

Fast 7: The Quran — called an honoured book and a guide right at the beginning

- After the short prayer in the first chapter of the Quran (*Al-Fatihah*), the second chapter of the Quran begins as follows:

“This **Book**, in which there is no doubt, is a guide to those who keep their duty, who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend (on good works) out of what We have given them, and who believe in what has been revealed to you (O Prophet) and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are sure. These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful.” — ch. 2, v. 2–5

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾
 الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا
 رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَا اُنزِلَ
 اِلَيْكَ وَمَا اُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾
 اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾

- The Holy Quran begins by calling itself a book and it immediately mentions its function: it is a guide.
- “This Book”: The word translated as “this” is *dhālika* which literally means “that”. Why is the Quran calling itself “that” book? It is because the Arabic word *dhālika*, which normally is applied to something far (“that”), can also be applied to something near as a title of honour and respect. It indicates that the Quran will be greatly honoured and held in high estimation.
- Someone recently said: How do we know that by the words “that book” the Quran isn’t referring to something else, like, for example, the book of nature? This point can be settled by looking at other similar verses of the Quran occurring at the beginning of certain chapters:

“These are verses of the Book.” — ch. 13, v. 1

تِلْكَ اٰیٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ

“These are the verses of the Book and (of) a Quran that makes clear.” — ch. 15, v. 1

تِلْكَ اٰیٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ وَقُرْاٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ

Here again the word translated as “these” literally means “those” (*tilka*). It here means “these” in a sense of honour. Both the above statements tell us that it is talking about a book which has verses, and the second one says explicitly that the Book being mentioned is the Quran. This comparison establishes that the statement in chapter 2,

beginning with “This book”, is referring to the Quran and to nothing outside it, even though it literally means “That book”.

- We have seen that the reason why the Quran applies to itself the word which means “that” is to show that it is a book which is honoured and respected. But when this verse was revealed there were only a few Muslims, the people who held the Quran in honour. This is a prophecy that the Quran would attain great respect and honour in the future. Such honouring of the Quran is not confined to Muslims, but non-Muslim scholars of the Quran have also ranked it highly. There is a book entitled *A Dictionary of Islam*, compiled by Thomas Patrick Hughes and published in 1885. Before publication it was revised by a German Dr. F. Steingass, who had also written an Arabic to English dictionary. In the entry for *Quran*, Dr. Steingass wrote as follows:

We may well say the Qur'an is one of the grandest books ever written, because it faithfully reflects the character and life of one of the greatest men that ever breathed. “Sincerity,” writes Carlyle, “sincerity, in all senses, seems to me the merit of the Koran.” This same sincerity, this ardour and earnestness in the search for truth, this never-flagging perseverance in trying to impress it, when partly found, again and again upon his unwilling hearers, appears to me as the real and undeniable “seal of prophecy” in Muhammad.

I have given above the image of this passage from him, which is on p. 527, column 1, of this book.

- As the above quote shows, the greatness of the Quran is a reflection of the greatness of the character and life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. Just as the Quran is an honoured book, so is the Holy Prophet an honoured Messenger. The Quran says:

“Surely, it is the word of an honoured Messenger, and it is not the word of a poet. Little do you believe! Nor the word of a fortune-teller. Little are you mindful! It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.” — ch. 69, v. 40–

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إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ
 قَلِيلًا مَّا تُوْمَنُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا
 تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

It is said here that only an honoured messenger could deliver the honoured word of God. Its teachings are not the exaggerations and fancies of a poet, merely rousing the listener’s emotions. Its prophecies are not the predictions of a fortune-teller, designed to impress and exploit people’s ignorance and gullibility.