# 82856 - Repetition in the Qur’aan – types and benefits

**the question**

I am researching a subject, which is the phenomenon of repetition in the Holy Qur’aan.

**Detailed answer**

Praise be to Allah.

There follows a brief discussion on the repetitions in the Qur’aan, which suits the nature of our site. You can examine the subject further by looking at the references we refer to, or by studying the books of ‘Uloom al-Qur’aan in general.

1 – Definition of repetition

Ibn al-Manzoor said:

The word takraar (translated here as repetition) is derived from the word al-karr, which means going back to a thing.

Lisaan al-‘Arab (5/135).

In sharee’ah terminology, takraar means repeating a word or phrase more than once for various reasons, such as emphasis, exaggeration, reinforcement and so on.

2 – Repetition is a kind of eloquence

Some of those who do not have any understanding of the Arabic language criticized the repetition that appears in the Qur’aan, and thought that this is not eloquent. This stems from their ignorance. The repetition that appears in the Qur’aan is not the kind of worthless repetition that is of no value – as we shall see in detail below – and which appears in the speech of one who does not speak the language well or express himself well.

Al-Suyooti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Repetition is more eloquent than merely emphasizing and it is reflective of good style, contrary to what some people think.

Al-Itqaan fi ‘Uloom al-Qur’aan (3/280), Mu’sasat al-Nada’ edition.

3 – Kinds of repetition

The scholars have divided the repetition in the Qur’aan into two kinds:

(i) Repetition of words and meanings

This is where words are repeated with no difference in the meaning. There are two types, connected and disconnected.

The connected type appears in various ways, either by repeating the words in the same verse, as when Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Far, very far is that which you are promised!”

[al-Mu’minoon 23:36]

or at the end of a verse and at the beginning of the following verse, such as when Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And amongst them will be passed round vessels of silver and cups of crystal —

16. Crystal-clear, made of silver. They will determine the measure thereof (according to their wishes)”

[al-Insaan 76:15,16]

or at the end of a verse, such as when Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Nay! When the earth is ground to powder [kallaa idha dukkat il-ardu dakkan dakka]”

[al-Fajr 89:21]

or when a verse is repeated straight after another verse, such as when Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“5. Verily, along with every hardship is relief,

6. Verily, along with every hardship is relief”

[al-Sharh 94:5,6]

As for that which is disconnected, it appears in two forms, either repeated in the same soorah, or repeated throughout the Qur’aan.

Examples of repetition in the same soorah include the phrase “And verily, your Lord, He is truly, the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful” which is repeated 8 times in Soorat al-Shu’ara’ and “Woe that Day to the deniers (of the Day of Resurrection)!” which is repeated 10 times in Soorat al-Mursalaat, and “Then which of the Blessings of your Lord will you both (jinn and men) deny?” which is repeated 31 times in Soorat al-Rahmaan.

Examples of phrases which are repeated throughout the Qur’aan include the phrase “They say: ‘When will this promise (i.e. the Day of Resurrection) come to pass if you are telling the truth?’” which appears six times, in Yoonus 10:48, al-Anbiya’ 21:38, al-Naml 27:71, Saba’ 34:29, Yaa-Seen 36:48 and al-Mulk 67:25. And the phrase “O Prophet (Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم)! Strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be severe against them; their abode will be Hell, and worst indeed is that destination” appears twice, in al-Tawbah 9:73 and al-Tahreem 66:9.

(ii) Repetition of meaning but not words

Such as the stories of the Prophets with their peoples, and mention of Paradise and its people and Hell and its horrors.

4 – Benefits of repetition

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

There is no pointless repetition in the Qur’aan, rather there are benefits in every repetition.

Majmoo’ al-Fataawa (14/408)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said, commenting on the repetition of the story of Moosa and his people:

Allaah mentions this story in several places in the Qur'aan, and in every place He highlights a different idea and conclusion, just as Allaah, His Messenger and His Book are called by different names, each name indicating a meaning that is not indicated by another name. There is no repetition in that, rather it is a kind of diversity, like the names of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), as he is called Muhammad, Ahmad, al-Haashir, al-‘Aaqib, al-Muqaffa, the Prophet of Mercy, the Prophet of Repentance, and each name points to a meaning that is not indicated by any other name; the person is the same but the attributes are numerous.

The same applies to the Qur’aan, which is also called Furqaan (criterion), Bayaan (a plain statement), Huda (guidance), Basaa’ir (clear evidence), Shifa’ (healing), Noor (light) and Rahmah (mercy). Each name points to a meaning that is not indicated by other names.

The same applies to the names of the Lord, as He is called: al-Malik (the Sovereign), al-Quddoos (the Holy), al-Salaam (the One Free from all defects), al-Mu’min (the Guardian of faith), al-Muhaymin (the Watcher over His creatures), al-‘Azeez (the Almighty), al-Jabbaar (the compeller), al-Mutakabbir (the Majestic), al-Khaaliq (the Creator), al-Baari’ (the Inventor of all things), and al-Musawwir (the Bestower of forms). Each name points to a meaning that is not indicated by another name. The Essence is One but the attributes are numerous.

The same applies to sentences that are complete in meaning. The story is told in one way that highlights one point, then it is told in another way which highlights a different point. The story is the same story, but its details are numerous, and every sentence conveys a meaning that is not indicated by other sentences.

Majmoo’ al-Fataawa 919/167, 168).

Al-Suyooti (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

There are a number of reasons for repetition:

This includes confirmation. It is said that if words are repeated the meaning is confirmed. Allaah has indicated the reason why He repeats stories and reminders in the Qur’aan, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“and have explained therein in detail the warnings, in order that they may fear Allaah, or that it may cause them to have a lesson from it”

[Ta-Ha 20:113]

It also includes emphasis.

It also includes highlighting a point so that the words will be accepted, such as the verse:

“And the man who believed said: ‘O my people! Follow me, I will guide you to the way of right conduct [i.e. guide you to Allaah’s religion of Islamic Monotheism with which Moosa (Moses) has been sent].

39. ‘O my people! Truly, this life of the world is nothing but a (quick passing) enjoyment’”

[Ghaafir 40:38].

In the passage the call is repeated for this reason.

Another example is if the speech is lengthy and there is the fear that what was said at the beginning may be forgotten, so it is repeated a second time to keep the idea fresh. For example, in the verses:

“Then, verily, your Lord __ for those who do evil (commit sins and are disobedient to Allaah) in ignorance and afterward repent and do righteous deeds, verily, your Lord thereafter, (to such) is

Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

[al-Nahl 16:119]

“Then, verily, your Lord _for those who emigrated after they had been put to trials and thereafter strove hard and fought (for the Cause of Allaah) and were patient, verily, your Lord afterward”

[al-Nahl 16:110]

“And when there came to them (the Jews), a Book (this Qur’aan) from Allaah confirming what is with them [the Tawraat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)], although aforetime they had invoked Allaah (for coming of Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم) in order to gain victory over those who disbelieved, then when there came to them that which they had recognised, they disbelieved in it”

[al-Baqarah 2:89]

“Think not that those who rejoice in what they have done (or brought about), and love to be praised for what they have not done,— think not you that they are rescued from the torment”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:188]

“Verily, I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon — I saw them”

[Yoosuf 12:4]

It may also be done for emphasis, as in the verses:

“The Inevitable (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)!

2. What is the Inevitable?”

[al-Haaqqah 69:1]

“Al-Qaari‘ah (the striking Hour, i.e. the Day of Resurrection).

2. What is the striking (Hour)?”

[al-Qaari’ah 101:1]

“And those on the Right Hand —how (fortunate) will be those on the Right Hand?”

[al-Waaqi’ah 56:27]

al-Itqaan fi ‘Uloom al-Qur’aan (3/281, 282).

5 – Benefits of repeating some stories and verses

1 – Abu’l-Faraj Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

If it is said: What is the point of repeating the verse “Then which of the Blessings of your Lord will you both (jinn and men) deny?” [in Soorat al-Rahmaan]?

The answer is: This repetition is in order to confirm the blessing and emphasize the remembrance thereof. Ibn Qutaybah said: It is the habit of the Arabs to repeat things for emphasis and to ensure that they are understood, although they may also speak briefly so as not to tire the listener, because if a speaker addresses a point from different angles, that is better than him approaching it from just one angle, such as if someone said:  By Allaah, I will not do it, and by Allaah, I will not do it – because he wanted to emphasize his point and put an end to any hope that he could do it. And if he wanted to be brief he may say:  By Allaah I shall do it, but omitting the word ‘not’ for the sake of brevity. Similarly, one who is in a hurry may say, Hurry up, hurry up! And it may be said to the archer: Shoot, shoot!

Ibn Qutaybah said: When Allaah listed His blessings in this soorah, and reminded His slaves of His signs, and drew attention to His power, He repeated this phrase between each two blessings, so that they would appreciate the blessings and recognize them, such as when you say to a man: Didn’t I give you accommodation when you were homeless – can you deny that? Didn’t I take you for Hajj when you had never been – can you deny that?

Zaad al-Maseer (5/461).

2 – al-Qurtubi (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

As for the way in which the repetition is done – i.e., “Say (O Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم to these Mushrikoon and Kaafiroon): “O Al-Kaafiroon (disbelievers)” – it is said that it is for emphasis to cut off their hopes, as one might say: By Allaah, I will not do it, and by Allaah I will not do it.

Most of the scholars of semantics said: The Qur’aan was revealed in the language of the Arabs, and it is their way to repeat things for emphasis and to ensure that they are understood, and also to speak briefly so as not to tire the listener, because when the speaker uses different phrases in his speech, it is better than limiting himself to one phrase. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning): “Then which of the Blessings of your Lord will you both (jinn and men) deny?” and “Nay, they will come to know! Nay, again, they will come to know!” [al-Naba’ 78:4, 5] and “5. Verily, along with every hardship is relief,6. Verily, along with every hardship is relief” [al-Sharh 94:5,6]. In all cases, the aim is emphasis.

Tafseer al-Qurtubi (20/226).

And Allaah knows best.