178203 - Is it permissible to have a favourite soorah of the Quran that one recites and listens to a great deal because it has an impact on the heart?

the question

My question is whether it is okay for a person to have a favourite surah that they like to read/listen to and think about all the time? From a young age I have always loved Surah Al-Waqiah. I try to read the Quran as much as I can on a daily basis but am always drawn to Surah Al-Waqiah. It brings about all sorts of wonderful emotions such as love, hope and gratitude, but also extreme fear and terror of ending up in the fire. Whenever I am faced with a problem/stressful situation, the verses just automatically pop into my head and make me feel better. But I sometimes feel that maybe I am doing wrong by focusing on it and loving it more than other surahs.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is nothing wrong with a Muslim singling out a soorah from the Book of Allah for extra attention, whether that is reciting it or listening to it or learning about its meanings and the like, and learning about what it contains of rulings, exhortation, warnings and so on, without that leading to neglect of the rest of the Quran and neglecting to recite it, so long as that is based on some special reasons such as trying to develop a deeper understanding of the soorah or because one feels moved by its contents and the like. It should not be based on a belief in a particular virtue of that soorah for which there is no proof in sharee'ah.

In a hadeeth that was narrated and classed as hasan by at-Tirmidhi (3297), it says that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Hood, al-Waaqi'ah, al-Mursalaat, 'Amma yatsaa'iloon [al-Naba'] and Idha ash-'shamsu kuwwirat [al-Takweer] have made my hair turn grey."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

An-Nasaa'i (1010) narrated that Abu Dharr said: The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) prayed qiyaam all night, repeating the verse (interpretation of the meaning): "If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily You, only You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise" [al-Maa'idah 5:118].

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh an-Nasaa'i

Abu Nu'aym narrated in al-Hilyah (2/55) with a saheeh isnaad that 'Urwah ibn az-Zubayr said: I entered upon Asma' bint Abi Bakr when she was praying and I heard her reciting this verse (interpretation of the meaning): "But Allah has been gracious to us, and has saved us from the torment of the Fire" [at-Toor 52:27], then she started seeking refuge with Allah (and continued to do so). I got up to leave when she was still seeking refuge with Allah, and I went to the marketplace. And when I came back, she was still weeping and seeking refuge with Allah.

Ibn Sa'd narrated in at-Tabaqaat (7/150) from Bahz ibn Hakeem that Zaraarah ibn Awfa led them in praying Fajr in the mosque of Banu Qushayr, and he recited until he reached the words (interpretation of the meaning), "Then, when the Trumpet is sounded (i.e. its second blowing); Truly, that Day will be a Hard Day. Far from easy for the disbelievers" [al-Muddaththir 74:8-10], whereupon he fell down dead. Bahz said: I was one of those who carried him.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

What is the ruling on preferring one soorah to another, especially since I love to recite Soorah Maryam sometimes, for example, because I feel comfort and joy when I recite it?

He replied: There is nothing wrong with a person preferring one soorah of the Quran over another for some reason. All of it is the word of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. With regard to the One Who spoke its words, namely Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, there is no differentiation. But with regard to what it includes of great meanings, there may be some differentiation.

Hence it is proven from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that “The greatest soorah of the Book of Allah is Soorat al-Faatihah and the greatest verse in the Book of Allah is Aayat al-Kurisy.”

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) sent one of the Sahaabah on an expedition, and he used to recite Quran for his companions and end with Soorat al-Ikhlaas. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Ask him why he does that?” He said: Because it is a description of the Most Merciful and I love to recite it. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Tell him that Allah loves him.”

It was proven from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that “Soorat al-Ikhlaas is equivalent to one third of the Quran.” If this questioner loves to recite Soorah Maryam because of what it contains of great and beneficial stories, and what it contains of mention of the recompense of the Last Day, and denunciation of the one who disbelieves and rejects the signs of Allah, and other meanings, there is nothing wrong with that at all.

End quote from Fataawa Islamiyyah, 4/50

The point is that some parts of the Quran may have a greater impact on the heart, instilling fear or hope, than other verses or soorahs. If the reader benefits from reciting that and has the habit of doing so time after time, there is nothing wrong with it.

Rather what is not allowed is to think that a particular soorah or verse has some spiritual virtue, or that the one who reads it will have such and such reward, without that being based on any text of the revelation.

Shaykh Bakr Abu Zayd (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is an innovation (bid‘ah) to single out without any evidence, a particular verse or soorah to be recited at a particular time or in a particular place or for a particular need.

End quote from Bida‘ al-Qiraa’ah, p. 14

And Allah knows best.