

peace, and therefore, did not and could not have contributed to the deterioration of the situation.

Journalists are part of a society. As ordinary members of a community, they are presumably subject to the same pressures of the values and views of the society. But they are also the shapers and keepers of conscience of a society. It is in this role that those editors of the three Israeli newspapers had failed. The vast majority of the Israeli people might have been part of the collective sense of fear experienced by the Israeli society or share, in Dor's own words, racist views about Palestinians and know nothing about the consequences of the occupation. Perhaps, it is due to the "constitutive role" of editors, as played by those of the three Israeli newspapers cited above, that the following facts have been fenced out from the collective Israeli consciousness: that since the Oslo peace process began, the Israeli government has expropriated at least 70,000 acres of Palestinian land, largely for Israeli settlement expansion and the construction of new settlements and settlement infrastructure; that since 1993, nearly 4,000 Palestinian houses had been demolished; that Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Gaza have used more water for keeping their lawns green than the Palestinians have for carrying out their daily basic needs such as drinking, washing, and cleaning, and for other necessities of life.

Reflections on the Qur'ān: Understanding *Sūrah*s *al-Fātiḥah* & *al-Baqarah*. By Irfan Ahmad Khan. Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2005/1426 AH., pp. 782+xiii. ISBN 0 86037 455 6.

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Though the Holy Qur'ān was first translated into English in 1649 by Alexander Ross, it remains a close text to most of the English readers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The book under review marks a departure from earlier efforts. It would definitely assist a

person who, coming to this scripture for the first time, sincerely desires to penetrate its meaning to see how it influences the ordinary believer and his or her life, and how it penetrates the deepest layers of a Muslim conscience. It helps understand that the Qur'ān is not an impenetrable text but a living guide for an ordinary Muslim. The learned author, in a straightforward manner, communicates his own deeply committed reflections on the Qur'ān. It helps the reader to understand the Qur'ān which declares itself to be “a Book which We have sent down to you, full of blessings, that they may ponder over it, and that men of understanding may receive admonition” (*Sūrat Ṣād*, 38:29).

Reflections on the Qur'ān: Understanding Sūrahs al-Fātiḥah & al-Baqarah is the latest effort to help man understand the Qur'ān and thus to know the Almighty Creator and establish the linkage with Him. It is a commendable effort to understand the Qur'ān with a modern mind. It provides an in-depth and insightful study of the two initial chapters (*Sūrahs al-Fātiḥah* and *al-Baqarah*), with each *sūrah* (chapter) being divided into several sections with study notes or reflections of different lengths. The author draws attention to the principal issues, explicates key terms and points out aspects of conceptual coherence in the Qur'ān.

Before reflecting on the two *sūrahs*, the author explains the ways to approach the Qur'ān and understand its messages in a given human condition. The author deserves commendation for this lucid and engaging introduction devoid of all polemics and philosophical nuances. The learned author argues that Allah (SWT) has granted man the faculties of *sam'*, *baṣar*, and *fu'ād* (hearing, sight, and thinking) for them to understand the Qur'ān. Man uses these abilities in his daily life, he listens, analyses and deliberates over the message or statement he receives to see its relevance and benefit for life, individually and socially.

The author also points out that Allah (SWT) addresses man directly using various phrases such as “O people,” “O you who have rejected the truth,” “O you who have attained to faith,” and “O people of Scripture.” These are the phrases of direct dialogue. Allah (SWT) has also arranged the chapters and verses systematically giving it the shape of a book. Therefore, mankind should use the gifted intellectual faculties to study the Qur'ān and thus establish the link

with their Creator. The purpose of writing the reflections on the Qur'ān according to the author, is to “instil in my readers an interest in the Qur'ānic text and to motivate them to reflect on the *āyāt* of this great book” (p. 1). The author rightly points out that the prime requirement for benefiting from the Book is to “sincerely look for guidance through it” (p. 33).

The second section entitled *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* is relatively short containing 17 pages whose major theme, according to the author, is the covenant between man and God. Irfan is perhaps the first *mufasssir* (commentator) of the Qur'ān to have advanced this unique idea concerning the central message of the *sūrah*. *Al-Fātiḥah* undoubtedly is a covenant between the Lord of the universe and the man. This explains the significance of placing this short *sūrah* in the very beginning of the Qur'ān. This section contains mainly sixteen messages explaining various terms found in the *sūrah*. The third section on *sūrat al-Baqarah* consumes the remaining 713 pages and it contains 639 explanatory notes. Each note contains something new in terms of methodological and practical dimensions of the divine message keeping the jurisprudential debates at bay. Given the fact that *al-Baqarah* contains a number of legal *āyāt*, it is common for the commentators to be engaged in the *fiqhī* discussions. It is to the credit of Irfan that he managed to convey the original message to the reader without entering into difficult jurisprudential terrain.

Irfan uses the traditional as well as rational approach to the study of Qur'ān. At times, he is critical but without becoming pedantic. Though trained in philosophy, Irfan has not enslaved himself to the philosophical style of expression. Well versed in classical Arabic, Irfan has no problem in explaining Qur'ānic terms and phrases. He leaves no room for confusion over the original import of the terms and words of the Qur'ān in his discussion. He divides the message of *al-Baqarah* into many sections, each under a particular theme, and thus makes it easy to get the message of the Qur'ān and establish a direct link with the revealed words. In this, Irfan's work is similar to the famous *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān* authored by the great *mufasssir*, Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī.

Irfan's emphasis on the coherence (*Naẓm*) in the Qur'ān gives credence to the idea of *Naẓm al-Qur'ān* propounded earlier by 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Faraḥī and applied by Sayyid Quṭb, Sayyid

Mawddī and Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī. Irfan repeatedly stressed, in addition to his elucidation in the “Introduction,” the need to study all the statements of a *sūrah* as an integral whole. His interpretation of the doctrine of abrogation in the Qur’ān is also unique. He considers abrogation (*naskh*) “as the experience of the Companions of the Prophet” at a time when the Qur’ān was still being revealed. This issue, therefore, need not be addressed. Instead, the Qur’ān should be looked at as a divine discourse to human beings in classical Arabic language. To understand the Qur’ān, it is necessary to look at it as a coherent whole.

The language used in the *Reflections* is very lucid and the style is informal, simple and touching. It attempts to unravel the Qur’ānic wisdom in the contemporary idiom, and relates divine guidance to modern man’s condition. *Reflections on the Qur’ān* will be useful for teachers, students, and scholars alike and should be included in the curricula of Qur’ānic studies. It will also be well-received if the work is translated into other world languages. It is hoped that the learned author would continue the work to cover the remaining 112 chapters.

Perspectives on Management and Organization. By Abbas J. Ali. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005, pp. 260 + viii. ISBN 1 84376 766 X

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Islamic approach to management and organization is of recent origin and Muslim scholars are in the forefront putting in their best efforts to widen the horizons of Islamization of knowledge including the Islamization of management science. *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization* is the latest and commendable effort to approach Management and Organization from an Islamic perspective. It fills the gap in the literature by reflecting on the rich resources and ideas displayed during the early centuries after the inception of Islam. It covers issues related to Islamic assumptions