



Book Review



Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali, *Lessons on Knowing the Quran*, n. p.: Risalat International Institute, and Centre for Cultural and Ethical Studies, 2020. 423 pp.

The Holy Quran is the topmost and unanimously the well-accepted scripture of the Islamic religion. Although many, many introductory books have been written on the Holy Quran, there are still many untold aspects of it. This is no strange, for it is the intact Divine scripture, hence above all other books.

Books written on introducing the Holy Quran might be developed from various perspectives. Some approach the Holy Quran in terms of casting doubt on it and its origin, while others accept it as Divine text per se. Others approach the Quran from an Islamic view but confine themselves to certain rather marginal topics. They prefer to give some statistical data, e.g., number of suras and verses, the duration of the descent of the revelation, and so forth. The present book, in contrast, endeavors to take the reader into the inner levels and dimensions of the Holy Quran. This is its outstanding merit, although it might seem rather heavy for the uninitiated.

Arranged in four parts, the first part is concerned with the Divine revelation and its characteristics. Its first chapter attempts to provide definitions and types of revelation. An interesting feature of this book is that its arguments are based on the Quranic evidence which are quoted in Classical Arabic, and followed by English translation.

The second and third chapters focus on significant aspects of the Prophetic revelation and the light of the revelation in the Divine scriptures. As understood from its arguments, it is the Divine element in the scriptures that makes them outstanding and capable of withstanding the test of time.

The second part focuses on the Quranic revelation. Comprised of Chapters 4 to 10, they provide instructions on the descent of the Quran, the



special status of the month Ramadan and the Eves of al-Qadr (the Eves of Divine Determination), the actual Divine words, the compilation of the Quran, the transparency of the Quran, and the centuries-long trends of Quran exegeses, *tafsirs*.

The third part turns to the status and reality of the Quran. Divided into four chapters, it deals with the significance of the Quran in hadith, the reality of the Quran, the status of the Quran in the Quran itself, and the Quran as a living scripture for all ages. It is the last topic that makes a clear distinction between the Quran and other books. Although revealed over fifteen centuries ago, it is always as living and fresh as it was in the time of the Prophet. Divided into Chapters 15-18, it sheds light on how to approach the Holy Quran. It attempts to show how our responses to the Quran should be. This is because the Quran is the living Divine book, hence capable of guiding its enquirers. As the Divine book, the Quran leaves its tremendous effects on the soul and mind of its audience and listeners when it is recited in its prescribed manner, hence it does have several etiquettes to be observed for recitation, both in private or in public. The last chapter takes the reader to the stages of contemplating on the Quran.

The seven-page bibliography guides the reader to the sources consulted or quoted from. A great majority of the books listed in the references is in Arabic.

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