

3214 - The order of Soorahs and Aayahs in the Qur'aan

the question

Why are the sourates in Quran ordered are they are ? (since the first sourate is the one which begins with "Iqraa")

Baraka Allah fikoum

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The fact there is scholarly consensus, and many texts stating the order of aayahs in one soorah, that is very well known. The consensus was reported by many scholars, including Al-Zarkashi in al-Burhaan and Abu Ja'far, who said: "The order of the aayahs in their soorahs came about because this is how it was instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and there is no dispute among the Muslims with regard to this matter."

The texts regarding this matter include the following:

The report narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawood, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nisaa'i, Ibn Hibbaan and al-Haakim from Ibn 'Abbaas, who said: "I said to 'Uthmaan, 'What made you put al-Anfaal which is one of the Mathaani, next to Baraa'ah [al-Tawbah], which is one of the Mi'een? Why did you not put the line Bismillaah ir-Rahmaan ir-Raheem in between them when you put it at the beginning of the rest of al-Sab' al-Tiwaal [the long seven soorahs]?" 'Uthmaan said: "The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to receive revelation of soorahs with many aayahs. When they were revealed, he would call his scribes and tell them, 'Put these aayahs in the soorah where such-and-such is mentioned.' Al-Anfaal was one of the first soorahs to be revealed in Madeenah, and Baraa'ah (al-Tawbah) was one of the last parts of the Qur'aan to be revealed. Its stories were similar to the stories mentioned in al-Anfaal, so it was thought that it was part of it. The Messenger

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of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was taken [i.e., died] without explaining whether it was indeed part of it, so they were put next to one another, and the line Bismillaahi ir'Rahmaan ir'Raheem was not written between them, and it [al-Tawbah] was put among the Sab' al-Tiwaal [seven long soorahs]." (Al-Haakim said: its isnaad is saheeh, and al-Dhahabi agreed with him. Al-Mustadrak, 2/330)

Ahmad narrated in al-Musnad (4/218) with a hasan isnaad from 'Uthmaan ibn Abi'l-'Aas that he said: "I was sitting with the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) when he fixed his gaze on something, then lowered his gaze until he was almost looking at the ground, then he gazed at something. He said, 'Jibreel (peace be upon him) came to me and told me to put this aayah in this place in this soorah:

"Verily, Allâh enjoins Al-'Adl (i.e. justice and worshipping none but Allâh Alone Islâmic Monotheism) and Al-Ihsân [i.e. to be patient in performing your duties to Allâh, totally for Allâh's sake and in accordance with the Sunnah (legal ways) of the Prophet in a perfect manner], and giving (help) to kith and kin (i.e. all that Allâh has ordered you to give them, e.g., wealth, visiting, looking after them, or any other kind of help), and forbids Al-Fahshâ' (i.e. all evil deeds, e.g. illegal sexual acts, disobedience of parents, polytheism, to tell lies, to give false witness, to kill a life without right), and Al-Munkar (i.e. all that is prohibited by Islâmic law: polytheism of every kind, disbelief and every kind of evil deeds), and Al-Baghy (i.e. all kinds of oppression). He admonishes you, that you may take heed." [al-Nahl 16:90 - interpretation of the meaning]."

Al-Bukhaari narrated in al-Saheeh (no. 4536) that Ibn Abi Maleekah said: "Ibn al-Zubayr said: 'I said to 'Uthmaan, "This aayah that is in al-Baqarah (interpretation of the meaning), 'And those of you who die and leave wives behind them ... And those of you who die and leave behind wives should bequeath for their wives a year's maintenance and residence without turning them out' [al-Baqarah 2:234-240] has been abrogated by the other, so why are you writing it down it down?" He said, "Leave it as it is, my nephew, I will not change anything from its place.'"

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Muslim narrated (no. 1617) that 'Umar said: "I did not ask the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) about anything more than I asked him about al-Kalaalah [those who die leaving neither ascendants nor descendents as heirs], until he poked me in the chest with his finger and said, "Is not aayat al-sayf [?] at the end of Soorat al-Nisa' enough for you?"

There are also the ahaadeeth about the aayahs at the end of Soorat al-Baqarah.

Muslim narrated (no. 809) from Abu al-Darda' that whoever memorizes the first ten aayahs of Soorat al-Kahf will be protected from the Dajjaal; according to another version, whoever recites the last ten verses will be protected.

The Prophet's recitation of various soorahs in the presence of his companions indicates that the order of their aayahs is something that was instituted and commanded by him, and that the Sahaabah did not put the aayahs in a different order from that in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to recite them. The reports to that effect reach the level of Mutawaatir.

Al-Qaadi Abu Bakr said in al-Intisaar: "The order of the aayahs is something that is obligatory and binding. Jibreel used to say (to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him)), 'Put such and such an aayah in such and such a place.'"

He also said: "What we think is that all of the Qur'aan which Allaah revealed and commanded that it should be written down, and which was not abrogated after being revealed, is that which is contained between the covers of the Mus-haf of 'Uthmaan, and that there is nothing lacking or added to it. Its order is the same as that commanded by Allaah, may He be exalted, and instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). Nobody has moved any aayah backwards or forwards. The Ummah learned from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) the order of the aayahs of each soorah properly, just as they learned from him the correct pronunciation and recitation."

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Al-Baghawi said in Sharh al-Sunnah: “The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to instruct his companions and teach them what was revealed to him of the Qur’aan in the order in which it appears in our Mus-hafs now, the order which Jibreel taught him. When each aayah was revealed, Jibreel would tell him, this aayah is to be written after such and such an aayah in Soorah such and such. Thus it is clear that the efforts of the Sahaabah were limited solely to gathering the Qur’aan in one place, not to arranging its order. The Qur’aan is written on al-Lawh al-Mahfooz in this order, then Allaah sent it down in its entirety to the first heaven, whence it was revealed in stages as it was needed, and the order in which it was revealed is not the order in which it is recited.”

With regard to the order of Soorahs, was this also instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), or was this the ijtihaad of the Sahaabah? With regard to this question, there were differences among the scholars. The majority of scholars, including Maalik and al-Qaadi Abu Bakr, according to one of his two opinions, favoured the second opinion.

Ibn Faaris said: “There were two aspects to the compilation of the Qur’aan. One was putting the soorahs in a certain order, such as putting al-Sab’ al-Tiwaal (the seven long soorahs) first, and following them with the Mi’een, which is what the Sahaabah did. The second aspect is the compilation of the aayahs within the soorahs. This was instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), who recited them as he was told to by Jibreel, on the command of his Lord. On this basis the salaf differed as to the order in which the soorahs should appear. Some of them put them in order of revelation, which was the mus-haf of ‘Ali, which started with Iqra’ (al-‘Alaq), then al-Muddaththir, then Noon (al-Qalam), then al-Muzzammil, and so on. The Mus-haf of Ibn Mas’ood started with al-Baqarah, then al-Nisa’, then Aal ‘Imraan, with other major differences. The Mus-haf of Ubayy was similar.”

Al-Karmaani said in al-Burhaan: the order of the soorahs as it is now is the same as that in al-Lawh al-Mahfooz which is with Allaah. This is the order in which the Prophet (peace and blessings of

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Allaah be upon him) used to review the soorahs of the Qur'aan he had received so far with Jibreel each year. In the year in which he died, he reviewed it with him twice, and the last aayahs to be revealed were (interpretation of the meaning): 'And be afraid of the Day when you shall be brought back to Allaah...' [al-Baqarah 2:281]. Jibreel commanded the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) to put this between the aayahs dealing with riba and those dealing with loans."

Al-Zarkashi said in al-Burhaan: "The difference between the two views is one of wording. Those who support the second view say that it was taught to them so that they could learn the reasons of Revelation and the sequence of the words. Hence Maalik said that they compiled the Qur'aan according to what they had heard from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as well as saying that the order of the soorahs was the product of their ijtihaad. He said that the dispute boils down to one question which is: was this a verbal instruction of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), or were they merely referring to what he used to do, which would give them room for ijtihaad."

Al-Bayhaqi said in al-Madkhil: "At the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), the soorahs and aayahs of the Qur'aan were in this order, except for al-Anfaal and Baraa'ah (al-Tawbah), as we see from the hadeeth of 'Uthmaan referred to above."

Ibn 'Atiyah said: "The order of many of the soorahs was known during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), such as the seven long soorahs, those that begin with Ha'-Meem, and al-Mufassal. With regard to the others, it may be the case that it was left for the Ummah to determine their order after he died."

Abu Ja'far said: "The reports support most of what Ibn 'Atiyah said, and a little is left which is open to debate, such as the hadeeth, 'Recite the two shining ones, al-Baqarah and Aal 'Imraan.'" (Reported by Muslim, no. 804).

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Al-Bukhaari narrated (no. 4739) that 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "Bani Israa'eel (al-Israa'), al-Kahf, Maryam, Ta-Ha and al-Anbiya', these are among the earliest and most beautiful soorahs and they are my treasures," (meaning, these are among the earliest I recited).

Abu Ja'far al-Nahhaas al-Mukhtaar said that the soorahs were compiled in this order from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) because of the hadeeth of Waathilah, "In place of the Tawraat I was given the seven long soorahs." He said: "This hadeeth indicates that the order of the Qur'aan was taken from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

Ibn Hajar said, "the fact that the soorahs , or most of them, are in a given order does not contradict the idea that this was instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). What proves that this was instituted by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) is the report narrated by Ahmad and Abu Dawood from Aws ibn Hudhayfah, who said: 'We asked the companions of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in the morning, "How did you write down the Qur'aan in chapters?" They said, "We wrote it down in chapters of six soorahs, five soorahs, seven soorahs, nine soorahs, eleven soorahs and thirteen soorahs, and the chapter of al-Mufassal, from Qaaf until the end. This indicates that the order of the soorahs - as it appears in the Mus-haf now - existed at the time of the Messenger of Allaah, or it is possible that what was known in order at that time was Hizb al-Mufassal specifically, which is not the case with the rest."

See al-Itqaan fi 'Uloom al-Qur'aan by al-Suyooti, 1/62-65).

And Allaah knows best.