

Local

Kuwait Heritage



KUWAIT: The Mubarakiyah School was the first school to open in Kuwait in 1911. It was named after Kuwait's seventh ruler Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. The school improved on the basic instruction available at the time, which had only included reading, writing and arithmetic. In 1921, another school was opened; the Ahmadiyah school, while the first school for girls opened in 1939. The picture shows students attending an English language class circa 1937. (Source: 'Kuwait in the Eyes of Early Photographers,' William Facey, Gillian Gran, London, 1989. — Prepared by: Mahmoud Aakarria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage, Ministry of Information)

Ramadan, month of the Quran

By Dr Teresa Leshner

One of the distinguishing features of Islam is its Holy Book, the first verses of which were revealed in the month of Ramadan, 1453 lunar years ago (610 AD). During the course of 23 years, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received Quranic verses as spoken addresses from the Creator - the Quran is considered the speech of God in the Arabic language. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) then recited the verses so that they could be memorized verbatim, and they were also recorded in writing. Before he died, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) specified the order of verses and the division of chapters, according to divine instruction. The original Quran is still preserved until today with precise pronunciation, with the Arabic language developing to represent it phonetically. It is the only revelation or divine book that contains the pure words of God without being rephrased by His messengers or any other human being.

The Quran is addressed to all mankind. Sometimes Muhammad (PBUH) is specifically addressed with instructions such as "They ask you about... Say [to them]..." Muhammad is also encouraged and sometimes gently reproached in the Quran. Believers are addressed with specific instructions on how to achieve both temporal and eternal success. And mankind in general is addressed with invitations to believe in God and mold life around that belief, and they are informed of the consequences of accepting or rejecting God's invitation.

The Quran's purpose is to inform people of a reality beyond their five senses and their perceptions of space and time, and to teach moral lessons and develop spirituality. With the additional perspective it offers, the Quran also invites people to adopt a lifestyle that ensures ultimate happiness and success. Finally, through stories and instruction, it describes the beliefs and practices that are essential to achieve that state.

The verses of the Quran were revealed to address particular situations, to relate historical information and to codify Islamic law. Common subjects are descriptions of God,

stories of prophets, descriptions of believers and disbelievers, promises of God's rewards, especially Paradise, warnings about consequences for rebellion toward God, including Hellfire, instructions for personal conduct, guidelines for familial and social relations, and a framework for international relations.

Being an oral revelation first and foremost, devout Muslims learn how to recite the holy scripture as it was revealed. Verbatim memorization is common and care is taken to reproduce the exact pronunciation and vocal duration of each letter. Arabic is a rich language, and words of the Quran have great depth and breadth; therefore, they also study the meaning of the words, verses and chapters, and there are encyclopedic works of this nature. In addition, Muslims study the occasions of revelation, the relation of the holy text to prophetic traditions, and the application of principles by renowned scholars and rulers. The study of the Quran develops moral reasoning and spirituality first and foremost, as well as thought processes of logic, sequencing, deduction, intuition, assimilation and abstraction. Reciting and memorizing it develops memory, enunciation and self-expression.

The printed Quran is revered as a holy book and is treated with respect. It is not considered casual reading or handled like an ordinary book. There is only one version of the Quran, and careful measures are taken that prints and reprints of the Quran in Arabic are authenticated by authoritative bodies for accuracy. Since the Quran is an Arabic-language literary masterpiece both technically and aesthetically, it is impossible to portray its rhythm, rhyme, depth of denotation and subtlety of connotation in another language. There are many translations of the Quran, but we cannot call a translation "the Quran" but only an approximation of the meaning of the Quran. The best English translations have the accompanying original text in Arabic so that it can be consulted.

Since Ramadan is the month of the Quran, everyone should have their copy handy and complete reading it in this holy month.

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