

Memorising the Qur'an

It was kept in memory before it was kept in ink. Most of what was said about memorising it is about keeping it, not about getting it.



★ The promise over it

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder, and indeed, We will be its guardian.” The preservation is not the memoriser’s achievement.

Qur'an 15:9

★ Made easy to recall

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We have certainly made the Qur'an easy to remember — so is there any who will remember?” Repeated four times in that surah.

Qur'an 54:17

★ Learn it, then teach it

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

“The best of you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it.” Memorising ends in passing it on.

Sahih al-Bukhari 5027

★ The tied camels

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ صَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ كَمَثَلِ صَاحِبِ الْإِبِلِ الْمُعَقَّلَةِ إِنْ عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَمْسَكَهَا وَإِنْ أَطْلَقَهَا ذَهَبَتْ

“If he keeps them tied he will control them; if he releases them, they will run away.” The image is of holding, not of acquiring.

Sahih al-Bukhari 5031

★ Faster than camels

“Keep on reciting the Qur'an, for it escapes from the hearts of men faster than camels do” — said against the man who shrugs that he has forgotten a verse.

Sahih al-Bukhari 5032

★ Commit yourself to it

Abu Musa narrated: “Commit yourself to the Qur'an, for by Him in whose Hand is my soul, it is more prone to break away than a camel in its bind.”

Sahih al-Bukhari 5033

★ Two ranks

The one who has mastered it is with the noble scribes. The one who labours at it and recites with difficulty has two rewards — so the slow memoriser is not the loser.

Sahih al-Bukhari 4937

★ Do not race it

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

“And do not hasten with the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge.”

Qur'an 20:114

★ How fast to go through it

‘Abdullah b. ‘Amr kept asking to shorten his reading until he was told seven days; and “he who recites the Qur'an in less than three does not understand it”.

Sunan Abi Dawud 1390, 1394 • sahih