book, because the Qur`an was being recorded and memorized as parts of it were being revealed to the Prophet. Inspired by the Prophet, who was himself hafiz, and also inspired by his sayings which commend those who know Qur`an by heart, numerous Muslims, male and female, became huffaz.

Tradition of committing the Qur`an to memory has been alive till today. Indeed, a large number of people know Qur`an by heart.

It is interesting that the tradition of memorization of the Qur`an is not only characteristic of the regions whose population

speaking Arabic, but also the characteristic of all the peoples who embraced Islam. It is as interesting, for example, to see at the world's competitions in reciting the Qur'an people from different countries and continents who know Qur'an by heart.

At the world's competition of reciters of the Qur'an held in Cairo in 1995 and organized by Al-azhar University and Ministry of Waqf, I was competing as the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in category of 7,5 ajza`. On that occasion I had an opportunity to meet the huffaz from more than 60 countries participating at that particular competition. Overall winner was a boy from Egypt not older than seven years and he competed in category the entire Qur'an. Few huffaz came from China (Eastern Turkmenistan) and they were also competing in the same category. It is noteworthy to mention that even candidates from New Guinea and New Zealand took part in that competition.

Sincere Intention and Perseverance

A person who desires to memorize the Qur'an has to, before all, possess a sincere intention. The one intending to embark upon committing the whole Qur'an to his/her memory should make a firm niyyat that he is doing that for

Allah and His pleasure only, not for some worldly interest. In order to achieve that it is necessary for one to feel in his heart true love towards the Qur`an as the last revelation and message from Allah to people. Sincerity (*ikhlas*) is a secret of success and obtaining help of Allah - that is what is mentioned in numerous sayings of the Prophet (saws) That is, in fact, the road towards the highest levels of human soul, the road to moral virtues.

Love towards the noble Qur`an is manifested in numerous forms. One of the essential ones is constant contact with the Qur`an through its correct recitation and reflection upon its content. Therefore, the one who desires to memorize Qur`an is supposed to read it frequently. That will enable him to pronounce its words with correctness and fluency, and that is essentially important in the process of memorization.

This is why it is not recommended that those who have not learnt how to read Qur`an well and according to the rules of Tajweed should embark upon its memorization.

Along with sincere intention, a strong perseverance is required, because hifz can not be accomplished fast. Qur`an is the book which consists of more than 600 pages of dense text. In

order for a person to commit to memory such a book, truly enormous perseverance is needed, as well as a huge sacrifice from anything that may disturb the process of fulfilling the dream of hifz. A prospective hafiz should have continuity in adopting new and repeating the preceding material, should he seriously yearn to successfully complete such a complex task. Consequently, only a remarkable perseverance, hard work, a great deal of patience and special love towards the Qur`an can lead one to the goal of committing this Book to memory.

In this context it is useful to remember the following verses of an Arab poet:

*Who goes after honor, he sacrifices his
rights;
Proportionate to the work invested,
reward will come.
Accomplish something, and then sleep
peacefully;
If you search for a pearl, dive deeply.
Honor and praise are in work and will,
And strength and firmness in sacrificing
nights.
Who thinks that praise will come without
effort,
He lives his life in vain.
I've turned my nights into lively days,
In order to realize my dream.*

*Help me my Lord, accept my prayer,
To accomplish the highest goal through
obtaining knowledge.*³³

As he memorizes portions of the Qur`an, the candidate develops greater and greater love towards it. Along with other things which he has to do daily, memorizing new pages and repeating those memorized earlier become quite a normal routine. Many huffaz reveal that they felt some strange emptiness in the days in which they failed to memorize something new from the Qur`an because they were overly preoccupied with other things. As soon as they would resume memorizing new pages that feeling of emptiness would disappear.

It is a Must to Memorize the Qur`an Before a Mentor

Qur`an is the book which one can memorize entirely, but for that undertaking a mentor is needed.

A person which is supposed to lead a prospective hafiz towards his goal of committing

³³ Taken from: al-Zarnuji: *Guide to a student on the path of acquiring knowledge*, Takvim, 1981., translated by Nijaz Sukric, publisher Predsjednistvo Udruzenja Islamskih vjerskih sluzbenika, SR BiH, p. 293. The verses adapted in Bosnian by professor Midhat Kasap.

the Qur`an to memory is known in the Muslim tradition as muhaffiz. That tradition goes back to the time of the Prophet of Allah, who memorized the Qur`an before the angel Jibreel.

In the relevant works of Hadith³⁴ it is recorded that the Prophet (saws) would read before Jibreel the entire Qur`an in the month of Ramadan of every year. That process is known in the Islamic literature as mu`aradah, which can be translated as collective reading or exposition. In the year in which he left this world, the Prophet (saws) read the Qur`an before this honorable angel two times.

Keeping the mind the fact that the Prophet of Islam did not know how to read, and to that testify reliable historic literature, it is clear that during those mu`aradah readings he depended on his hifz, that is to say, be recited before the angel by heart. It is recommended that a muhaffiz should also be hafiz, considering that huffaz read the Qur`an correctly and understand and know well the difficulties awaiting a person who tries to become a hafiz. Nevertheless, this is not a must. What is important is that a mentor should be well acquainted with the science of Tajweed and he must be very patient and attentive towards the one whom he leads through hifz, because a

³⁴ See: Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani: *Fath al-Bari bi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, Dar al-ryan, Cairo, vol. 7, p.132.

prospective hafiz, while going through the hard process of memorizing the Qur`an, will be facing countless difficulties like tiredness, lack of enthusiasm, lack of patience, possible preoccupation with other problems, etc. Muhaffiz (mentor) is expected to encourage his student and offer him moral and every other support to take him to the successful completion of his noble aim.

Presence of skilful and communicative mentor is very essential in the process of pursuing hifz. Therefore, anyone who desires to become a skilful hafiz should have a mentor, who will regularly check and supervise his reading by heart at the mutually acceptable times, and the best for a prospective hafiz is that they meet every day. It proceeds from this that a candidate would not start memorizing a new text before having previously memorized pages checked out and verified.

Memorization in *Circles*

Many methods of memorization of the Qur`an are known. The most commonly used are the following two:

The first is that a candidate follows the textual order of the Qur`an, that is the order established in the original Mushaf. That method is good in the case of a candidate who

understands Arabic and is able to see the connection between the meanings of the verses. Also, if a candidate gives up his intention to become a hafiz (if he/she does not succeed to complete hifz), he will still have complete parts (chapters, hizbs, juz's) which he was able to memorize, and that is certainly a very beneficial thing. The companions used to say that the one who committed to memory the sura *al-Baqarah* and *Ali 'Imran* "is notable in their eyes".³⁵

The second method is from the one explained above. A candidate does not commit the pages of the Qur`an following the original order of Mushaf, but follows a different order.

As we know the Qur`an is divided into 30 *ajza`*, each consisting of 20 pages.³⁶ A candidate first takes the final page of the first *juz`*. As he gets it checked before his mentor, he moves to the

³⁵ See: Safwat Mustafa Halilovic: *Al-Tafsir bi al-ma`lur: ahammiyyatuhu wa dawabituhu; dirasa tatbiqiyya fi surah al-Nisa'* (Traditional Tafsir: Its Importance and Regulations; Applicable Critical Study in sura *al-Nisa`*), Dar al-nashr li al-jami'at, Cairo, 1999, p. 39.

³⁶ Obviously, here the standard issue of *Madinian Mushaf*, which is the most widespread in the world, is implied. In that mushaf each page starts with a new verse. Consequently, there is no a verse whose portion is moved to another page. It is evident that the Qur`an is printed that way in our country, then in Turkey and other parts of the Islamic world.

final page of the second juz`, then third, fourth, fifth, and so to the last-thirtieth juz`. When he commits to memory the final page of the last juz` that makes up what is called the first round (or circle). Then he goes back to the first juz`, and starts memorizing the second last page of the first juz`, repeating the previous one. The muhaffiz listens to him while he recites both pages. The candidate moves on to the second last page of the second juz`, then to third, fourth and all the remaining ajza`. As he memorizes and checks before muhaffiz the last second page of every juz`, he has completed second circle. This method of pursuing hifz knows of 20 such circles. It is crucial that a prospective hafiz regularly repeats previously memorized page, along with the newly adopted one, and that muhaffiz does not give him permission to move on to the new pages before having checked out and verify the old in front of him. Taking advantage of this method the candidate actively refreshes the memorized text, which is essentially important in the process of committing the Qur`an to memory.

Even though the first method has certain advantages, it is nevertheless characterized by some disadvantages, as it does not offer a systematical way of keeping afresh the pages previously memorized. Once he starts off with memorization of the Qur`an, the candidate remembers, as the time passes, new pages better

and better, but the problem arises when he strives to keep and maintain what he had memorized earlier. Naturally, he desires to commit to his memory new pages as soon as possible, but has a problem to hold on to the old ones. *How does one keep the adopted pages from forgetfulness? There is no way other than repetition.* Of course, a candidate who chose the first method of hifz may repeat the already memorized text, but the second method is purposeful, as he is simply forced to refresh old pages with those which he learnt before. It is owing to this that we recommend the second method to be used. And we emphasize this recommendation particularly to those candidates who do not know Arabic language and are therefore unable to take benefits offered by the first method (especially the benefits of connecting the memorized pages based on the meaning). Having in mind that majority of the candidates from among our people do not understand Arabic well, the second method is more suitable for them. That is the method used in the process of hifz in Turkey and some other Muslim countries.

It is recommended that a candidate, irrespective of the method he selected, should always use the same print of mushaf, as he memorizes new and repeats the old pages. Usage of different prints of mushaf produces confusion and disturbs the order of the memorized text.

Memorization in Continuity

It is very important that a candidate should always memorize new pages in continuity, without pause. Continued memorization on daily basis is much better than that with interruption. Once he embarks upon his goal, a prospective candidate should memorize something new every day. Quantity of memorized text should neither be too large nor small. Experience has shown that one new page daily is an optimum which a future hafiz should adhere to. Of course, he should also allocate days for rest. Our suggestion is that six new pages have to be memorized weekly. That allows one day a week for break. If a candidate would adhere to this plan, he would memorize 312 pages in one year (52 weeks), which is little more than half of the Qur`an. This means that, with continued work, little less than a two year period is sufficient for one to memorize the entire Qur`an. Logically, that is possible in a much shorter length of time, but it depends on the candidate's memory as well as his desire and enthusiasm. In the beginning every prospective hafiz learns much harder new pages, but later that process becomes easier and easier.³⁷

³⁷ I experienced it myself, and numerous other huffaz told me the same, that at the beginning of their pursuit of hifz it was taking them much longer to memorize a new page; they needed an hour to two hours, and sometimes even

A candidate and his muhaffiz can, for the purpose of facilitation of the process of learning, the table (see appendix at the end of the book), on which they will note dates they rehearsed each new page. By following this method the candidate has in front of himself all the pages of the Qur`an and is always informed how much he accomplished on his road to hifz.

To Repeat What One Has Memorized

As much it is difficult to memorize the Qur`an, it is even more difficult to keep from forgetfulness what one has memorized. That requires enormous discipline and perseverance in repeating. No day should pass by without a prospective hafiz repeating something of the memorized pages of the Qur`an. There are different opinions regarding the amount of the memorized texts that should be repeated. That is understandable, considering the quality of hifz

more. But, as the time passed, the ability of memorization improves so that it is possible to memorize some pages within five to six minutes only. Naturally, it should be kept in mind that those pages which are memorized quickly can be forgotten quickly, and the other way around: what is learnt slowly and firmly, stays more strongly stored in memory. As a measure of strength of hifz a candidate's readiness to recite in Salat the memorized text can be utilized.

and the strength of memory of every particular candidate.

The method of pursuing hifz in circles helps the candidate to repeat the previously memorized pages, but in addition to this a great deal of attention should be devoted to the repetition of the old pages. In that respect, reciting in Salah of the pages committed to memory can be used as means of mastering what a prospective hafiz had memorized before. If he is able to recite by heart those pages in Salah, which means that he has memorized them well. Should he be able to recite them also when leading the congregation in Salah (if he has such an opportunity), that is an indication that he has really mastered the subject material. That is why every person who embarked upon the goal of hifz, should try, after having been checked by his mentor, to use the adopted Qur`anic text in prayers as much as possible in order to cement that in his memory. If he perseveres in that, it can be expected that his hifz will be qualitative.

In this the candidate should look up to the first Muslim generation, when many used to get up at night to offer nafl prayer, thus thanking Allah for the bounties He blessed them with and imploring Him for guidance, mercy and forgiveness. In those evening prayers they used to read along portions of the Qur`an, following in

that the Prophet sws, who, often prolonged his qiyam so much, reciting the Qur`an and supplicating, that his legs would get swollen. When he was asked why he, whom everything was forgiven, was doing that, he replied: “*Should I not be a thankful slave (of Allah)!*”³⁸

Advice and Recommendations of Professor Al-Ghawthani

Professor Yahya al-Ghawthani is known as a person who was long preoccupied with the phenomenon of hifz of the Qur`an. He visited many countries populated by Muslims for the purpose of getting acquainted with the methods of memorization of the Qur`an. Al-Ghawthani is the author of very notable work *Kayfa tahfaz al-Qur`an al-Karim* (How to memorize the noble Qur`an), which is translated into Bosnian.³⁹

In that book he displays the basic rules and practical methods for memorization of the Qur`an. As we continue, we will present his recommendations and advices intended for those who wish to commit the entire Qur`an to memory. In order to avoid a lengthy discussion

³⁸ The hadith is reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim and many other authors of collection of ahadith.

³⁹ The book was printed by Taibah International, Sarajevo, 2000 .

on this particular subject, we have summarized those advices, not adhering to the practice of literal translation.

1. Sincerity (ikhlas) is the secret of success and of the help of Allah. The one who wishes to memorize the Qur`an should make a sincere intention that he is doing that solely for Allah and His pleasure, not to achieve some worldly benefit. The Prophet (saws) said: *“Indeed, the deeds are valued according to intentions.”*

2. Learning in youth is like engraving in stone. This truth should be an incentive to our children and youth to be as active as possible in memorizing the content of the Qur`an. Of course, older people can also memorize Qur`an, but at old age that is much harder.

3. Choosing suitable time is of essence, because a person under anxiety and concern can hardly commit something to his memory. This is why one should choose the time when there is a peace around and when soul is restful and unconcerned.

4. Choosing a place for memorization is also an essential factor, because committing something to memory is different than leisure reading. It is desirable that the place should not be filled with pictures, engravings, ornaments and things which will serve as a distraction. It is

better that the place is more closed, as long as the air is fresh and clean.

Khatib al-Baghdadi said: “The best places for learning are rooms on upper levels, as well as places with no objects which divert one’s attention or those where a person may be disturbed in certain way...” In our opinion, the best place is a mosque, because in it a person looks after the three of his organs: the eye – as he does not see in it what is haram; the ear – because he does not hear in it anything which displeases Allah; and the tongue – because in a mosque only good is spoken. These three organs represent the three major instruments relevant for reading the Qur`an, and if they are secure, memory will be stable and qualitative.

5. Melodious and prolonged reciting of the Qur`an, that is to say, reciting according to the rules of Tajweed, strengthens the verses in memory, because the Qur`an possesses a specific musicality and harmony, so that the ear which had listened earlier repeated vocal and semi-vocal recitation of a certain Qur`anic texts, in most of the case, easily recognizes and feels an eventual mistake.

6. Usage of only one and the same copy of the Qur`an in the process of memorization and repetition of the learned material. It is not advisable to read from different copies of mushaf

as it creates confusion and disturbs the order of the memorized verses.

7. Correct pronunciation before starting memorization. In order for that to be achievable, a person must know Arabic letter and be well versed in reading the Qur`anic text while looking. It is recommended that he should read before his mentor the intended text from the Qur`an, and only then to memorize it, because it is very difficult to correct the texts learnt with mistakes.

8. Connecting the memorized material by way of sound and visual joining of the ends and the beginnings of the verses. Sufficient attention must be given to that, considering that a pause between verses represents a difficulty to majority of potential huffaz; how to continue after a pause, and what comes after the verse at whose end pause was made!?

9. Repetition of the Qur`anic text intended to be memorized, and this differs from a person to a person, because we do not possess identical memory; some people remember quickly, with fewer number of repetitions, while others have to repeat many times in order to remember. One can repeat to himself, as well as in a loud voice. The first way is recommended before going to bed. In that way, the state of the material committed to memory as well as position and order of verses, etc. are further consolidated.

10. Continued reading every day is much better than reading with interruptions. The example of drops which constantly fall on a rock and create a hole in it tells enough.

Naturally, a person has to assign for himself days of rest, but it is essential to maintain continuity in memorizing. It is necessary to avoid memorization in the condition of tiredness and a lack of motivation. To the contrary, each time he feels tired, the candidate should take up something that will cheer him up, like reading some interesting text, stories, poetry and alike.

11. Reading slowly and in a low voice is better than fast. The pupil of the human eye plays a very important role in the process of memorization. It is like the objective of a camera. Cameraman moves his camera attentively and without rush from object to object of his interest, making sure that his hand is calm. The one who intends to memorize a page of the Qur`an should handle himself in the same manner. The first time he reads a verse, he should do it slowly and attentively fix his sight on it. Then what was learnt by the tongue should be repeatedly pronounced in order to be stored in one's memory. The slower and lighter the reading is, the more effective it is. Experience has shown that the verses which one memorizes with great concentration, slowly and gradually, repeating

them more times and only then considering them learnt, are far better engraved in his memory than those memorized differently. Huffaz themselves feel that they know some suras better than others. And the reason for that is that they invested much more effort.

12. More concentration on the identical verses removes the possibility of confusion. The Qur`an is the book which contains many similar verses. Sometimes one letter is the only difference, as is the case in verse 78 of sura *al-A`raf* (*fa-asbahu fi darihim*) and in the 67th verse of sura *Hud* (*fa asbahu fi diyarihim*). Sometimes that difference is manifested only in the definite article (*al*), as is the case in the verse 61 of sura *al-Baqarah* (*wa yaqtulun al-nabiyyina bi ghayr al-haqq*) and in the verse 21 of sura *Ali `Imran* (*wa yaqtulun al-nabiyyina bi ghayri haqq*). In the first case the word *al-haqq* is with definite article and in the other without it. Such similarities create great difficulties in the process of hifz and that requires maximum concentration. It is largely helpful if the mentor draws candidate's attention to those similarities. About those, at first sight identical verses, there exist separate works like *Al-Burhan fi mutashabih al-Qur`an* (by al-Karimani); *Mutashabih al-Qur`an* (Hasan al-Munawi);

Dabt al-mutashabihat fi al-Qur`an al-karim
(Muhammad al-Saghir) and others.

13. Constant contact with the mentor represents an essential need for every potential hafiz. In this case, the mentor is a teacher who, besides teaching the student correct pronunciation of the Qur`anic words, is there to encourage his student, removes problems which he encounters in the course of memorization, draws his attention to mutually identical verses, reminds him of getting closer to Allah and a reward which awaits those who know Qur`an by heart, etc. That encouragement is a very essential factor on the road to the final goal-the goal of hifz, because a candidate goes through various crises in pursuing that. That is why it is so important that a person who desires to become a hafiz of the Qur`an should find a skilful mentor.

The conditions which a mentor should meet are:

- a) To possess the right 'aqidah (belief) and to have high moral qualities;
- b) To be well versed in the Qur`an;
- c) To be capable of passing to others his knowledge.

14. The one who desires to become a hafiz must protect himself from sinning and should adjust his whole practical life so that it agrees

with the teachings of the Qur`an. Constancy in worship illuminates one`s heart, brings tranquility and leads to cleanliness of mind and preparedness for learning. Renowned companion, Abdullah ibn Mas`ud said: “I believe that a man forgets what he knew due to sins he committed.” Imam Malik Ibn Anas was asked if there was something that helps in pursuing hifz, and he answered: “If something is helpful in that regard, it is the abandoning of sins.”

15. Systematical repetition strengthens what is learnt. Process of repetition is as important as learning itself, and therefore it demands great attention. It can be said that repetition is even more important than learning, because a candidate approaches to committing to memory new pages with an enthusiastic heart and desire to become a hafiz. Repetition of the previously memorized pages is hard and it requires enormous effort and patience. Without repetition, the learnt pages are quickly forgotten. Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq said: *“The heart is the soil, knowledge is vegetation, and repetition is water. When the soil is deprived of water, vegetation will become dry.”*

16. Comprehensive understanding leads to a universal hifz. Understanding of the Qur`anic text largely helps in the process of memorization. Nevertheless, it is not general rule, because it is

possible to memorize Qur`an also without being able to comprehend its content. The same is with people whose mother tongue is a language other than Arabic. There exist in the world a great number of those who know the Qur`an by heart and do not understand a single Arabic word. However, it is true that memorizing the Qur`an with understanding is certainly more beneficial and better.

17. A strong motive and personal desire towards reading of the Qur`an. The aim of every sincere Muslim is winning pleasure of Allah. One of the most significant means in achieving that aim is the noble Qur`an. There are well known sayings of the Prophet (saws) in which he speaks about a great reward and extraordinary honors which Allah swt. has prepared for huffaz as well as those who have always been with the Qur`an, read it and lived according to its teachings. These are quite sufficient motives for Muslims, young and old alike, to turn to the reading of the Qur`an.

18. Supplication to the Creator and asking help from Him is the road of a believer to easing all hardships. The one who is in pursuit of hifz should firmly depend on Allah and constantly implore Him for His help. Surely, Allah the Glorious will never reject a sincere supplicant: *“And when My slaves ask you concerning Me,*

then (answer them), I am indeed near (to them). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So, let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright.” (al-Baqarah, 184)

These are the advices and recommendations of the professor al-Ghawthani. We presented them in this work because most likely a wider circle of readers will not be able to get hold of his book *Kayfa tahfaz al-Qur`an al-karim* (How will you be able to memorize the noble Qur`an). Considering an enormous experience which the distinguished professor possesses in the field of hifz of the Qur`an, we are of the opinion that the advices offered will come handy to everyone who desires to become a hafiz.

By adhering to the enlisted advices and, of course, sincere niyyat, strong desire, great perseverance, continued effort and repetition of the adopted text, all of which we have spoken about on the preceding pages, a candidate will successfully complete his task, with the help of Allah, and become one of many huffaz. I implore Allah the Glorious to make our homeland Bosnia and Herzegovina a place where the Qur`an will always be read, memorized and practically implemented, because that is the guarantor of our survival: *“Indeed, We have sent down for you a Book (the Qur`an) in which there*

is your Reminder. Will you not then understand?”
(al-Anbiya` , 10)

GUARDING AND
MAINTAINING THE
HIFZ

GUARDING AND MAINTAINING THE HIFZ

Human being is a creature prone to forgetfulness. Some scholars are even inclined to see correlation between the word *insan*, which in Arabic designates a man, with the word *nisyan* which means forgetfulness. According to such an understanding, *insan* (man) would be a being of forgetfulness or a being who forgets. However, even from linguistic standpoint, not to mention other aspects, that understanding is far from correct. The word *insan* is derived from the root *uns*, which means sociability, intimacy, geniality, friendliness, etc... Consequently; *insan* (man) is a sociable being.

The process of memorization of the Qur`an is expressly difficult and demanding, but it is even more difficult to save what is memorized from forgetfulness. For that reason the Prophet (saws) left behind many sayings in which he encourages that one should frequently repeat what one has committed to memory from the Qur`an and warns of a danger of forgetting that.

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated the following words of the Prophet (saws):

« تَعَاهَدُوا الْقُرْآنَ ، فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَهُوَ أَشَدُّ
تَفْصِيًّا مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فِي عُفْلِهَا »

“Be in constant contact with the Qur`an (i.e. recite it frequently)! By the One in Whose hand is my soul, it slides out faster than the camel gets out of the rope with which she is tied up.”⁴⁰

Abdullah ibn 'Umar r.a. narrates that the prophet (saws) said:

« إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ صَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ كَمَثَلِ صَاحِبِ الْإِبِلِ
الْمُعَقَّلَةِ ، إِنْ عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَمْسَكَهَا ، وَإِنْ أَطْلَقَهَا
دَهَبَتْ »

“The one who is a hafiz of the Qur`an is like the keeper of the tied camel: if he watches her-she is his, and if he releases her-she will run away!”⁴¹

Encouraged by these hadith and others with similar content, the Muslims from the first generation demonstrated almost unbelievable example of sacrifice, hard work, patience and

⁴⁰ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim in their *Sahih* .

⁴¹ Reported by Muslim in his *Sahih* and Malik in his *Muwatta`* .

endurance in respect of learning the Qur`an by heart. Imam an-Nawawi In his work *At-Tibyan fi adabi hamalah al-Qur`an*, devoted to merits and virtues of hifz is presenting the fact that individuals from salafi-salih used to read the whole Qur`an every two months. Some used to do it within one month period, and there were also those who used to do it within much shorter length of time, every ten nights, every eight, seven, six, five, and even in fewer days. There were even such individuals - Muslims who would complete reading the entire Qur`an every day, and some days even more than that. Among those who managed to read the whole Qur`an within one day and night were 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, Tamim ad-Dari, Sa'id ibn Jubair, Mujahid, Imam al-Shafi' and others.⁴²

Imam al-Nawawi, then says: "It is correct to state that the quantity of the recited text of the Qur`an differed from person to person. The one who, after deep reflection over its reading, uncovers beauty and more profound meanings of the Qur`an, let him recite what he is able to completely understand. Also, the one who is preoccupied with spreading the knowledge (teaching others) or with some other work

⁴² See: al-Nawawi: *al-Tibyan fi ada b hamalah al-Qur`an*, Dar al-Sabuni, 1st edition, pp. 81-83 .

important for the deen and interests of Muslims, let him reduce his reading of the Qur`an to a measure which will not affect him in accomplishing what is expected of him.”⁴³

Of course, here one should also keep in mind that the Muslims from the first generations used to read the Qur`an primarily because of a great reward prepared for a reader (for each harf ten hasanat), as well as because of satisfying the needs stemming from their Iman, as Qur`an nourished their hearts and souls. Reading of the Qur`an “for money” and “for souls of diseased” was not known to those generations, as they simply found neither place nor time for it. That was one of the reasons why their condition was better than the condition of the subsequent generations.

In order for the text of the Qur`an to be reserved enormous perseverance, discipline and continuity in repetition are needed. One must read the Qur`an daily and repeat what he learnt.

What will help a hafiz to endure in repetition is a strong conviction that he is a keeper of the Qur`an, the book which represents the last revelation of Allah, his word and message to people. That book is the main source

⁴³ See: al-Nawawi, the quoted work, p. 85 .

of Islam in doctrinal, legal, moral and every other aspect. To keep in memory the book which has such an importance is certainly very honorable task. That is why a hafiz should focus his strength in a way that would make him persevere. In a hadith the Prophet (saws) says:

« يَقُولُ الرَّبُّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ : مَنْ شَغَلَهُ الْقُرْآنُ
وَذَكَرَنِي عَنْ مَسْأَلَتِي أُعْطِيَهُ أَفْضَلَ مَا أُعْطِيَ
السَّائِلِينَ »

'Allah, the exalted, said: 'The one who occupies himself with the reciting of the Qur`an and remembering Me, and then ask nothing from Me (i.e. his reciting of the Qur`an and remembering Me takes his full attention) I will give him the best that I give to those who ask from Me. “⁴⁴

In the transmission of the mentioned hadith, recorded by al-Darimi, the Prophet (saws) says:

« مَنْ شَغَلَهُ قِرَاءَةُ الْقُرْآنِ عَنْ مَسْأَلَتِي وَذَكَرَنِي
أُعْطِيَهُ أَفْضَلَ ثَوَابِ السَّائِلِينَ .. »

“To the one who is busy reciting the Qur`an and asks nothing from Me and has no time for

⁴⁴ See: al-Tirmidhi, Abu `Isa: *Sunan*, Cairo, vol. 5, p. 184., hadith #2926. Al-Tirmidhi considers this narration to be *hasan-gharib*.

*other kinds of dhikr (i.e. reciting of Qur`an takes all his free time) I will give the best reward that I give to those who ask from Me....”*⁴⁵

It is of the utmost importance that the person who got promoted in a hafiz should not in his repetition of the Qur`an be content with repetition by reading only. It is necessary that he reads it by heart as well. Of course, after the hafiz du`a` and official promotion into a hafiz that reading by heart will not be taking place before a mentor, but independently, or, eventually, before one of a closer family members (father, neither, son, wife, etc), or some of friends. The best is to repeat a page by way of looking into the Qur`an, then by heart.

Here also a measure of quality of the memorized part is ability to read it correctly in Salat. What one can recite by heart during his Salat, which is well remembered? This is why each hafiz should try to always recite in Salat new pages and new suras, because that is the best opportunity for their repetition.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See: al-Darimi: *Sunan*, Dar al-rayyan, Cairo, 1st edition, 1987, volume 2, p. 533, hadith #3356 .

⁴⁶ At the world competition of the readers of the Qur`an, held in Cairo in 1995., I had a chance to meet numerous huffaz from different parts of the world. Several huffaz arrived from the People’s Republic of China (Eastern Turkmanistan) and they competed in the category *the entire*

A beautiful example of keeping and maintaining hifz we saw in hafiz Ibrahim Trebinjac, rahmatullah alaih. Those who knew him well say that for twenty years in one of the Sarajevo mosques he offered Fajr prayer with khatmah, so that in each rak'ah he would recite a half of a juz'. Thus, in one month he would read by heart the entire Qur'an just in one Salat. Certainly, hafiz Trebinjac, rahmatullah alaih, was a true keeper of the Word of Allah throughout all his mature life. It is believed that in his lifetime he read the whole Qur'an three thousand times.

Is forgetting of the memorized text of the Qur'an grave sin?

Among scholars of Islam there is disagreement of the memorized text of the Qur'an that one forgot: is that grave sin or only a disliked act?

Renowned Islamic authority, Imam al-Suyuti holds the view that forgetting of the

Qur'an. Responding to my question how they keep their hifz of the Qur'an fresh in their memory, one of them answered that he "simply could not forget the Qur'an because he had memorized it in his early youth, and he maintains and keeps it in memory by constantly reading khatma (complete Qur'an) in Salat."

memorized text of the Qur`an represents a great sin and he call to mind a famous 'alim of the Shafi school of thought Imam al-Nawawi, who expressed such an opinion in his work *al-Rawdah*. Two following sayings of the Prophet (saws) are used as proof:

« مَنْ قَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ ثُمَّ نَسِيَهِ ، لَقِيَ اللَّهَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
أَجْدَمَ »

*“Who reads the Qur`an, then he forgets (how to read) it, will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment as a mutilated person.”*⁴⁷

« عُرِضَتْ عَلَيَّ أَجُورُ أُمَّتِي حَتَّى الْقِدَاةَ
يُخْرِجُهَا الرَّجُلُ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ ، وَعُرِضَتْ
عَلَيَّ ذُنُوبُ أُمَّتِي ، فَلَمْ أَرَ ذَنْبًا أَكْبَرَ مِنْ
سُورَةٍ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ أَوْ آيَةٍ ، أَوْ تَيْهًا رَجُلٌ ثُمَّ
نَسِيَهَا »

“I was shown beforehand rewards of my ummah, including even an ounce of good that he gets out of the mosque. I also was shown the sins of my ummah, and I saw no sin greater than that

⁴⁷ Reported by Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Abu Dawud in his *Sunan*.

*a man forgets a sura or a verse which he was blessed with.”*⁴⁸

The fact is, however, that these two ahadith have been an object of criticism of the Islamic scholars. Among them, the eminent alim Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi in his work *Kayfa nata'amal ma'a al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (How do we relate to Qur'an?) says that after detailed analyses it was concluded that the first hadith has in its sanad (chain of transmitters) one untrustworthy person (Yazid ibn Abu Ziyad), and also the sanad is broken (munqati'), and therefore such a hadith can no be used as a relevant Shari'ah proof. As for the second hadith, it was not transmitted in authentic way, and it is also listed in some of the collections which contain exclusively *da'if* hadith.⁴⁹

Imam at-Tirmidhi, who recorded this hadith, gives the following note right after presenting its text in his Sunan: "This hadith is *gharib* and it was transmitted only this way (i.e.

⁴⁸ Reported by Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi in their respective *Sunans* from Anas ibn Malik.

⁴⁹ See: Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi: *Kayfa nata'amal ma'a al-Qur'an al-'azim*, Dar al-shuruq, Cairo, 1st edition, 1999, p. 140. The collection alluded to in this case is *Al-'ilal al-mutanahiyah*, by the author Abu al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi.

it has not come to us through any other sanad of transmitters). I mentioned this hadith to Muhammad ibn Isma'il (he refers to Imam al-Bukhari), and it was not known to him. He (al-Bukhari) said: -I do not know that al-Muttalib ibn 'Abdullah (*rawi* who transmits this narration from Anas ibn Malik) heard any of the companions...”⁵⁰

On the basis of these statements it is clear that narrations transmitted by that *rawi*, in cases when they are not supported by another sanad of transmitters, can not be taken as authentic. It is evident that this hadith reached Abu Dawud the same way, that is from al-Muttalib ibn 'Abdullah, who supposedly received it from Anas ibn Malik.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See: Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunan, Kitab Fada'il al-Qur'an*, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, vol. 5, pp. 178 & 179, hadith #2916. The eminent authority on hadith Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani says about that *rawi* in his work *Taqrib al-Tahdhib* that he is '*kathir al-tadlis wa al-irsal*', which is a classification quite consistent with what Bukhari mentioned about him, and it is that the narrations which he transmitted he had not heard from the companions. See: Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani: *Taqrib al-Tahrib*, Dar al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, Bairut, 1993, vol. 2, p. 189 .

⁵¹ See: Abu Dawud: *Sunan, Kitab al-salah* Dar al-hadith, Cairo, vol. 1, p. 124., hadith #461 .

After the presented analyses of the hadith dr. al-Qaradawi says: “After it has been proven that the ahadith which have been used as evidence that forgetting something of the text of Qur`an is a grave sin, we see no other way but to conclude that forgetting something of the memorized text of Qur`an is disliked thing (*fi mawdi’ al-zamm*), because it is a consequence of negligence of repetition of Qur`an. The proofs offered are not sufficient to characterize something as a haram, let alone a grave sin. It correct to say that forgetting (memorized portions of) Qur`an represents something very disliked (*makruh karahiyyah shadidah*), and it is dishonorable for a Muslim blessed with this great treasure (*hifz*) to have an irresponsible attitude towards it, and because of that allow it to be lost. What led me to take this standpoint is my concern that people might neglect learning Qur`an by heart (*hifz al-Qur`an*) due to the fact that each human being is prone to forgetfulness and it is always possible for him to forget what he had memorized from the Qur`an. By letting that happen, he would deserve a serious sin, as is mentioned in some of the traditions, while, according to some opinions, he would not have been considered sinful if he had not memorized that from the Qur`an at all.”⁵²

⁵² See: Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the quoted work, pp. 140-141

The above presented words of Dr. Qaradawi should understand as an incentive to memorize as much of the Qur`an as possible. Because, there are those who, as they claim themselves, do not want to memorize Qur`an as its forgetting is a grave (in the mentioned traditions even greatest) sin! And in order to avoid committing that 'sin', they simply leave Qur`an aside. That is a wrong understanding, holds dr. al-Qaradawi.

Salat and du'a' for memory improvement

The way of safeguarding hifz is in its constant maintenance through repetition. A hafiz has to read and repeat the Qur`an throughout his entire life. To remain on this path, enormous patience, perseverance and extraordinary love towards Qur`an is required.

Here we would like to mention one tradition recorded by al-Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*, and is connected to 'Ali, r.a. Once, when he was in the presence of the Prophet (saws) he complained about the problem with remembering. The Prophet (saws) recommended to him to offer a special Salat and taught him a supplication which can be recited for improvement of hifz. We are presenting this tradition in its entirety:

أَخْرَجَ التِّرْمِذِيُّ بِسَنَدِهِ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ :
بَيْنَمَا نَحْنُ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
إِذْ جَاءَهُ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ فَقَالَ : « يَا أَبِي أَنْتَ
وَأُمِّي ، تَقَلَّتْ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ مِنْ صَدْرِي فَمَا أَجِدُنِي
أَقْدِرُ عَلَيْهِ » ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ : « يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ ، أَفَلَا أَعَلَمَكَ كَلِمَاتٍ يَنْفَعُكَ
اللَّهُ بِهِنَّ وَيَنْفَعُ بِهِنَّ مَنْ عَلِمْتَهُ وَيُنَبِّتُ مَا تَعَلَّمْتَ فِي
صَدْرِكَ ؟ » قَالَ : « أَجَلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَعَلَّمْنِي »
. قَالَ : « إِذَا كَانَ لَيْلَةُ الْجُمُعَةِ فَإِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ أَنْ
تَقُومَ فِي ثُلُثِ اللَّيْلِ الْآخِرِ فَإِنَّهَا سَاعَةٌ مَشْهُودَةٌ
وَالدُّعَاءُ فِيهَا مُسْتَجَابٌ ، وَقَدْ قَالَ أَخِي يَعْقُوبُ لِابْنِهِ
(سَوْفَ اسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي) يَقُولُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَ لَيْلَةُ
الْجُمُعَةِ ، فَإِنْ لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ فَقُمْ فِي وَسْطِهَا ، فَإِنْ لَمْ
تَسْتَطِعْ فَقُمْ فِي أَوَّلِهَا فَصَلِّ أَرْبَعَ رَكَعَاتٍ تَقْرَأُ فِي
الرَّكَعَةِ الْأُولَى بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ وَسُورَةَ يَسٍ وَفِي
الرَّكَعَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ وَحَمَّ الدُّخَانَ وَفِي
الرَّكَعَةِ الثَّلَاثَةِ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمَ تَنْزِيلُ السَّجْدَةِ
وَفِي الرَّكَعَةِ الرَّابِعَةِ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَبَارَكَ
الْمُفَصَّلُ ، فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ مِنَ التَّشَهُدِ فَأَحْمَدِ اللَّهَ
وَأَحْسِنِ النَّهَاءَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَصَلِّ عَلَىِّ وَأَحْسِنِ وَعَلَى
سَائِرِ النَّبِيِّينَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
وَلِلْإِخْوَانِكَ الَّذِينَ سَبَقُوكَ بِالْإِيمَانِ ،

ثُمَّ قُلْ فِي آخِرِ ذَلِكَ :

It has been recorded by al-Tirmidhi with sanad of Ibn 'Abbas that he said: *“Once, when we were with the Prophet of Allah, (saws), 'Ali ibn Abi Talib came and said: -O prophet of Allah, to me you are like a father or mother. This Qur`an is slipping out of my chest so that it is becoming very hard to me to keep it in my memory.*

The Prophet (saws) responded: -Would you like me to teach you words (a supplication), which will, by the help of Allah, benefit you and those whom you teach? That way you will, by the help of Allah, make lasting in you chest (memory) what you memorized?

-Yes, teach me, o prophet of Allah – said 'Ali.

-When the night of Friday starts (Lailatul-Jumu'ah)⁵³, if you manage to get up in the last third of that night – get up, because that time is blessed and in it Allah accepts supplications. My brother Ya'qub told his sons: - I will surely supplicate to my Lord for you; and he was intending to do that in the Jumu'ah night. If you can not get up in its last third, then try in its half. And if you do not manage even in that part, get

⁵³ That is Thursday evening. (translator's remark).

up at the beginning of that night and offer 4 rak'ahs. During the first rak'ah read sura al-Fatihah and the sura Yasin, during the second read suras al-Fatihah and al-Dukhan, during the third rak'ah surahs al-Fatihah and al-Sajdah, and on qiyam of the fourth rak'ah read suras al-Fatihah and al-Mulk. Upon completion of the fourth rak'ah, thank Allah and nicely express yourself about Him, then bring Salawat on me and do that nicely. Also, bring Salawat on other prophets of Allah and seek forgiveness for believing men and women and your brothers who surpassed you in religion. At the end, he said:

«اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْنِي بِتَرَكِّ الْمَعَاصِي أَبَدًا مَا أَبَقَيْتَنِي ،
وَارْحَمْنِي أَنْ أَتَكَلَّفَ مَا لَا يَعْينُنِي ، وَارزُقْنِي حُسْنَ
النَّظَرِ فِيمَا يُرْضِيكَ عَنِّي ، اللَّهُمَّ بَدِّعِ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ وَالْعِزَّةِ الَّتِي لَا تُرَامُ
أَسْأَلُكَ يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ بِجَلَالِكَ وَنُورِ وَجْهِكَ أَنْ
تُلْزِمَ قَلْبِي حِفْظَ كِتَابِكَ كَمَا عَلَّمْتَنِي وَارزُقْنِي أَنْ
أَتَلُوهُ عَلَى النَّحْوِ الَّذِي يُرْضِيكَ عَنِّي ، اللَّهُمَّ بَدِّعِ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ وَالْعِزَّةِ الَّتِي
لَا تُرَامُ أَسْأَلُكَ يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَحْمَنُ بِجَلَالِكَ وَنُورِ
وَجْهِكَ أَنْ تُنَوِّرَ بَكِتَابِكَ بَصْرِي ، وَأَنْ تُطْلِقَ بِهِ
لِسَانِي ، وَأَنْ تُفَرِّجَ بِهِ عَن قَلْبِي ، وَأَنْ تُشْرَحَ بِهِ
صَدْرِي ، وَأَنْ تُغْسِلَ بِهِ بَدَنِي ، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يُعِينُنِي عَلَى

الْحَقِّ غَيْرُكَ وَلَا يُؤْتِيهِ إِلَّا أَنْتَ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا
بِاللَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ»

“O Allah, have mercy on me so that I stay away from sinning for as long as I live! Have O Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Glorious and Honorable and Almighty, I beg you, the most Merciful, calling upon Your Glory and the Light of Your Face, to oblige my heart to remember Your Book the way You taught me. Bless me to read it the way that will please You! My Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, You Who are absolute in Your might, I implore You the most Merciful, calling upon Your Glory and Light of Your Face, to illuminate with you Qur`an my sight, to move with it my tongue and make it easy on my heart. With it make my chest wide and clean my body. Truly, on the path of Truth only You can help me and only You are able to give me the Truth. There is no might no power except with Allah, the most High, and the most Glorious!”

« يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ تَفَعَّلْ ذَلِكَ ثَلَاثَ جُمُعٍ أَوْ خَمْسًا
أَوْ سَبْعًا تُجِبُ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ، وَالَّذِي بَعَثَنِي بِالْحَقِّ
مَا أَخْطَأَ مُؤْمِنًا قَطُّ » ، قَالَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ
عَبَّاسٍ : « فَوَاللَّهِ مَا لَيْتَ عَلَيَّ إِلَّا خَمْسًا أَوْ
سَبْعًا حَتَّى جَاءَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ

وَسَلَّم فِي مِثْلِ ذَلِكَ الْمَجْلِسِ فَقَالَ : يَا رَسُولَ
 اللَّهِ إِنِّي كُنْتُ فِيمَا خَلَا لِي أَخَذُ إِلَّا أَرْبَعَ آيَاتٍ أَوْ
 نَحْوَهُنَّ وَإِذَا قَرَأْتُهُنَّ عَلَى نَفْسِي تَقَلَّتْنِ ! وَأَنَا
 أَتَعَلَّمُ الْيَوْمَ أَرْبَعِينَ آيَةً أَوْ نَحْوَهَا ، وَإِذَا قَرَأْتُهَا
 عَلَى نَفْسِي فَكَأَنَّمَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْ ! وَلَقَدْ
 كُنْتُ أَسْمَعُ الْحَدِيثَ فَإِذَا رَدَدْتُهُ تَقَلَّتْ ، وَأَنَا
 الْيَوْمَ أَسْمَعُ الْأَحَادِيثَ فَإِذَا تَحَدَّثْتُ بِهَا لَمْ أُخْرَمْ
 مِنْهَا حَرْفًا ، فَقَالَ لَهُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى
 اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ : « مُؤْمِنٌ وَرَبٌّ
 الْكَعْبَةِ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ ! »

“O Abu al-Hasan, you will do that on three, five or seven Friday (Jumu’ah) nights, and it will be accepted from you with the permission of Allah. By the One Who sent me with the Truth, this has not yet left unaffected any (true) Muslim!”

Abdullah ibn 'Abbas narrates: “By Allah, not five or seven Fridays passed by and 'Ali again came to the prophet and said: -O Prophet of Allah, earlier I used to memorize four verses at once, and each time I wanted to repeat them they would disappear. Now I memorize more than forty verses, and when I repeat them I feel as if the Book of Allah is wide open in front of me. Also, when I now hear your sayings and pass them on later, I do not omit one letter from them.”

The prophet of Allah said on that occasion:

*“You are the believer, by the Lord of
Ka’bah, o Abu al-Hasan!”⁵⁴*

⁵⁴ See: al-Tirmidhi, Abu ‘Isa: *Sunan*, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, vol. 5, pp. 563-565, hadith #3570. *Sanad* (chain of transmitters) of this hadith is as follows: Al-Tirmidhi reports from Ahmad ibn al-Hasan, and Ahmad from Sulaiman ibn ‘Abdurrahman al-Dimishqi, and Sulaiman from al-Walid ibn Muslim, al-Walid from ibn Jurajj, Ibn Jurajj from ‘Ata` ibn Abi Rabah and ‘Ikrimah, and finally these two from Ibn ‘Abbas. Imam al-Tirmidhi values this *sanad* as *hasan-gharib*.

Analysing the mentioned *sanad* according to the principles of the methodology of hadith which deals with the critique of transmitters of tradition (*al-jarh wa al-ta’dil*), we concluded the following:

a) The chain of transmission is connected (*muttasil*) and every rawi (transmitter) in it did heard it from the rawi that had preceded it;

b) The well known authority on hadith Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, in his famous work *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib* and its resume *Taqrib al- Tahdhib*, gives to the majority of the mentioned transmitters high marks (*thiqatun, hafiz, faqih*), and only to al-Walid he gives a mark *saduq*, which is also considered a positive qualification. The scholars in the field of the science of hadith take the narrations with such marks as valid evidence for (*hasan narrations*). In connection with the mentioned marks and qualifications consult: Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani: *Tahdhib al-Tahdhib*, Dar al-kitab al-islami, Cairo, 1993, and *Taqrib al-Tahdhib*, Dar al-kutub al-‘ilmiyyah, Bairut, 1993. The names of rawis in the mentioned works are listed in alphabetical order.

Practical value of the mentioned narration

The narration which we have just presented contains few very important details:

1. Importance of Salat in the life of a believer. Salat is the path to ease any of the life difficulties. Allah (saws) Pints that out in His Book and says: “*O you who believe! Seek help in patience and Salat (the prayer)...*” (*al-Baqarah, 153*). Salat is a connection between the slave, who is a temporary and inhabitant on earth, and his Lord, who is the most High and Eternal. At the same time, Salat is an extraordinary instrument to a Muslim pursuing hifz to repeat the memorized pages and suras while performing it, and especially while performing Salat al-Lail and nafl. We have already stressed the fact that whatever from the memorized text of the Qur`an a person is able to read by heart in Salat, can be considered to be well learnt and firmly ingrained in his memory.

2. Importance of keeping from sins. This is extremely important on the path of acquiring and keeping the qualitative hifz. In fact, keeping away from sins is of essential significance. In the previously mentioned supplication which the Prophet (saws) recommended to 'Ali for the purpose of improving his memory, the first thing

supplicated for is the supplication to Allah to protect one from sinning and haram things: “*O Allah, have mercy on me, so that I do not concern myself with what is not my business. Help me so that what you are pleased with become beautiful in my eyes!*”

Surely, keeping from sins and haram things is the best path to preservation of hifz. There are numerous testimonies of the Islamic scholars about this. Imam al-Shafi' in that sense composed the well known verse:

*I complained to my sheikh Waqi'
About bad memory,
And he guided me to
Abandoning sinning,
Informing me that 'ilm is light
And the light of Allah is not awarded to a sinner.*

Another Islamic scholar by name Burhanuddin al-Zarnuji, wrote a letter entitled *Instruction to a student regarding acquiring knowledge*. In it, he says, among other things: “*Fast forgetfulness is caused by: disobedience to Allah, numerous sins, worries, sorrow, grief, preoccupation with obligations and extensive connections with the world.*”⁵⁵ He too, mentions

⁵⁵ See: Al-Zarnuji, Burhanuddin: *Guide to a student on the path of acquiring knowledge*, Taqwim, 1981, translated

as a main cause of forgetfulness, man's disobedience and sinning towards Allah (saws)

3. Perseverance in maintaining hifz. In the quoted hadith the Prophet (saws) said to 'Ali, r.a. to repeat the mentioned Salat and supplication several times:

“O Abu al-Hasan, you will do that on three, five or seven Friday (Jumu'ah) nights, and it will be accepted from you with the permission of Allah. By the One Who sent me with the Truth, this has not yet left unaffected any (true) Muslim!”

Insistence on repeating those acts three, five or seven times, which comprises the time length of three to seven weeks, is intended to build a stable person who will be extremely hardworking and persistent on his way of accomplishing certain goals.

Without any doubt, this hadith originated in the time when the practice of a continuous reading and repeating of the Qur'an was largely present among the companions. In other traditions it is mentioned that a nightly passer - by through the streets of al-Madinah could hear from the houses inhabited by al-Muhajirun and al-Ansar reading of the Qur'an, which resembled the

by Nijaz Sukric, publisher Predsjedništvo Udruženja islamskih vjerskih službenika, Sarajevo, p. 317.

sound of bees. Considering the fact that at that time illuminating the dwelling places was very difficult, and literacy not that widespread among people, one can clearly conclude that they were reading the Qur`an by heart.

Besides the fact that the hadith we deal with contains a beautiful supplication for improvement of memory, it also points to the key elements in the process of preserving hifz, and those are: Salalat, keeping away from sins and perseverance in continual repetition of the memorized Qur`anic text. Consistency in this leads to a qualitative and

lasting hifz of the noble Qur`an. I pray to Allah Almighty to make us true keepers of His Book.

Periodic testing of hifz

Practice has shown that for a qualitative preservation of hifz there must exist a certain testing of its condition. In that respect it would be the best to read from time to time the whole Qur`an before another hafiz or a person well versed in the Qur`an.

Those huffaz who are Imams or who carry that function during Ramadan, have a unique opportunity to do that during the Tarawih

prayers or during some other Salat which they have a chance to lead in Ramadan, such as Night-salat (*Salat al-tahajjud*), which is offered in the last third of that chosen month. That is extraordinary chance for a hafiz to repeat the Qur`an in the most effective way in that blessed month, in which it was revealed.⁵⁶

Throughout the Muslim world it is traditional that in larger mosques Tarawih be offered with khatmah, which means that every night one juz` of Qur`an is recited. In the last tenth of Ramadan one more khatmah can be read.

⁵⁶ According to the preferred views of the Islamic scholars, the Qur`an was lowered in one piece (*jumlatah wahidah*) from *Lawh mahfuz* (a Tablet well preserved) in the most suitable way to the heaven closest to us (*al-Sama` al-dunya`*); then it was being revealed gradually and according to the needs to the prophet (saws) during his prophetic mission which extended over 23 year period. The night in which that took place is a sublime night (*Lailah al-Qadr*) and in sura *al-Dukhan* it is said about it that it is *lailatun mubarakah*, i.e. blessed night. That night is in the month of Ramadan and in it the first appearance of the angel Jibril to Muhammad (saws) occurred while he was in the cave Hira`, where he received the first five verses of sura *al-'Alaq*.

Imam al-Suyuti, the renowned Islamic scholar, claims in his capital work *al-Itqan* that the above view is the most correct and widespread, and then presents narrations of *salafi-salih* (especially of Ibn 'Abbas) in which that is explained in more detail.

A hafiz who manages in reading the whole Qur`an by heart in Salah certainly belongs to the category of qawiyy (strong) huffaz.⁵⁷

For that reason, the tradition of performing Tarawih with khatmah should be encouraged in our places.

⁵⁷ During my stay in Misr (Egypt), where I spent many years as a student and a graduate, I had an opportunity to meet many strong huffaz. Some of them used to read the Qur`an (clearly and plainly) as many as three times just in the last third of Ramadan (last nine nights), while heading the jama`at as Imams in *Salat al-tahajjud*. That means that they would read one khatmah in three nights. The raka`at (sing. rak`ah) of that prayer were expressly long, so that, for example, in one rak`ah the whole sura *al-Baqarah* is recited and in the other the entire sura *Ali `Imran*, etc.

AFTERWORD

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The Qur`an is the main source of Islam. It, is the eternal speech of Allah not just in terms of meaning but also in terms of the linguistic form which carries that meaning. The Qur`an is the last revelation of Allah to human kind and on that basis it constitutes the core of the Islamic way of life. The life of a believing Muslim must be focused on the Qur`an, its teachings, its study and its following.

From the moment its revelation started the Qur`an was being faithfully registered in written form and it was entirely committed to writing during the life of the Prophet (saws).

Along with careful safeguarding of every Qur`anic verse and ayat, very essential way of its protection in the face of any change has been provided through the possibility of its memorization. Owing to that, Muslims have their sacred Book preserved, because the Qur`an was being written down and memorized at the same time as portions of it were being received by the Prophet (saws)

Inspired by the Prophet (saws), who was himself hafiz of the Qur`an, and motivated by his

sayings which commend memorization of the Qur`an, the Muslims have been competing throughout the history who will memorize more of the text of the Qur`an.

The fact that the Qur`an is a book which is possible to be entirely committed to memory, represents one of the numerous aspects of I`jaz of the Qur`an (i.e. its supernatural character). Those who memorize the Qur`an constitute themselves one of the most significant segments of the Qur`anic supernatural character.

In the well-known hadith the Prophet of Islam noted: *“The best among you are those who read and study the Qur`an and teach others to it.”* In the ahadith which we have mentioned in this study enlisted are special honors and reward that will be extended to the keepers of the Book of Allah (i.e. to huffaz) in the eternal life. Those ahadith should be an incentive to every Muslim man and woman to occupy himself on the plan of memorization of the Qur`an. Desire towards hifz should be developed especially among children and youth, because in their age a possibility of memorizing is far greater than in the age of those preoccupied with numerous life needs and problems.

Those who memorized the entire Qur`an are the ones who guard not only over the form of

text of the noble Qur`an but also over its content and essence. It is due to that credit that the huffaz of the Qur`an are considered and called in Islamic tradition *ashraf al-ummah* (those who excel within the ummah), because they are supposed to be a paradigm of knowledge, education, taqwa, beautiful behavior, etc.

It is pointed out in the Qur`an that preservation of authenticity of the Qur`anic text is in authority of the One Who revealed it. In that regard we find the following promise of Allah the Exalted:

[إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ]

“We have, without doubt, sent down the message; and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).” (Al-Hijr, 9)

That sacred text, in addition to the primary and quite clear meaning, refers to another, less obvious, but also very beautiful meaning:

This verse, apart from the fact that it promises that the Qur`an will be protected from any change (omission or addition), also refers that those who guard over the Qur`an will be protected too! That is to say, that the individuals and communities which dedicate enough attention to learning, studying and correct understanding of the noble Qur`an, with the aim of following its

guidance and implementing its norms and principles in practical life, will also be looked after and protected against numerous misfortunes, temptations, unpleasant situation and catastrophes, because they guard over the last God's revelation, Whose keeping and protection has been guaranteed by the One Who revealed it.

That is why our recommendation is that the Qur`an should be recited and studied as much as possible. Connection to the Qur`an is, in fact, a connection to Allah the Exalted. And the one who is in firm connection to Allah, shall be saved in this life and in the Hereafter!

I pray to Allah the Exalted to take us in His protection and to make us be of those who are always with the Qur`an: who recite it, memorize it, study it and who follow it and apply it in their life!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Safwat Mustafa Halilovic was born in 1968 in Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. After he graduated from the Ghazi Husrav-bey's Madrasa in 1988, he enrolled at the famous Al-Azhar in Cairo where he graduated from the Faculty of Tafseer and Qur'anic Sciences in 1992. From the same faculty he received his masters in 1997 after having successfully defended his thesis *Al-Tafsir bi al-ma'lur; ahamiyyatuhu wa dawabituhu – dirasah tatbiqiyah fi surah al-Nisa'* (Traditional interpretation of the Qur'an – Its significance and postulates – a Critical study of surah Al-Nisa'.) The M.A. thesis was published in Cairo in 1999 in Dar al-nashr li al-jami'at (University publication). In 1997, he registered for his doctoral dissertation entitled *Al-Imam Abu Bakr al-Razi Al-Jassas wa manhaguhu fi al-tafsir* (Methodology of interpretation of the Qur'an based on the example of an outstanding hanefi scholar Abu Bakr Al-Razi Al-Jassas), which he successfully defended in 2001 and

received the highest grade possible (*martabah al-sharaf al-ula*) along with a recommendation that the dissertation be published because of its scholarly value. The dissertation was published in 2001 by Dar al-Salam from Cairo.

Dr. Safwat Halilovic is a professor of Tafsir and Qur'anic Sciences at the Islamic Pedagogical Academy in Zenica. He has published around 70 papers in the field of tafsir (Qur'anic interpretation), Islamic studies, culturology, history, Islamic missionary work and education. He is a contributor for many of the Islamic publications and magazines at home and abroad. He has participated in several academic symposiums in Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad. He is the author of the book *Hifz – the Learning of the Qur'an*, published in Bosnian in 2003; an essay entitled *Islam and the West in the Perspective of Asad's Thought*, also published in 2003. He is the editor and a reviewer for many publications. In 1999, with a group of enthusiasts, he founded the Islamic journal *The New Horizons*, which has been published continually in Bosnian for the past 5 years. *The New Horizons* is a journal for the affirmation of cultural and spiritual values. In 2002 Dr. Halilovic was appointed president of its advisory board.