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How to Read

In both English and Arabic, “to read” is an action that is beyond the common colloquial use of the word. If you were to ask someone what the word means without any context, its likely that they would say it has something to do with combining letters into words. But the meaning is much more vast.

Even the act of combining letters to form words is multifaceted, because letters standing alone can be read. Likewise, understanding hieroglyphs is reading. The use of symbols in place of letters does not nullify translation of those symbols into understood meanings as a form of reading. These examples clearly show the importance of understanding how many things can be read. To read, encompasses everything that is “readable”.

For example, one can read someone’s face or body language and interpret from it how they are feeling, what they may do next. One can also read art and interpret the meaning behind it. These examples clarify the numerous potential applications of the act of reading. While I will refrain from defining “reading” itself, understanding the vast implications, for purposes of this essay, I will limit my definition of “to read” to mean, “understanding and internalizing the reality of something.”

As for “how to read”, to understand this one must do some reading. What does “how to read” mean? Is it a statement or a question? What did the speaker mean when they assigned this? What was the purpose of assigning it? Is it left up to our interpretation? The questions are endless, but I will choose to “read” the statement in the way I believe I can explain, within reason.

How to read, can be interpreted to mean, “how one can be able to understand and internalize”. Further, that interpretation can be further expounded upon to mean, “the prerequisites that makes one best able to read and internalize.”

Shaykh Amin Kholwadia says that there are 3 prerequisites for *ijtihad*: 1) *Nur of Nubuwwah*; 2) Acting upon the Sunnah of the Rasul ﷺ; and 3) the skillsets of the particular discipline. *Ijtihad* is one of the highest forms of understanding and internalizing realities, so one who has these prerequisites will be able to read better than those who do not. These prerequisites mentioned is what will give the individual the most ability to understand and internalize the realities of something, be it '*ilm an-nafi*' or '*ilm al-anfa*', or as applied to anything else that is readable.

The *Nur of Nubuwwah* is acquired from frequent acts of *ibadah*. It is the *nur* that one receives when they are in sync with the personal *ibadah* of the Prophet ﷺ. According to Shaykh Amin, the first 3 generations of the pious predecessors, the *Sahabah*, *Tabi'een*, and *Tabi' At-Tabi'een*, the *Nur* was at level close enough to its source, the Prophet ﷺ, such that it could create an individual with enough *Nur* to be a *mujtahid*. After those generations have past, such an individual cannot reach that level. Nonetheless, the principle that frequent *ibadah* with the state of heart of the Prophet ﷺ, will give one *nur* that increases their ability to read.

Acting upon the Sunnah of the Rasul ﷺ is conducting oneself with the *akhlaq*, *adab* and other virtues he carried in his life like accommodation and bravery. It also includes removing certain vices and diseases of the heart like miserliness, greed, anger, and impatience. This makes the individual be able to understand and internalize realities more clearly without the cloudiness and confusion that such diseases of the heart would create.

Finally, the skillsets of the discipline, as applied to the subject of what is being read, are required for *ijtihad*. This applies universally to other disciplines. Hence, anyone who seeks to read something, and to understand and internalize its reality, will be more effective if they acquire the skillsets necessary to do so. Just as someone who studies *fiqh* will more effective if they know *sarf*, *nahw*, *balaghah*, *mantiq*,

usul and *'aqidah*, someone who studies medicine will be more effective if they know biology, chemistry, anatomy and physiology and so on.

According to Shaykh Amin, the first 2 prerequisites, are prerequisites of compatibility and the last is one of capability. For purposes of *'ilm al-anfa'*, the former two are more important than the latter.

In conclusion, in my interpretation of "How to Read", I expanded my understand of what reading can mean, focused on a possible interpretation of what the speaker could have meant and chose an interpretation of the speaker's possible intent. I chose to interpret and summarize the prompt by presenting "the prerequisites of how to best understand and internalize the reality of something", and attempted to present them based on knowledge that the speaker provided. The prerequisites for this follow from the principles of Shaykh Amin's prerequisites for *ijtihad*, one of the highest forms of reading, which I believe can be applied to reading anything generally. These prerequisites, if applied correctly, will make one able to best understand and internalize realities, and are the means to "How to Read".