

## Qur'aan: Definition of the Term

The word "Qur'aan," a verbal noun, is equivalent in meaning to "qiraa'ah," as both come from the verb "qara'a" which means "to read."

That is, Qur'aan literally means "a reading or reciting." [1] However, the term "Qur'aan" has been historically used specifically to refer to the book which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam). The term "Qur'aan" is mentioned in a number of places throughout the book in reference to itself. For example:

"Verily, this Qur'aan guides (humanity) to that which is most just." [2]

The name Qur'aan is used to refer to both the Qur'aan as a whole, as in the previously quoted verse; as well as to each verse or group of verses, as in the following verse:

"And if the Qur'aan is recited, you should listen to it and be silent, that you may receive mercy." [3]

The Book has also been referred to by other names; for example, the Furqaan (The Distinction):

"Blessed is He who revealed the Furqaan to His slave in order that he may be a warner to all the worlds." [4]

and the Thikr, (The Reminder):

"Verily, I revealed the Thikr and verily I will preserve it." [5]

The Qur'aan could be defined as Allah's words which were revealed in Arabic in a rhythmical form to Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam). Its recitation is used in acts of worship and its smallest chapter (surah) is of a miraculous nature.

The Prophet's divinely inspired statements which were recorded by his followers are generally referred to as Hadiths. For example, the Prophet's companion (sahaabee), 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab, reported that he once said, "Verily, deeds are (judged) by their intentions." [6]

However, in some of his statements, the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) attributed what he said to Allah; for example, another sahaabee, Abu Hurayrah, reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, "Allah, Most High, says, 'I am as My slave thinks of Me and I am with him when he

remembers me. So if he remembers Me to himself, I will remember him to Myself and if he remembers Me in a group, I will remember him in a better group.’ ”[7]

In order to distinguish this type of hadith from the previous type, it is referred to as hadith Qudsi (sacred hadith) and the former referred to as hadith nabawee (prophetic hadith).

The Qur’aan, however, is not the same as hadith Qudsi for a number of reasons. First, the Qur’aan is from Allah both in its wording and in its meaning, while in the case of hadith qudsee, its meaning is from Allah but its wording was the Prophet’s (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam). Second, Allah challenged the Arabs and mankind in general to produce even a chapter equivalent to one of the Qur’aan’s chapters, and their inability to do so proves its miraculous nature. This is not so in the case of hadith qudsee. Third, the recitation of the Qur’aan is used in salaah and is itself considered a form of worship. The Prophet (sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam) said, “Whoever reads a letter from the book of Allah, the Most High, will get a good deed (recorded for him), and each good deed is worth ten times its value. I am not only saying that Alif Laam Meem is a letter, but I am also saying that Alif is a letter, Laam is a letter, and Meem is a letter.”[8]

However, the recitation of hadith qudsee carries none of these properties.[9]

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[1] Arabic-English Lexicon, vol. 2, p. 2502.

[2] Surah al-Israa’ (17):9.

[3] Surah al-A’raaf (7):204.

[4] Surah al-Furqaan (25):1

[5] Surah al-Hijr (15):9.

[6] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 1, p. 1, no. 1) and Muslim (Sahih Muslim, vol. 3, p. 1056, no. 4692).

[7] Collected by al-Bukhaari (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol. 9, pp. 369-70, no. 502) and Muslim (Sahih Muslim, vol. 4, p. 1408, no. 6471).

[8] Reported by Ibn Mas’ood and collected by at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad. See footnote 154, p.75.

[9] See Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, p. 15, and Qawaa’id at-Tahdeeth min Funoon Mustalih al-Hadith, p. 56.

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