

Chapter Twelve

The Perversion of Qur'an and the Loss of Many Parts of It

On page 131 of his book, "El-Sheaa and Correction", the contemporary Muslim scholar, Dr. Mosa-El-Mosawy, makes this frank confession,

"Those who adopt the notion of the perversion of the Qur'an are present among all different Islamic groups, but the majority of them come from the El-Sheaa scholars."

Perversion of Qur'an is an unimaginable notion to the lay Muslim because the Scholars of Islam are hiding this truth from being published or becoming known.

Of course, we weren't just satisfied with what Dr. El-Mosawy has already mentioned, but we went back to the most popular ancient scholars and to Muhammad's relatives and companions to investigate this notion concerning the perversion and loss of several parts of the Qur'an because those are the trustworthy people regarding the history and development of Islam.

Upon examining the testimonies of these great companions, the answer was positive. They clearly stated that perversion and loss of large fragments of the Qur'an did occur. Let us scrutinize their testimony in order to present to deluded Muslims the truth as it is proclaimed by their trusted spiritual leaders and scholars. The deceptive veil must be removed so people can see the true face of the Qur'an.

'Ibn Umar al-Khattab explicitly admits,

"Let no one of you say that he has acquired the entire Qur'an for how does he know that it is all? Much of the Qur'an has been lost, thus let him say, 'I have acquired of it what is available'" (Suyuti: Itqan, part 3, page 72).

A'isha (also page 72) adds to the story of ibn Umar and says,

"During the time of the prophet, the chapter of the Parties used to be two hundred verses when read. When Uthman edited the copies of the Qur'an, only the current (verses) were recorded" (73 verses).

The same statement is made by Ubay ibn Ka'b, one of the great companions. On page 72, part 3, the Suyuti says,

"This famous companion asked one of the Muslims, 'How many verses in the chapter of the Parties?' He said, 'Seventy-two or seventy-three verses.' He (Ubay) told him, 'It used to be almost equal to the chapter of the Cow (about 286 verses) and included the verse of the stoning.' The man asked, 'What is the verse of the stoning?' He said, 'If an old man or woman committed adultery, stone them to death.'"

This same story and same dialogue which took place between the companion and one of the Muslims is recorded by Ibn Hazm (volume 8, part 11, pages 234 and 235). Then Ibn Hazm said,

"'Ali Ibn Abi Talib said this has a reliable chain of authority (The Sweetest [Al Mohalla] vol. 8.)."

The Zamakh-shari also cited it in his book, "al-Kash-Shaf" (part 3, page 518).

These are unquestionable statements made by the pillars of the Islamic religion who transmitted Muhammad's sayings and biography, "The Tradition", and who interpreted the Qur'an— among them Ibn 'Umar, A'isha, Ubay Ibn Ka'b and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Ibn 'Umar states that a large part of the Qur'an was missed. A'isha and Ubay Ibn Ka'b assert that dozens of verses from the "Chapter of the Parties" have been lost. 'Ali confirms that, too. In regard to this particular verse, the following incident is recorded in "The Itqan" by Suyuti (part 1, page 168),

"During the collection of the Qur'an, people used to come to Zayd Ibn Thabit (with the verses they memorized). He shunned recording any verse unless two witnesses attested to it. The last verse of chapter of Repentance was found only with Khuzayma Ibn Thabit. Zayd said, 'Record it because the apostle of God made the testimony of Khuzayma equal to the testimony of two men.' 'Umar came with the verse of the stoning but it was not recorded because he was the only witness to it."

One can only wonder and ask, "Does 'Umar need another witness to agree with him? Would he lie to God and the Qur'an? Because of that, 'Umar said after that, "If it were not that people would say, "Umar has added to the book of God', I would have recorded the verse of the stoning" (part 3, page 75 of the Itqan). Refer also to skiek Kishk's book (part 3, page 64). Another confession by A'isha:

"Among the (verses) which were sent down, (the verse) of the ten breast feedings was abrogated by (a verse which calls for five breast feedings. The apostle of God died and this verse was still read as part of the Qur'an. This was related by Abu Bakr and 'Umar" (refer to Suyuti's qan, part 3, pages 62 and 63).

Events Which Led To The Loss Of Some Verses

A Domesticated Animal Eats Qur'anic Verses

In his book (volume 8, part II, pages 235 and 236), Ibn Hazm says plainly,

"The verses of stoning and breast feeding were in the possession of A'isha in a (Qur'anic) copy. When Muhammad died and people became busy in the burial preparations, a domesticated animal entered in and ate it."

A'isha herself declared that and she knew exactly what she possessed. Also, Mustafa Husayn, who edited and reorganized the book, "al-Kash-shaf" by the Zamakh-Shari, asserts this fact in page 518 of part 3. He says that the ones who related this incident and said that a domesticated animal ate the verses were reliable persons among them 'Abdulla Ibn Abi Bakr and A'isha herself. This same story has been mentioned also by Dar-al-Qutni, al-Bazzar and al Tabarani, on the authority of Muhammad Ibn Ishaq who heard it from 'Abdulla who himself heard it from A'isha.

Professor Mustafa indicates that this does not negate that the abrogation of these verses may have

occurred before the domesticated animal ate them. Why then did 'Umar want to record the verse of the stoning in the Qur'an if its recitation was abrogated? And why did people used to read the verses of the breast-feeding? And, if Muhammad died while these verses were still recited who abrogated them? Did the domesticated animal abrogate them? It is evident that this really did occur according to the witness of the companions, Muslim scholars, and A'isha herself.

Other Matters Which Were Lost, Not Recorded And Altered

In part 3, page 73, the Suyuti said,

"Hamida, the daughter of Abi Yunis, said, 'When my father was eighty years old, he read in the copy of A'isha, "God and His angels bless (literally pray for) the prophet Oh ye who believe, bless him and those who pray in the first rows." Then she said, "That was before 'Uthman changed the Qur'anic copies.'"

On page 74, we read,

"Umar said to 'Abdul-Rahman Ibn 'Oaf, 'Didn't you find among the verses that we received one saying, "Strive as you strove at the first?" We do not locate it (any more).' 'Abdul-Rahman Ibn 'Oaf told him, 'This verse has been removed among those others which were removed from the Qur'an.'"

It is well known that 'Abdul-Rahman Ibn 'Oaf was one of the great companions and was among those who were nominated for the caliphate.

Also, on the same page (74, of part 3) of "The Itqan", we read,

"Maslama al-Ansar said to the companions of Muhammad, 'Tell me about two verses which have not been recorded in the Qur'an which 'Uthman collected.' They failed to do so. Maslama said, 'Oh, ye who believed and immigrated and fought for the cause of God by (sacrificing) your properties and yourselves, you received the glad tidings, for you are prosperous. Also, those who sheltered them, aided them and defended them, against whom God (revealed) His wrath, no soul knows what is awaiting them as a reward for what they did.'"

Throughout pages 73 and 74 of part 3, the Suyuti records for us all the remarks made by Muhammad's companions in regard to the unpreserved Qur'anic verses which the readers failed to find in the Qur'an which 'Uthman collected and which is currently in vogue. It is worthwhile to notice that we only quote the testimonies of the most reliable authorities whose witness is highly regarded and cited by all the scholars and students of the Qur'an such as 'Ali, 'Uthman, Abu Bakr, A'isha (Muhammad's wife), Ibn Mas'ud, and Ibn 'Abbas. In the context of expounding the Qur'an, these scholars are always quoted to shed light on the events which took place during the time of Muhammad. No one could interpret the tenets of Islam better than these scholars could.

If we ponder the first part of "The Itqan", by the Suyuti, we read (page 184),

"Malik says that several verses from chapter 9 (Sura of Repentance) have been dropped from the beginning. Among them is, 'In the name of God the compassionate, the Merciful'

because it was proven that the length of Sura of Repentance was equal to the length of the Sura of the Cow."

This means that this chapter has lost 157 verses. Also (page 184), the Suyuti tells us that the words, "In the name of God the compassionate, the merciful" were found in the chapter of Repentance in the Qur'anic copy which belonged to Ibn Mas'ud which 'Uthman confiscated and burned when the current Qur'an was edited.

Not only verses have been dropped, but also entire chapters have been abolished from the 'Uthmanic copy which is in the hands of all Muslims today. The Suyuti and other scholars testify that the Qur'anic copies of both Ubay and Ibn Mas'ud include two chapters called "The Hafad" and "the Khal". They both are located after the chapter of "the 'Asr" (103) (refer to pp. 182 and 183 of part one of the gn).

He also indicates that the Qur'anic copy of 'Abdulla-Ibn Mas'ud does not contain the chapter of "The Hamd" and "The Mu'withatan" (Surah 113, 114). On page 184, the Suyuti tells us that Ubay ibn Abi Ka'b recorded in his Qur'anic copy two chapters that start with, "Oh God, we ask for your assistance," and "Oh God, you whom we worship." These are the two chapters of "The Hafad" and "The Khal". On page 185, the Suyuti assures us on the authority of the most famous companions of the prophet that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib was aware of these two chapters. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was accustomed to read them after his prostration. The Suyuti records them in their entirety on page 185. They are available to any Arab who wishes to read them. Then, the Suyuti adds that the two chapters are found in the Qur'anic copy of ibn 'Abbas also. What more we should say after we heard the testimonies of ibn 'Abbas, 'Umar, 'Ali, ibn Mas'ud and ibn Abi Ka'b Talib? It is evident that the Qur'an once included these two chapters.

If the reader asks, "What do you mean by saying '...the Qur'anic copy of ibn 'Abbas', or '... the copy of ibn Mas'ud ... A'isha', etc.? Were there many different Qur'anic copies?' I will not supply the answer, but I leave that to the Muslim scholars and chroniclers as we examine how the Qur'anic copies were burned and only one universal copy was kept.

The Collection Of The Qur'an And The Fierce Dispute Among The Scholars And The Companions

Among the greatest events which took place during the reign of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, third caliph after Muhammad, is the collection of the Qur'an. It is appropriate here to record briefly the story of the first collection of the Qur'an which occurred during the time of Abu Bakr after the death of Muhammad. All chroniclers, without exception, have never questioned the authenticity of the incident (refer to "The Itqan" of Suyuti, part 1, page 165, Dr. Ahmad Shalabi, pp. 37 and 38, al-Bukhari, part 6, page 477). What did the Bukhari say in this regard?

"'Umar said to Abu Bakr, 'I suggest you order that the Qur'an be collected.' Abu Bakr said to him, 'How can you do something which Allah's messenger did not do.' Then Abu Bakr accepted his proposal and came to Zayd and said to him, 'You are a wise young man and we do not have any doubts about you. So you should search for the fragments of the Qur'an and collect it.' Zayd said, 'By Allah if they had ordered me to shift one of the mountains it wouldn't have been heavier for me than this ordering me to collect the Qur'an.'"

The question which presents itself is, why did not Muhammad give orders to collect the Qur'an? Why did not the angel Gabriel suggest to him to do such an important task to avoid the disagreement, dispute, and the fight which spread among the people? He could have avoided the debate about the chapters and the verses of the Qur'an which raged among the great scholars.

Secondly, why did Zayd consider the task of collecting the verses of the Qur'an more difficult than removing a mountain? There is no answer for the first question. Of course, Gabriel was supposed to order Muhammad to collect the Qur'an while he was still alive in order to save his people from the disputes and fights. The answer for the second question is evident because a great number of the reciters and the memorizers of the Qur'an had already been killed in the wars of the apostasies, especially in the battle of Yamama. So, how could Zayd collect the Qur'an thoroughly? Removing a mountain is much easier, as he said.

Now what happened during the time of 'Uthman? In his book "The History of Islamic Law" (page 38), Dr. Ahmad Shalabi says,

"The Qur'an was collected and entrusted to Hafsa. It was not proclaimed among people until the era of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. Huthayfa, one of Muhammad's companions who fought in Armenia and Adharbijan, said to 'Uthman, 'The Muslims disagree on the (correct) reading of the Qur'an and they fight among themselves.' 'Uthman ordered Zayd ibn Thabit and the other three to collect the Qur'an in one copy. After they accomplished that, 'Uthman gave the order to burn the rest of the Qur'anic copies which were in the hands of Muhammad's companions. That was in the year 25 H."

All Muslim scholars concur—such as Al-Bukhari (part 6, page 225), Suyuti in "The Itqan" (part 1, page 170), and Ibn Kathir in "The Beginning and the End" (part 7, page 218) in which he remarks,

"'Uthman burned the rest of the copies which were in the hands of the people because they disagreed on the (correct) reading and they fought among themselves. When they came to take ibn Mas'ud's copy to burn it, he told them, 'I know more than Zayd ibn Thabit (whom 'Uthman ordered to collect the copies of the Qur'an).' 'Uthman wrote to ibn Mas'ud asking him to submit his copy for burning."

When ibn Mas'ud said that he was more knowledgeable than Zayd, his claim was not questioned because he was a very reliable person. In part 7, page 162 of his book, "The Beginning and the End", ibn Kathir said about him that he used to teach people the Qur'an and the traditions. Some even thought that he was a member of Muhammad's family because he had easy access to Muhammad's assembly while Zayd was still young. The Bukhari comments (part 6, page 229) that Muhammad prompted his adherent to learn the Qur'an from four people, among them ibn Mas'ud Zayd was not mentioned among them. Yet, when 'Uthman asked Zayd to collect the Qur'an, he did not add ibn Mas'ud to the committee. A contemporary scholar, Sheikh Kishk, remarks in his book, "Legal Opinions" (part 1, page 102),

"The four most important commentators are ibn 'Abbas, ibn Mas'ud, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and 'Ubay ibn Ka'bal-Ansari."

So ibn Mas'ud is one of the four great expounders of the Qur'an and Zayd ibn Thabit did not enjoy the same prestige of ibn Mas'ud.

It was common knowledge that both ibn Mas'ud and ibn Ali Ka'b were accustomed to write the two

chapters of the Hafad and the Khal' which are now eliminated from the current Qur'an which Zayd collected. Ibn Mas'ud asserts that the chapter of the praise and the Mu'withatan are not part of the Qur'an (refer to "The Itqan" by Suyuti, part 1, pp. 221, 222). Despite that, Zayd recorded them.

It was a strange thing, 'Uthman's order to burn the companions' copies. If we question that, we will be inclined to believe that these copies differed from the Qur'anic copy which Zayd edited and compiled, otherwise 'Uthman would not have burned them. This is not the conclusion of the author, but it is the opinion of many great contemporary Muslim scholars, among them Ibrahim al-Abyari, who expressed his view in his book, "The History of the Qur'an" (3rd print, 1982, page 107). He plainly says,

"There were also other copies of the Qur'an such as the copy of Abi Musa al-Ash'ari, al-Maqdad ibn al-Aswad, and Salim the client of Abi Huthayfa. There were differences between those copies, differences which Huthayka attested to it. That frightened 'Uthman, thus he issued an order to collect the Qur'an because the Kufis followed the copy of ibn Mas'ud; the Syrians the copy of ibn Abi Ka'b; the people of Basra, the copy of Musa al-Ash'ari; the Damascenes, the copy of ibn Maqdad."

On page 41, he adds:

"Ibn Qutayba says that the differences between the recitations of the various Qur'anic copies may include the meaning also."

Also on page 109, he says:

"When Abu Bakr and 'Umar assigned Zayd ibn Thabit to compile the Qur'an, there was a previous compilation of the Qur'an made by a group of the greatest companions such as 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, ibn Mas'ud and ibn 'Abbas and others."

The Muslim has the right to wonder and to ask why Abu Bakr and 'Umar took the trouble to do that when ibn Mas'ud and ibn 'Abbas who were (according to Muhammad) the most knowledgeable people in the Qur'an, had already accomplished it? Why did they not at least add them to the committee or solicit their opinions?

In regard to the copy of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Imam Khu'i tells us in his book, "al-Bayan" (page 222), the following:

"The existence of Imam 'Ali's copy is an unquestionable matter. All scholars admit it and say that it contains additions which are not found in the current Qur'an. These additions are under the title of 'The Revelation of God for the Explanation of the Intended' (purpose)."

The Imam Khu'i is one of the greatest scholars among the Shi'ites. He drew his information from what the Imam al-Tabari had recorded in his book, "'al-Ihtijaj'" ("Apology") (refer to Dr. Musa, The Shi'ites and the Reformation, pp. 132,133).

Dr. Musa also indicates:

"Our scholars and legists infer from an episode recorded by the Tabari in the book of al-Ihtijaj about the existence of a Qur'anic copy compiled by the Imam 'Ali. This episode tells that 'Ali said to Talha (one of Muhammad's relatives and companions) that every verse God bestowed upon Muhammad is in my possession, dictated to me by the apostle of God

and written by the script of my hand, along with exposition of every verse and all the lawful and unlawful (issues)."

Dr. Musa tells us, that despite the fact that he studied Islam and jurisprudence under the direction of the Imam al-Khu'i, he was involved in a fierce argument in regard to this serious matter. But we will tell Dr. Musa that all the Shi'ites and their scholars (whose total number is more than one hundred fifty million Muslims scattered all over the Islamic countries) believe this. Even Sheikh Kishk who was one of the Sunnis' scholars, repeats similar statements in his book, "Legal Opinions" (part 1, page 103). He says,

"Ali remarked, 'Ask me about the book of God. I swear to God that there is no verse which I do not know whether it was sent down at night or during time, or on a plain or on a mountain.'"

He also states similar words about ibn Mas'ud. In spite of that, 'Ali ibn Mas'ud and ibn Abi Ka'b had been disqualified from contributing to the compilation of the Qur'an and their copies were neglected, though they were the most important expounders of the Qur'an along with ibn 'Abbas.

It is 'Ali's copy which contains additional material lacked in the current Qur'an and includes revelations from God for explaining the intended purposes. This is what happened in the course of the compilation of the Qur'an during the time of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. Thus, it is no wonder that ibn Kathir explicitly mentions that Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, the righteous, and the brother of A'isha, Muhammad's wife had participated with 'Ammar ibn Yasir, one of the famous companions, in the assassination of 'Uthman, reiterating, "You have altered God's book" (refer to the Bidaya and The Nihaya, part 7, page 185). On page 166, ibn Kathir records that a large number of the reciters of the Qur'an used to curse 'Uthman and encouraged people to revolt against him.

The question is, "Why do the reciters of the Qur'an do that and why does ibn Kathir vow that ibn Abi Bakr said that to 'Uthman? Did 'Uthman really change the copies of the Qur'an as Hamida daughter of Abi Yunis testified along with the rest of the great companions whom we mentioned? Yes indeed!

The Dispute Among The Companions And The Seven Readings Of The Qur'an

On the authority of all the scholars, the Suyuti tells us that the most eminent companions disagreed on the number of chapters of the Qur'an and their verses. They disagreed on the order of the chapters. He listed for us the order of the chapters in 'Ali's and ibn Mas'ud's copies (refer to the Itqan, part 1, pp. 176 and 189). He tells us that the multitude of scholars said that the order of the chapters was the outcome of the companions' opinion and they disagreed about that among themselves. The Suyuti admits on this page that both 'Ali and ibn Mas'ud each owned his own copy. Also Ubay ibn Ka'b possessed his own, too.

He regarded the dispute over the verse, "In the name of God the Compassionate and Merciful", a striking example about the dispute between the most eminent companions and the scholars. Some said that it is not one of the Qur'anic verses, so ibn 'Abbas told them that they eliminated 114 verses from the Qur'an because it was repeated 114 times. The Zamakh-shari, who recorded this incident in the Kash-shaf (part 1, pp. 24-26) states that those who denied these verses were ibn Mas'ud himself, Abu Hanifa, Malik and all the reciters and legists of Medina, Basra and Syria.

Imam Malik used to say, "This verse should not be read aloud or privately because it is not part of the Qur'an. Sheikh Kishk agrees with the Zamakh-shari in this matter and confirms that a dispute has resulted among the greatest scholars because of this verse. Some famous scholars such as the Qurtubi and ibn 'Arabi are of the same opinion as Malik that this verse is not of the Qur'an (refer to "Legal Opinions" of the contemporary Egyptian scholar Sheikh Kishk, part 9, pp. 41-47).

Of course, this verse is included in all the chapters of the Qur'an except the chapter of the Repentance. The reason for that is a very significant story which reveals that the compilation of the Qur'an and the order of the chapters are the product of human effort in compliance with the order of 'Uthman. In his "Itqan" (part 1, pp. 172,173), the Suyuti tells us:

"Ibn 'Abbas said to 'Uthman, 'What made you combine the chapter of the Anfal and the chapter of Tawba (repentance) without separating them by the verse, "In the name of God the compassionate, the Merciful"? (And why) did you put them among the seven long (chapters)?' 'Uthman said, 'The chapters used to be bestowed upon the apostle of God. The chapter of Anfal was among the early ones which were revealed in Medina and the chapter of Repentance was among the last revealed. Its story was similar to the early story (of the Anfal), so I thought that it was part of it. Then the apostle of God died without showing us that it was part of the (Anfal); thus, I combined them and did not write between them the verse, "In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful", and it is among the long ones."

The order and organization of the Qur'an depended on 'Uthman's view as he admitted himself to ibn 'Abbas. This time 'Uthman's opinion was wrong. The Suyuti tells us in "The Itqan" (part 1, page 195) that a dispute broke out among the scholars because of this verse which was revealed in some of the seven readings but not in all of them.

You may wonder what "the seven readings" are, and what we mean when we say that the Qur'an was sent down in "seven letters" (readings). We would briefly answer this question before we move to the last subject in this chapter which is the religious teachings, the mythical episodes and the meaning of the chapters included in the contents of the Qur'an.

The Seven Letters (Readings) Of The Qur'an

Both former and latter Muslim scholars agree on this issue. They all relied on Muhammad's famous statements which Bukhari and others recorded, as well as an incident which is frequently quoted by most of these scholars. The incident took place between 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and one of the great companions by the name of Hisham ibn al-Hakam in which Muhammad was the arbitrator.

Muhammad's Statements

Muhammad said:

"Gabriel made me read in (one dialect), I consulted with him again and continued asking for more (dialectal reading) and he continued to add to that until I finished with seven readings" (refer to Bukhari, part 6, page 227, and "The Itqan", part 1, page 131).

The Suyuti tells us that this admission is quoted in al-Bukhari, and Sahih of Muslim on the authority of ibn 'Abbas. Also, ibn 'Abbas indicated to us (part 1, page 132) that Muhammad said,

"My Lord told me to read the Qur'an in one dialect. I sent back and asked Him to make it easy for my people. He answered me (saying), 'Read it in two dialects.' I requested of him again, thus he sent to me (saying), 'Read it in seven dialects.'"

"Gabriel and Michael visited me. Gabriel sat at my right side and Michael at my left side. Gabriel said (to me), 'Read the Qur'an in one dialect.' Michael said, 'Add (more dialects)' until he reached seven dialects."

These are Muhammad's statements, but before we allude to the meaning of the seven letters (readings) as they were recorded by Muslim scholars, let us look at the incident which took place between 'Umar and Hisham (part 6, page 482 of al-Bukhari).

Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, "I heard Hisham ibn Hakim reciting Al-Furqan and I listened to his recitation and noticed that he recited in several different ways which Allah's messenger had not taught me. I was about to jump on him during his prayer and when he had completed his prayer, I put his upper garment around his neck and seized him by it and said, 'Who taught you this Surah which I heard you reciting?' He replied, 'Allah's Messenger taught it to me.' I said, 'You have lied for Allah's Messenger has taught it to me in a different way.' So I dragged him to Allah's Messenger and said to him, 'I heard this person reciting Surah Al-Furqan in a way which you haven't taught me.' Allah's Messenger said, 'It was revealed in both ways. This Qur'an has been revealed to be recited in seven different ways, so **recite out of it whichever way is easier for you.**'"

Refer also to Dr. Shalabi's book (page 40) along with other major sources, for all of them have recorded this story. It is very interesting to notice that Muhammad, the prophet, approved the readings of both of them in spite of the obvious differences between them which provoked 'Umar and forced him to treat Hisham brutally and pull him by his clothes.

The Meaning Of The Seven Letters (Readings)

The Suyuti says in "The Itqan" (part 1, pp. 131-140), scholars have argued among themselves about the meaning of the seven letters. Some like ibn Qutayba said that there is a difference in the meaning and not only in the usage of the vocabulary or the dialect. For some words, the meaning may change according to the vocalization of the word. The verb may be in the past tense or imperative as we find in chapter Saba': 19; or it depends on the word's diacritical points which incur a change in the meaning; or whether a phrase was added or deleted from the verse; or if a word is replaced by another. These are the views of ibn Qutayba who is one of the most famous scholars of his time.

Ibn al-Jazri agrees with him and admits that the meaning changes from one reading to another. The Suyuti states that Muslim scholars have said so because of the incident which occurred between 'Umar and Hisham ibn Hakeem, because both of them belonged to the same tribe of Quraysh and used the same dialect. It is impossible to say that 'Umar disapproved Hisham's dialect. This denotes that the Seven Letters do not mean mere difference in the dialect of the Arab tribes, otherwise 'Umar would not have objected to Hisham's reading (refer to Suyuti, part 1, page 136). Yet some other scholars such as al-Tabari argue that the difference is only in the vocabulary. One scholar agrees with the Tabari who said that ibn Mas'ud used to read:

"'Every time the (lightning) shines, they walk therein' (chapter 2:20). Yet other times, he may read, 'Passed through or went forward'; that is, stating the same meaning but using different vocabularies."

It is obvious to the reader that the differences between the seven readings **include the meaning and the vocabulary** because both 'Umar and Hisham belonged to the same tribe which speaks the same dialect. Yet they differed in their reading of the verses because the Qur'an was given without any vocalization or diacritical points, as the scholars indicated. In this case, it is inevitable that the meaning be exposed to change and disruption as ibn Qutayba, ibn al-Jazri and others mentioned and demonstrated by definite examples.

It is evident then that there are seven different dialects in the Qur'anic text. That created a dilemma for Muslim scholars. Even Suyuti himself alluded (page 136) to the fact that this issue has created a doubt in the minds of the scholars because the seven dialects required Gabriel to deliver each verse seven times.

Scholars' Admission Of A Strange Thing

In his "Itqan" (paragraph 1, page 137), the Suyuti remarks,

"A great scholar, that is the Mawardi, said that Muhammad had permitted the reading (of the Qur'an) on the basis of any of the Seven Letters as it happened in the episodes of 'Umar. He also allowed replacing a letter with another letter."

The Suyuti also says on (pages 141,142),

"The multitude of the scholars and the legists said that the 'Uthmanic Qur'an was (written) in accordance to one letter (dialect) only."

On pages 170 and 171, the Suyuti adds:

"When the lads and their teachers fought against each other during the era of 'Uthman due to the difference in reading (the Qur'anic text), he ('Uthman) standardized the reading and made people recite it accordingly because he was afraid of riots since the Iraqis and the Damascenes disagreed on the dialect. But before that, the Qur'anic copies (used to be read) on the basis of the Seven Letters in which the Qur'an was given."

Let us now examine what Dr. Shalabi said in this regard. In his book, "The History of Islamic Law" (pp. 40-41), he remarks:

"'Uthman wanted to have a standardized text read by all Muslims, but, after the era of 'Uthman, Muslims began again to read the Qur'an based on the Seven Letters as they used to do before. Each country followed the dialect of a famous reciter whom it trusted. Then public opinion settled on the Seven Readings taken from the most eminent reciters who were Nafi', Ibn Khathir, Abu 'Umar, Ibn 'Amir, 'Asim, Hamza and the Kisa'i. Egypt, for instance, followed the reading of Hafas who learned it from 'Asim."

Such circumstances created a problem for many Muslims who were seeking a solution. One of the inquirers asked Sheikh Kishk a question which this scholar attempted to answer in his book, "Legal Opinions" (part 1, pp. 113 and 114). The question was, "I heard a reciter reading the Qur'anic text, 'O ye

who would believe even if a godless messenger brought you news, be cautious.' He read it, 'Investigate' instead of, 'Be cautious'. I ask for a clarification for this reading and other similar verses."

Sheikh Kishk answers:

"The reading of the reciter, 'Investigate', is a correct famous reading which has been handed down (to people). Hamza, Kasa'i and Khalaf followed it. These three were among the ten on whom the Muslims relied that their reading is correct. The Qur'anic copies to which the inquirer referred, do not contain this reading. Thus, the reading is correct because the Qur'anic copies with which (the inquirer) is acquainted have the diacritical points based on the recitation of Hafas. If the Qur'an, in our time was written according to the recitation of Hamza or the reading of any of those who were with him, the diacritical points would be congruent with the reading of (Hafas).

"Maybe, there are Qur'anic copies which are written in the same pattern as this reading, yet the point to be taken into account is the authenticity of the chain of authority and its uninterrupted succession. All these readings proved to be correct and they were handed down uninterrupted. If the noble inquirer had pondered a little, he would have found that the formation of the word lends itself to be read in two ways based on the difference in the diacritical points. This is one of the secrets of the 'Uthmanic copy because during the era of the caliph 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, there was no vocalization or diacritical points."

Despite this answer, the question which is still without explanation is, "In which dialect was the Qur'an given to Muhammad? In which dialect were the tablets when it was still with God? Was there one Qur'an or seven Qur'ans with seven dialects? What did Sheikh Kishk (and his prophet Muhammad) mean when he said **all the dialects and all the meanings are correct?**"