

What is the ruling concerning old pages of the Qur'aan? What if they are burnt?

Q: Ilm-19: What must be done with pages of the Qur'aan that are old, decayed and tattered? What is the ruling about someone who burns them before burying them?

Answer: When the pages of the Qur'aan are worn out or eaten by termites and cannot be used anymore, they must be carefully wrapped in a clean cloth and buried in a place where little or no traffic passes, just as would be done to a dead person' (to ensure the respect of the Qur'aan? Arrangements should be made for no sand to fall on the pages, just as people's bodies are placed in a niche in the grave and covered with planks).

If the Qur'aan is handwritten, it is best to wash off the writing from the pages before burying them. Drinking the water afterwards will Inshaa Allaah ensure a cure from all physical and spiritual diseases.

One may also tie the pages of the Qur'aan to a pure and heavy thing and then respectfully lowering it down into deep running water or the depth of a well.

When these options are available, no permission may be given for burning the pages because of the disrespect involved. In fact, where burning is regarded as disrespectful, it will be totally impermissible to burn them.

However, when these two options are not possible or it is deemed that disrespect will be shown to them even afterwards, it will be permissible to burn them and then bury the ashes when there is no other alternative. This was the option used by Hadhrat Uthm aan RADI. when he ordered that all Qur'aans written in the non-Qurayshi script be burnt. The details of this are that the Qur'aan was revealed in the clear and eloquent dialect of the Quraysh. Although other Arab tribes also spoke Arabic, their dialects were not as precise and as eloquent. There was a difference in their manner of speaking and terminologies, just as we find differences between the speakers of various languages. For example, we find the differences in the speech of the people of Surat and the people of Baruch even though they all speak Gujarati. Amongst the Arabs existed differences in pronunciation such as the once reciting a 'Gaa' sound instead of a 'Kaa', a 'Taa' sound in place of a 'Sh' sound and some would recite 'Maa'in Ghayri Aasin' as 'Maa'in Ghayr Yaasin' etc.

When the various tribes became Muslims, they found it impossible for all their old men, women and children to pronounce the words of the Qur'aan in the dialect of the Quraysh, because of which Rasoolullah SAW. permitted them to recite it according to their own dialect because they needed to recite the Qur'aan in salaah. However, some people regarded this temporary permission to be applicable to all of them and they started to insist that the Qur'aan be recited as they recited it. As a result, there followed many disputes.

When Hadhrat Hudhayfah bin Yamaan RADI. witnessed both the Battles of Armenia and Azerbaijan, he noticed the conflicts between the Muslim army from Shaam and the Muslim army from Iraq. Each party regarded their recitation to be better than the other. He then went to Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. and said, "O Ameerul Mu'mineen! Do check on the Ummah before they start to differ on the Qur'aan just as the Jews and the Christians differed in their scriptures.

After consulting with the other Sahabah RADI. Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. then sent for the copy of the Qur'aan that was with Hadhrat Hafsa RADI. and which Hadhrat Abu Bakr RADI. had compiled with great care and accuracy during his term as Khalifah. He then sent for Hadhrat Zaid bin Thaabit RADI. of the Ansaar and several Sahabah RADI. from the Quraysh, who included Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Zubayr RADI., Hadhrat Sa'eed bin Al Aas RADI. and Hadhrat Abdullaah bin Haarith bin Hishaam RADI. He had them write out several copies of the Qur'aan in the pure Qurayshi script and then had announcements made in the marketplaces that all Qur'aans written in any other script should be burnt (it is for this reason that Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. is known as 'Jaami'ul Qur'aan'). This instruction is recorded in Bukhaari (Vol.2 Pg.746)

Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. gave the command to have the copies of the Qur'aan burnt because had he buried them or placed them underwater, people could have retrieved them, because of which they would become a means of conflict amongst the Ummah until the Day of Qiyaamah, as had happened to the Jews and the Christians. The burning was not done disrespectfully. Mazaahire Haqq also states that the burning was for a definite reason and that Hadhrat Uthmaan RADI. deserves no ridicule for it. The same is endorsed in Faydhul Baari (Vol.4 P5.264).

Imdaadul Fataawad states: "Because of the difference of opinion in burning, it will be permissible (when need be) but otherwise more cautious to avoid."

However, when it is not possible to bury the pages or to place them in water or when it is deemed that disrespect will be shown to them even afterwards, it will be permissible to burn them (only because of the necessity). Fataawaa Siraajiyyah states: "When the pages of the Qur'aan are worn out and cannot be used anymore, they must be carefully wrapped in a clean cloth and buried in a clean place, burnt (and the ashes scattered over water or buried) or placed into water."

Therefore, if the person in your question burnt the pages to protect them from disrespect, he should be left alone because a Muslim will seldom ever do it out of disrespect. One must have good thoughts' about one's fellow Muslim brother'. Rasulullaah SAW. said that actions are judged by their Intention and he also instructed us to think favourably of Muslims. Allaah Say in the Qur'aan: "O you who have Imaan! Abstain from excessive suspicion because some suspicion is sinful." Rasulullaah SAW. also said, "Beware of suspicion because it is the greatest of lies." And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah (Vol.1)