THE QUR’AN

For the Muslim, the Qur’an is a compilation of revelations from Allah (the God of the Old Testament), given to Muhammad intermittently between the years 610 and 632 CE. These revelations were given to Muhammad in different ways (e.g., in sounds like the ringing of a bell), but most often verbally by the angel Gabriel. Muhammad shared the revelations with his followers, who memorized them and also wrote some of them down, though not in any organized manner at first. The formal compilation of revelations was ordered and accomplished during the caliphate of Uthman (644-656 CE). Muslims believe that the Qur’an has come down to present day just as it was compiled at that time.

Key points regarding the Qur’an:

- Its three main purposes are:
  - to provide the Arab people their own scripture in their own language (Arabic), scripture which confirms that previously given to other peoples, in particular, the Jews and Christians.
  - to correct mistakes in earlier scriptures, in particular, the idea put forth in the Gospels that Jesus is the Son of God and/or that he is divine.
  - to provide guidance for every area of life: religious, social, political, economic and family.
- It is the supreme authority in Islam, the primary material source for Islamic life and Islamic law.
- It contains God’s words only. Muhammad neither speaks nor is there any account of his life in the Qur’an.
- It is organized by chapter (sura) and verse (aya). Each sura has a title which refers to one or more of the following:
  - the sura’s main theme.
  - an important event or a word referred to in the sura.
- Its revelations can be divided into two sections:
  - Meccan revelations, which deal primarily with basic Islamic beliefs (e.g., unity and singleness of God, Muhammad’s calling as a prophet, certainty of Judgment, Heaven, Hell and fate of unbelievers, and more).
  - Medinan revelations, which devote significant attention to laws to govern the Muslim community (umma). Marriage, family relations, treatment of orphans, commerce and finance, war and peace and other areas are addressed in these revelations.