

# *SPEED-READING OR SLOW TADABBUR IN RAMADĀN?*



# Speed-Reading or Slow Tadabbur in Ramadān?

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Question: What's a better option in Ramadān: reciting the Qur'ān slowly with contemplation, or faster and a greater amount of recitation?

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I don't believe that there's any wrong answer to this question. It's a matter of one's preference. Both are appropriate and acceptable Inshā'Allāh. I'll rephrase or re-word something Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله تعالى mentioned about this. He said the reward for reciting with Tartīl and contemplation is like one who donates a very valuable gem. It's like someone today, for example, donating a very valuable car. And the reward for one who recites faster and a greater amount, it's like someone who donates several, cheaper cars.

In Tarīkh Baghdad, Al-Khatīb Al-Baghdādi mentioned — and also Ibn Rajab mentioned it — that Ash-Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى used to recite the Qur'ān sixty times during Ramadān. Abu Nu'aym mentioned it in Al-Hulyah. Adh-Dhahabi mentioned it in *Siyar Alām An-Nubalā'* and also An-Nawawi mentioned it. They mentioned that Ash-Shāfi'ī would recite the Qur'ān sixty times in Ramadān. That's twice a day, completing the Qur'ān twice a day in Ramadān. There's no explicit, authentic, Marfū' Hadīth prohibiting one from completing the recitation of the entire Qur'ān in less than three days. There's a misconception on that. The point of the Hadīth that's in Sunan At-Tirmidhi,

لَمْ يَفْقَهُ مَنْ قَرَأَ الْقُرْآنَ فِي أَقَلِّ مِنْ ثَلَاثِ

*He who recites the Qur'ān in less than three (days), he does not understand it.*<sup>1</sup>

One who recites the Qur'ān in less than three nights does not understand it, the point of that is one will not be able to understand nor contemplate the Qur'ān if he recites the Qur'ān in less than three days. That's not to deny the reward of the

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<sup>1</sup> Tirmidhi: 2949

one who recites and completes the entire Qur'ān in less than three days, nor is it saying that it's Harām. Take, for example, someone who doesn't understand the Qur'ān due to a language barrier, but he recites the Qur'ān, not in three days, but in a month. He can't understand it because of a language barrier. He will, Inshā'Allāh, get the reward. Likewise, one who recites the Qur'ān at a greater speed in less than three days, he will Inshā'Allāh get the reward as well. Some Ulamā', when talking about this Hadīth, they said it's describing the status of the majority of the people, but there are exceptions. [Like] someone who memorized the Qur'ān while they were young, and studied the Tafāsīr at an early age, and they have a sharp memory. They may be able to comprehend the Qur'ān if they recite it in less than three days. Because the Hadīth, they said, is just talking about the overwhelming majority of the people. The point being is, failure to contemplate and understand the Qur'ān due to one reciting it in less than three days is not forbidden in any authentic, Marfū' Hadīth nor is the reward for it negated.

The Salaf had different customs in their recitation of the Qur'ān. Some used to finish the entire Qur'ān in a month. Some in ten days. Most would finish it, possibly, in seven days. Some in six days, some in five days, some in four days. Many finished it in three days. Some finished the Qur'ān in two nights, and among them were 'Abd Ar-Rahmān Ibn 'Awf, Al-Aswad Ibn Yazīd, and Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr. 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān رضي الله عنه used to recite the entire Qur'ān in one Rak'ah. Ibn Kathīr said it's Hasan, meaning the narration is Hasan, that he used to recite the Qur'ān in one Rak'ah. Others recited the Qur'ān in one day. Tamīm Ad-Dāri, Mujāhid, Ibn Asākir, and others recited the Qur'ān in one day. Ibn Kathīr said Al-Bukhāri used to complete the entire Qur'ān every single night of Ramadān, and there are other examples. An-Nawawi, in his book *At-Tibyān fi Adāb Hamalāt Al-Qur'ān*, and Ibn Abi Shaybah related that some finished the Qur'ān three times a day. As-Suyūti and An-Nawawi stated that some finished the Qur'ān eight times a day, four times in the daytime, and four times at night.

Decades ago, when I used to mention that Ash-Shāfi'ī رحمه الله تعالى would recite the Qur'ān twice a day in Ramadān, people would constantly fire back and

say that's impossible. Even as recent as ten years ago, I was told that by many people when I mentioned it. People who are not closely attached and accustomed to the reading and memorization of the Qur'ān may think it's a figment of imagination, but it is possible. Now, you can see Masājid in various countries, having events where the Huffādh review — young children, they review the Qur'ān. Tens and hundreds of students, they begin reciting the Qur'ān with their Shuyūkh in Fajr, and they complete the Qur'ān fully before Dhuhr. The same can be done a second time in the evening. So it's very practical to recite the Qur'ān twice a day. Now, eight times a day, *if* that's true, then the only explanation I would know of — *if* it's authentic and if it's a righteous individual — it may be a Karāmah of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى to that person. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى expanded and blessed the time for them to allow them to fulfill such deeds.

So the conclusion is that one is not wrong for choosing to recite faster in Ramadān to get a greater amount of recitation completed in that blessed month, because the deeds for each letter recited are generally multiplied by ten. In the blessed days of Ramadān, it's many more folds than that. When one is visiting Makkah, for example, a blessed place, or doing l'tikāf, or in Ramadān — blessed times and occasions and places — one focuses on quantity so he can get the multi-folds of rewards, and that would be my preference in this matter.

Another benefit for reciting faster in Ramadān is that it's a good temporary change. One should normally recite with understanding and contemplation, but this is a temporary change, and it's the nature of humans to like changes. That's one of the reasons Allāh سبحانه وتعالى prescribed a variety of 'Ibādāt. And another benefit is that it's helpful for the review of the Huffādh. Some used to have a weekly recitation of the Qur'ān where they would divide the Qur'ān out over a week. And then another one, at the same time, where they would divide the Qur'ān over a month. And then a third one that they said they haven't completed in thirty years. Each Khitmah had its level and pace of recitation and understanding and contemplation of the Qur'ān.

Now, that should never be the consistent rule. Meaning, recitation with contemplation and understanding should be the general rule. Recitation with

contemplation can never be emphasized enough. The Āyāt and Ahādīth and the statements of the Salaf on that are enormous. The fast or speed-reading of the Qur'ān, fulfilling its right, should only be during blessed days and blessed places and occasions, if one chooses. On normal occasions, one should recite with contemplation and understanding. Contemplating and understanding the Qur'ān is a voluminous topic, and I spoke about it many times in the past, one of them was in the start of the Tafsīr classes.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Al-Jawzi رحمه الله mentioned that a woman entered upon 'Abd Ar-Rahmān Ibn Abi Laylah and she was astonished at his slow pace in his recitation of the Qur'ān when he was on Sūrat Hūd. She inquired about that, 'Abd Ar-Rahmān Ibn Abi Laylah said, "والله، I have been reading this Sūrah for six months and I still haven't finished it yet." Six months on Sūrat Hūd. The benefits of understanding and contemplating the Qur'ān are enormous. It attains one guidance, which is the purpose of the revelation of the Qur'ān.

هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ

*a guidance for the people...<sup>3</sup>*

It's to boost one's Īmān. It's a healing of the heart. On normal occasions when you recite, your goal shouldn't be to flip the page or to reach the end of the Sūrah. It should be a recitation where the ears hear it, and the heart absorbs it. The purpose should be, *how many verses are going to penetrate my heart and attain me knowledge and fear of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى? How many verses are going to boost my Īmān? How many verses are going to bring tears to my eyes? How many verses are going to make my skin shiver and how many verses are going to make my heart tremble?* That should be the purpose on a normal occasion with the recitation of the Qur'ān.

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<sup>2</sup> The series can be found [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> [2:185]