

# ARTICLES ON KNOWLEDGE

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Imam Sha'fi on Knowledge by **Imaam ash-Shafi'ee**

29. Someone asked me: What is [legal] knowledge and how much should men know of it?

30. Shaafi'ee replied: Legal knowledge is of two kinds: one is for the general public, and no sober and mature person should be ignorant of it.

31. He asked: For example?

32. [Shaafi'ee] replied: For example, that the daily prayers are five, that men owe it to God to fast the month of Ramadan, to make the pilgrimage to the [Sacred] House whenever they are able, and to [pay] the legal alms in their estate; that He [God] has prohibited usury, adultery, homicide, theft, [the drinking of] wine, and [everything] of that sort which He has obligated men to comprehend, to perform, to pay in their property, and to abstain from [because] He has forbidden it to them. This kind of knowledge may be found textually in the Book of God, or may be found generally among the people of Islam. The public relates it from the preceding public and ascribes it to the Apostle of God, nobody ever questioning its ascription or its binding force upon them. It is the kind of knowledge which admits of error neither in its narrative nor in its interpretation; it is not permissible to question it.

33. He asked: What is the second kind?

34. Shaafi'ee replied: It consists of the detailed duties and rules obligatory on men, concerning which there exists neither a text in the Book of God, nor regarding most of them, a sunna. Whenever a sunna exists [in this case], it is of the kind related by few authorities, not by the public, and is subject to different interpretations arrived at by analogy.

35. He asked: Is [legal knowledge of] this kind as obligatory as the other, or is it not obligatory so that he who acquires such knowledge performs a supererogatory act, and he who neglects it falls not into error? Or, is there a third kind, derived from a narrative (khabar) or analogy?

36. [Shaafi'ee] replied: There is a third kind [of knowledge].

37. He asked: Will you explain it, give its source, and state what [portion] of it is obligatory, and on whom it is binding and on whom it is not binding?

38. [Shaafi'ee] replied: The public is incapable of knowing this kind of knowledge, nor can all specialists obtain it. But those who do obtain it should not all neglect it. If some can obtain it, the others are relieved of the duty [of obtaining it]; but those who do obtain it will be rewarded.

39. He asked: Will you cite a narrative or any other relevant information as a basis for [using] analogy?

40. [Shaafi'ee] replied: God has imposed the [duty of] jihad as laid down in His Book and uttered by His Prophet's tongue. He stressed the calling [of men to fulfil] the jihad [duty] as follows:

God has bought from the believers their selves and their possessions against [the gift of] Paradise . They fight in the way of God; they kill, and are killed; that is a promise binding upon God in the Torah and Gospel and the Qur'an; and who fulfils his covenant better than God? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him. That is the mighty triumph [Q. IX, 112].

And He said:

Fight the polytheists totally as they fight you totally; and know that God is with the godfearing [Q. IX, 36].

And He said:

Slay the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in ambush for them everywhere. But if they repent and perform the prayer and pay the zakat, then let them free. God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate [Q. IX, 5].

And He said:

Fight those who do not believe in God nor in the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Apostle have made forbidden, and who do not practice the religion of truth, of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the jizya out of hand and have been humbled [Q. IX, 29].

41. 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Muhammad al-Darawardi' told us from Muhammad b. 'Amr b. 'Alqama from Abu Salama [b. 'Abd al-Raliman] from Abit Hurayra, who said that the Apostle of God said:

I shall continue to fight the unbelievers until they say: 'There is no god but God,' if they make this pronouncement they shall be secured their blood and property, unless taken for its price, and their reward shall be given by God.

And God, glorified be His praise, said:

O believers, what is the matter with you, that when it is said to you: 'Go forth in the way of God,' you sink down to the ground? Are you so content with this present life as to neglect the Here-after? The enjoyment of this life is little in comparison with the Hereafter. If you do not go forth, He will inflict upon you a painful punishment, and instead of you He will substitute another people; and you will not hurt Him at all, for God is powerful over everything [Q. IX, 38-39].

And He said:

Go forth, light and heavy! Struggle in God's way with your possessions and yourselves! That is better for you, did you but know [Q. IX, 41].

42. [Shaafi'ee] said: These communications mean that the jihad, and rising up in arms in particular, is obligatory for all able-bodied [believers], exempting no one, just as prayer, pilgrimage and [payment of] alms are performed, and no person is permitted to perform the duty for another, since performance by one will not fulfil the duty for another. They may also mean that the duty of [jihad] is a collective (kifaya) duty different from that of prayer: Those who perform it in the war against the polytheists will fulfil the duty and receive the supererogatory merit, thereby preventing those who have stayed behind from falling into error. But God has not put the two [categories of men] on an equal footing, for He said:

Such believers who sit at home-unless they have an injury-are not the equals of those who fight in the path of God with their possessions and their selves. God has given precedence to those who fight with their

possessions and their selves over those who sit at home. God has promised the best of things to both, and He has preferred those who fight over those who sit at home by [granting them] a mighty reward [Q. IV, 97].

The literal meaning of this communication is that the duty is obligatory on all men.

43. He asked: Where is the proof for your opinion that if some people perform the duty, the others would be relieved of punishment?

44. [Shaafi'ee] said: It is in the communication that I have just cited].

45. He asked: In what part of it?

46. [Shaafi'ee] replied: God said: "Yet to each God has promised the best of things."

Thus God has promised "the best of things" for those who stayed behind and could not go to the jihad, although he clearly specified his preference for those who went to the jihad over those who stayed at home. If those who stayed at home were in error, while others were fighting, they would be committing a sin, unless God forgives them, rather than receiving "the best of things."

47. He asked: Is there any other [proof]?

48. [Shaafi'ee] replied: Yes, God said:

It is not for the believers to go forth all together, but why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, perhaps they will beware [Q. IX, 123].

[When] the Apostle went to battle he was accompanied by some of his companions while others stayed at home; for 'Ali b. Abi Talib stayed at home during the battle of Tabuk. Nor did God ordain that all Muslims were under obligation to go to battle, for He said: "Why should not a party of every section of them go forth?" So He made it known that going into battle was obligatory on some, not on all, [just] as knowledge of the law is not obligatory on all but on some, save the fundamental duties which should be known to all men. But God knows best.

49. Shaafi'ee said: In like manner are other duties, the fulfillment of which is intended to be collective; whenever they are performed by some Muslims collectively, those who do not perform them will not fall in error. If all men failed to perform the duty so that no able-bodied man went forth to battle, all, I am afraid, would fall into error (although I am certain that this would never happen) in accordance with [God's] saying: If you do not go forth, He will inflict upon you a painful punishment [Q. IX, 39].

50. He asked: What is the meaning [of this communication]?

51. [Shaafi'ee] replied: It means that it is not permissible that all men should fail to "go forth"; but that if some go forth, so that a sufficient number fulfils [the collective duty], the others do not fall into error, because the going forth by some would fulfil the [duty of] 'going forth.'

52. He asked: Are there examples other than the jihad?

53. [Shaafi'ee] replied: Ys, such as the funeral and burial prayers, the performance of which should not be neglected; but men are not all under the obligation to attend to their performance, for those who perform them will relieve those who do not from falling into error. In the same [category falls the duty to] reply to a salutation. For God said:

When you are greeted with a greeting, respond with a better one, or return it. Verily God keeps account of everything [Q. IV, 88].

The Apostle of God said:

He who is standing shall greet him who is sitting. If [only] one replies to a greeting, he would fulfil [the duty] on behalf of the others.

These are merely intended to mean that a reply must be made. So the response of the few fulfils the duty for all who are obligated to reply, for the [collective] response is sufficient. So far as I have been informed, the Muslims have continued to act as I have stated, from the time of the Prophet to the present. Only a few men must know the law, attend the funeral service, perform the jihad and respond to greeting, while others are exempt. So those who know the law, perform the jihad attend the

funeral service, and respond to a greeting will be rewarded, while others do not fall into error since a sufficient number fulfil the [collective] duty.

Virtues of Knowledge which is Learnt and Taught for the sake of Allah - Taken from Imam Al-Nawawi's Riyad-us-Saliheen

**Chapter 241**

**Virtues of Knowledge which is Learnt and Taught for the sake of Allah**

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Allah, the Exalted, says:

"And say: `My Rubb! Increase me in knowledge." (20:114)

"Are those who know equal to those who know not?" (39:9)

"Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge." (58:11)

"It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah." (35:28)

1376. Mu`awiyah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah said, "When Allah wishes good for someone, He bestows upon him the understanding of Deen."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: Knowledge and understanding of Deen (religion) here stands for the understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, religious injunctions, and knowledge of the lawful and the unlawful. This Hadith highlights the excellence of knowledge and the fact that it is a sign of Allah's Help to the person who possesses it and acts upon it.

1377. Ibn Mas`ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Envy is permitted only in two cases: A man whom Allah gives wealth, and he disposes of it rightfully, and a man to whom Allah gives knowledge which he applies and teaches it."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: According to Imam An-Nawawi's explanation, the word Hasad (jealousy) is used in the sense of Ghibtah i.e., envy. In Islam, jealousy is forbidden and is held unlawful. The reason being that one who is jealous wants that the person, who possesses the quality of which he is jealous, be deprived of that quality. Envy is permissible for the reason



that when one seems that a person has been graced by Allah with certain gifts and qualities, he also desires to be blessed with those gifts. In the latter case, he does not grumble and grieve but eagerly prays to Allah for those gifts. `Knowledge' here stands for the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith because this knowledge alone is beneficial for man, and it is through this knowledge that correct judgements can be made among the people. This Hadith has an inducement for acquiring useful knowledge along with wealth to spend in the ways ordained by Allah.

1378. Abu Musa (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "The guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me are like abundant rain which fell on a land. A fertile part of it absorbed the water and brought forth profuse herbage and pasture; and solid ground patches which retained the water by which Allah has benefited people, who drank from it, irrigated their crops and sowed their seeds; and another sandy plane which could neither retain the water nor produce herbage. Such is the similitude of the person who becomes well-versed in the religion of Allah and receives benefit from the Message entrusted to me by Allah, so he himself has learned and taught it to others; such is also the similitude of the person who has stubbornly and ignorantly rejected Allah's Guidance with which I have been sent."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Commentary: This Hadith has already been mentioned, and is repeated here to highlight the eminence of knowledge and to induce Muslims to gain it. We learn from this Hadith that there are three categories of people. First, those who acquire knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith, act upon it and also impart it to others. Such people benefit from this knowledge themselves and extend this benefit to others also. By virtue of this quality they are the best of all. Second, those people who acquire knowledge and impart it to others, but do not fulfill the requirements of that knowledge. Such people are inferior in rank to the people of the first category and can be taken to task for their omissions. Third, those who

shun the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. Neither they study and hear the two themselves for their own benefit, nor do they acquire knowledge to impart it to others for their benefit. This is the worst category of people. Every Muslim should try to be in the first category of the people.

1379. Sahl bin Sa`d (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said to `Ali (May Allah be pleased with him), "By Allah, if a single person is guided by Allah through you, it will be better for you than a whole lot of red camels."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: "Better for you than red camels" is an allegory for every thing that is better than anything else. Red camels used to be precious in Arabia, and their reference here is to highlight the value of guidance. Thus, this Hadith brings into prominence the importance of calling people towards Allah. But before calling others to the path of Allah, one must himself know it, and for this purpose, the knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith is essential because one cannot provide any guidance in this respect without this knowledge.

1380. `Abdullah bin `Amr bin Al-`As (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Convey from me even an Ayah of the Qur'an; relate traditions from Banu Israel, and there is no restriction on that; but he who deliberately forges a lie against me let him have his abode in the Hell."

[Al-Bukhari].

Commentary: This Hadith contains the following three important points:

1. It stresses the importance of acquiring knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith and imparting it to others. No matter whether one has more or less knowledge, he must communicate it to others. There is no justification to presume that preaching or inviting to the Message of Allah is the duty of religious scholars and those who are well-versed in this sphere. In fact, it is a duty upon every Muslim, so much so that if a person knows even a single Verse of the Qur'an, that is to say if he knows

only one injunction of Allah, he is duty bound to communicate it to other people.

2. It allows the communication of Jewish Traditions but this permission is subject to the condition that such Traditions are not against the elucidations of the Qur'an and Hadith.

3. There is a stern warning on attributing any false saying to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). This demands strict scrutiny of Ahadith. If a Hadith does not have a reliable authority or whose chain of narrators has a false link or a person of doubtful integrity, that is to say if it is weak, then it is a serious offense to quote it as a Hadith of the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam). There are various grades of weakness, and this requires deep knowledge of the narrators and principles of Hadith to know them since scholars who are expert in this discipline are few and far. The safest course for ordinary scholars is to refrain from stating such Ahadith which are weak, no matter whether the weakness is serious or slight. The reason is that although the majority of Muhaddithun consider the slightly weak Ahadith acceptable but they cannot be identified by everybody. Thus, every Hadith which is marked as weak should not be mentioned. In the present age Sheikh Nasiruddin Al-Albani has done a very remarkable work in this field. He has separated the weak Ahadith found in the four famous volumes of Ahadith (Sunnan Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah) from the authentic and prepared separate volumes of authentic and weak Ahadith. This work of Al-Albani has made it easy for the ordinary `Ulama' to identify the weak Ahadith. Only a man of Sheikh Al-Albani's calibre can do research on it. The ordinary `Ulama' and religious scholars of the Muslims are heavily indebted to him for this great work and they should keep it in view before mentioning any Hadith. They should mention only the authentic Ahadith and refrain from quoting the weak ones. It is wrong to ignore this work on the ground that Sheikh Al-Albani is not the last word on the subject. There can be a possibility of error in his work because it is after all a human effort, but it will be very unfair to regard his effort of no account

merely because of a possible error. It is regrettable indeed that only because of this possible error many people refuse to accept even the correctness of the Sahihain. (i.e., Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim). Should we then accept their view? No, certainly not. So there is no sense in not making use of Sheikh Al-Albani's matchless contribution. As Muhaddithun have done a great service to the Muslim Ummah by collecting and compiling the Ahadith, similarly in the style of Muhaddithun, and in keeping with the principles laid down by them, the research carried out to separate the authentic Ahadith from the weak is in fact an effort to complete their mission. In this age, Almighty Allah has bestowed this honour on Sheikh Al-Albani. May Allah protect him, give him the best of the reward and give him a long life.

We now revert to the subject under discussion and say that no such saying and practice should be attributed to the Prophet (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) the authenticity of which is doubtful. On this principle, weak Ahadith, should not be mentioned. It is very unfortunate indeed that in spite of such a stern warning, many of our 'Ulama' are not careful in this matter. Not to speak of weak Ahadith, they do not hesitate to mention even Ahadith Maudu'ah (forged Ahadith) only to adorn their speech. May Allah guide them to the Right Path. In fact, there is a class of religious scholars who try to refute the authentic Ahadith and validate the weak ones only to add credence to their own juristic school. May Allah save us from such evils.

1381. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "Allah makes the way to Jannah easy for him who treads the path in search of knowledge." [Muslim].

Commentary: This Hadith has already been mentioned in full. See the Commentary on Hadith No. 247. A part of it which relates to the eminence of knowledge has been reproduced here. In this Hadith, knowledge means the knowledge of the religion, that is to say the correct knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith which is acquired without any

prejudice of any juristic school. Otherwise juristic prejudice can turn knowledge into great obstruction. May Allah bestow His Mercy on us.

1382. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "He who calls others to follow the Right Guidance will have a reward equal to the reward of those who follow him, without their reward being diminished in any respect on that account."

[Muslim].

Commentary: This Hadith has already been mentioned. This Hadith has glad tidings for those who learn the knowledge of religion, teach it and impart it to others.

1383. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: Sadaqah Jariyah (ceaseless charity); a knowledge which is beneficial, or a virtuous descendant who prays for him (for the deceased)."

[Muslim].

Commentary: "His deeds come to an end" means that he does not any longer receive the return and reward on his actions. But there are three categories of actions on which he receives reward even after his death. First, Sadaqah Jariyah such as building a mosque, or a hospital, or digging a well. As long as people will benefit from these, he will receive a reward for them. Second, "knowledge which is beneficial" means to impart knowledge to others or to propagate knowledge by means of one's books. As long as this medium of teaching will continue and his books will be studied and people will benefit from them, he will receive a reward for it. Third, virtuous descendants. Training of children on the right lines is essential so that after a person's death they continue to pray for him. The prayer of children in favour of parents is highly useful.

1384. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "The world, with all that it contains, is accursed except for the remembrance of Allah that

which pleases Allah; and the religious scholars and seekers of knowledge.”

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: This Hadith has already been mentioned. It does not mean that this world, and whatever is in it, is really cursed. What it in fact means is that such things of this world are cursed which make a person negligent of the remembrance of Allah; or it is cursed for those who in their whole life do not remember Allah. This Hadith has been mentioned in the present chapter, which relates to knowledge for the reason that acquisition of knowledge is essential to know that such and such work will be a source of winning the Pleasure of Allah and such and such act will incur His displeasure. This is the reason the teacher and the learner have been included in the exemptions from the curse.

1385. Anas (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, “He who goes forth in search of knowledge is considered as struggling in the Cause of Allah until he returns.”

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: In this Hadith the acquisition of knowledge has been equated with Jihad for the sake of Allah. Sheikh Al-Albani has regarded this Hadith weak in his “Takhriju Fiqh As-Sunnah”.

1386. Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, “A believer never satisfies doing good until he reaches Jannah.”

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: According to this Hadith, it is a quality of a Muslim that he is very much concerned about acquiring virtues and doing good, and he is never tired of struggling for them and live by them so much so that in this struggle he reaches the end of his life. By mentioning this Hadith in Kitab-ul-`Ilm it has been made evident that the best of the virtues is learning and teaching of religious knowledge because it is actually this knowledge which enables a person to distinguish between good and evil.

1387. Abu Umamah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "The superiority of the learned over the devout worshipper is like my superiority over the most inferior amongst you (in good deeds)." He went on to say, "Allah, His angels, the dwellers of the heaven and the earth, and even the ant in its hole and the fish (in water) supplicate in favour of those who teach people knowledge."

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: `Alim (learned person) here means scholar of the Qur'an and Hadith, who adheres to Faraid and Sunnah and remains busy in learning and imparting knowledge. `Abid (devout worshipper) is one who spends most of his time in the worship of Allah. The benefit of his voluntary prayer and remembrance of Allah is restricted to his own self while the benefit of knowledge of the scholar reaches others also. Hence, of the two, the latter is far superior.

If Salat is mentioned with reference to Allah, it denotes "Allah's Grace with Mercy;" if it is mentioned with reference to the angels, it denotes "to pray for forgiveness;" and if it is mentioned with reference to other creatures – men, animals, etc., – then it means prayer and supplication. Thus, Allah graces that person with His Mercy who teach people the beneficial knowledge, i.e., the knowledge of Islam; angels pray to Allah to forgive his (or her) sins; and other creatures pray for his (or her) well-being. In this way, this Hadith stresses the distinction of religious scholars and highlights the esteem in which they are held by Allah, His angels and His other creatures.

1388. Abud-Darda (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "He who follows a path in quest of knowledge, Allah will make the path of Jannah easy to him. The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him. The superiority of the learned man over the devout worshipper is like that of

the full moon to the rest of the stars (i.e., in brightness). The learned are the heirs of the Prophets who bequeath neither dinar nor dirham but only that of knowledge; and he who acquires it, has in fact acquired an abundant portion.”

[Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: Like the preceding Ahadith, this Hadith also mentions the eminence of learning religious knowledge, and respecting and honouring ‘Ulama’.

1389. Ibn Mas`ud (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) saying, “May Allah freshen the affairs of a person who hears something from us and communicates it to others exactly as he has heard it (i.e., both the meaning and the words). Many a recipient of knowledge understands it better than the one who has heard it.”

[At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: Besides mentioning the eminence of knowledge, this Hadith contains inducement for preaching and inviting people towards the path of Allah. It also urges us to communicate knowledge exactly as we have heard it, without changing anything in the least.

1390. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu ‘alayhi wa sallam) said, “He who is asked about knowledge (of religion) and conceals it, will be bridled with a bridle of fire on the Day of Resurrection.”

[Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi].

Commentary: We learn from this Hadith that to withhold guidance in the matter of religion from anybody who seeks it, is a grave sin which is threatened with Hell. Unfortunately, the religious scholars who are shackled in religious prejudices and terribly lack interest in juristic matters have developed a habit of concealing religious knowledge from people. In fact, this grave sin has become so alarming that any further delay to eradicate it will prove ruinous for us. May Allah grant us true guidance.



1391. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: The Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said, "He who does not acquire knowledge with the sole intention of seeking the Pleasure of Allah but for worldly gain, will not smell the fragrance of Jannah on the Day of Resurrection."

[Abu Dawud].

Commentary: This Hadith has an inducement for acquiring knowledge for the Pleasure of Allah alone. If a religious scholar acquires it to make it a means of worldly gains, then it turns to such a serious crime that such a scholar will not even smell the fragrance of Jannah (i.e., he will not enter it along with the saved). May Allah save us from it. However, if a scholar gains wealth and worldly gains through it without any intention, then it is altogether a different matter. In that case, it is not harmful for him as long as he uses it in a manner pleasing to Allah.

1392. `Abdullah bin `Amr bin Al-`As (May Allah be pleased with them) reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam) saying: "Verily, Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the people, but He takes it away by taking away (the lives of) the religious scholars till none of the scholars stays alive. Then the people will take ignorant ones as their leaders, who, when asked to deliver religious verdicts, will issue them without knowledge, the result being that they will go astray and will lead others astray."

[Al-Bukhari and Muslim].

Commentary: It is a sign of the nearness of the Day of Judgement that the world will be deprived of genuine religious scholars, and illiterate people will become leaders who will have neither the knowledge of the Qur'an nor that of the Hadith. Despite their ignorance of the Qur'an and the Hadith, they will be called Mujtahid (jurist entitled to independent reasoning) and Imam (leader) and will mislead people with their legal opinions and self-created problems. Besides urging us to acquire religious knowledge with a view to producing more scholars in the society, this

Hadith also warns us against the ignorant self-styled `Ulama'. It also warns us against entrusting religious leadership to them.

## Beneficial Knowledge by ibn Taymiyyah

**Source: The Concise Legacy, pp. 23-25**

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Abul `Aasim al-Qaasim bin Yoosuf bin Muhammad at-Tajeebee as-Sabtee al-Maghribee says:

I requested our leader, the shaykh, faqeeh, imaam, respected scholar, vanguard of the predecessors, leader of the later generations, reviver of the Deen, expresser of rare and wonderful ideas with great eloquence and literacy, the most knowledgeable person I have met in the lands of the East and West, Taqi ud-Deen Abul-`Abbaas Ahmad bin Taymiyyah (may Allaah enable us to continue benefiting from him):

[some questions deleted...]

- To point me towards those books which I may rely upon regarding knowledge of hadeeth, and other sciences of the sharee`ah.

[...]

Ibn Taymiyyah answered:

All praise be to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds.

As for which books one may depend on for the different branches of knowledge, then this is a vast topic, and again, the answer to this varies according to people's backgrounds in different lands. This is because in each land, one field of learning or way or mode of thinking may be easier than another, but the source of all good and blessings is that one seeks help from Allaah in acquiring knowledge inherited from the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, because that is what is truly fit to be named knowledge. Anything else is either not knowledge at all even though people call it so, or it is knowledge which is not beneficial, or it is beneficial knowledge, in which case it is necessarily true that there exists in the inheritance of Muhammad, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, that which replaces it, being similar to it or better than it.

Thus the person's effort should be to understand the purposes of the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, in his commands, prohibitions

and his various other sayings. When the heart is contended that something is indeed as the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, intended, then he should not waver from it as far as possible, whether it is regarding his duties to Allaah or to the people. In all branches of knowledge, he should strive to hold firmly to principles narrated from the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam; if he is in doubt regarding any matter about which the people of knowledge have differed, then he should supplicate to Allaah with the du`aa which appears in Saheeh Muslim narrated by `Aa'ishah, radiyallaahu `anhaa, that when the Messenger, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, stood for the night prayer, he would say,

"O Allaah! Lord of Jibreel, Meekaa'eel and Israafeel, Originator of the Heavens and the Earth, Knower of the Unseen and the Present! You judge among your slaves regarding what they have differed in. Guide me to the truth regarding that in which they have differed, for truly, You do guide whomsoever You wish to a path that is straight."

This is because Allaah the Exalted has said, as narrated by His Messenger from Him,

"O My slaves, all of you are astray except those that I have guided, so seek guidance of Me and I shall guide you." [Muslim]

As for a description of good books and compilations: people will have heard from me what Allaah has made easy on other occasions. I will say this much now, that out of all the compiled books which have been divided into chapters, there is none more beneficial than the Saheeh of Muhammad bin Ismaa`eel al-Bukhaaree. However, this alone is not enough to cover all the major principles of knowledge, nor can it fulfill all the objectives of one who seeks to dive deep into the various branches of knowledge. It is imperative that other ahaadeeth, as well as the words of the people of understanding and the people of knowledge of different specialised fields be known, for the Ummah has progressed tremendously in all fields of learning. He whose heart Allaah enlightens He guides him through what reaches him; but he whose heart Allaah blinds, many books

only increase him in confusion and misguidance, as the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, said to Ibn Labeed al-Ansaari, "Did the Jews and Christians not have the Turaat and the Injeel? So what benefit did these bring them?" [al-Bukhaaree in Khalq Af`aal al-`Ibaad, an-Nasaa'ee, Ahmad, al-Haakim, ibn Hibbaan, Saheeh]

So we ask Allaah Almighty that He sustains us with guidance and firmness, instills in our hearts our correct direction, protects us from the mischief of our own selves, that He does not allow our hearts to deviate after giving us guidance and that He bestows on us Mercy from Him, for He is the Most Generous.

All Praise be to Allaah, Lord of the Worlds, and His Blessings be on the most noble of the messengers.

## The Evil Scholar

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Know that craving after status and position inevitably causes great harm before its attainment due to the striving necessary to attain it, and also afterwards due to the person's strong desire to hold onto it which produces injustice, haughtiness and other evils.

Aboo Bakr al-Aajurree, who was one of the wise scholars and teachers at the start of the fourth century, wrote a treatise about the manners and the sentiments of the scholars and it is one of the best works on this topic. One who studies it will know from it the way of the scholars of the Salaf, and will know the innovated ways contrary to their way. So he describes the evil scholar at length, from this description is that: 'He has become infatuated with love of this world, and with praise, honour and position with the people of this world. He uses knowledge as an adornment just as a beautiful woman adorns herself with jewelry for this world, but he does not adorn his knowledge with action upon it.' He then mentions a lengthy speech and then says, "So these characteristics and their like predominate in the heart of one who does not benefit from knowledge, so whilst he carries these attributes his soul will come to have love of status and position – so that he loves to sit with kings and the sons of this world. Then he loves to share in their opulent lifestyle, sharing their lavish attire, their comfortable transport, servants, fine clothing, delicate bedding and delicious food. He will love that people throng to his door, that his saying is listened to, and that he is obeyed – and he can only attain the latter by becoming a judge (qaadee) – so he seeks to become one. Then he is unable to attain it except at the expense of his Religion, so he debases himself to the rulers and their helpers, serving them himself and giving them his wealth as a tribute. He remains silent when he sees their evil actions after entering their palaces and homes. Then on top of this he may praise their evil actions and declare them good due to some false interpretation in order to raise his position

with them. So when he has accustomed himself to doing this over a long period of time and falsehood has taken root in him – then they appoint him to the position of judge (qaadee) and in so doing slaughter him without a knife.” [Alluding to the saying of the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, "He who is appointed as a judge has been killed without a knife," Reported by Ahmad, Aboo Daawood (transl. 3/1013/ no.3564) and at-Tirmidhee who declared it hasan. I say: its isnaad is saheeh.]

Then they have bestowed such a favour upon him that he is obliged and has to show his gratitude to them – so he takes great pains to make sure that he does not anger them and cause them to remove him from his position. But he has no concern about whether he angers his Lord, the Most High, so he misappropriates the wealth of orphans, widows, the poor and the needy, and wealth bequested as waqf (religious endowment) for those fighting Jihaad and the nobles of Makkah and al-Madeenah, and wealth which is supposed to be of benefit to all the Muslims – but instead he uses it to satisfy his clerk, chamberlain and servant. So he eats that which is haraam and feeds with that which is haraam and increases that which is a proof against him. So woe to the one whose knowledge causes him to have these characteristics. Indeed this is the knowledge which the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, sought refuge from and ordered us to seek refuge from. This is the knowledge which the Prophet, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, mentioned, saying, “Those amongst the people receiving the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection is the scholar who is not given benefit through his knowledge by Allaah.” [Reported by Ibn 'Abdul-Barr in Jaami' Bayaanil-`Ilm (1/162) and al-Aajurree (pp.93-94) and at-Tabaraanee in as-Sagheer (1/1831) and others and its chain of narration is very weak since it contains 'Uthmaan ibn Miqsarn al-Burree who was accused of lying and fabrication. It is however reported as being the saying of Abud-Dardaa only, with an authentic chain of narration. It is reported by ad-Daarimee (1/82) and others.]

He, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, used to say,

Allaahumma innee a`oodhubika minal arba`i, min `ilmin laa yanfa`u, wa min qalbin laa yaksha`u, wa min nafsini laa tashba`u, wa min du`aain laa yusma`u

"O Allaah, I seek Your refuge from knowledge which does not benefit; from a heart which does not fear; from a soul which is never satisfied; and from a supplication which is not heard." [Reported by Ahmad, Aboo Daawood (transl. vol. 1/p.401/no. 1543) and others, all with the wording, "O Allaah I seek Your refuge from four: from knowledge which does not benefit..." The hadeeth was declared saheeh by al-Haakim and adh-Dhahabee agreed, and it has supports from a number of the Companions.]

And he, sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam, used to say, Allaahumma innee as'aluka `ilman naafi`an, wa a`oodhubika min `ilmin laa yanfa`u

"O Allaah, I ask you for beneficial knowledge, and I seek Your refuge from knowledge which does not benefit." [Reported with this wording by Al-Aajurree (p.134) and Ibn Hibbaan (no.2426). It is also reported by Ibn Maajah (no.3483) and Ibn `Abdul-Barr (1/162) with the wording, "Ask Allaah for beneficial knowledge and seek Allaah's refuge from knowledge which does not benefit." Its chain of narration is hasan (good) and there is a similar narration from Umm Salamah reported by Ibn Maajah and others.]

That was said by Imaam Aboo Bakr Al-Aajurree, rahimahullaahu ta`aala, who lived at the end of the fourth century (he died, in the year 360H) and corruption increased and multiplied greatly since his time – and there is no might and no strength except by Allaah's will.



## Benefiting From Knowledge **By Imam Ibn ul Jawzee**

From "Sayd Al-Khaatir" (138)

I have met many mashaaykh and the affair of one was different from that of the other, and their knowledge capacity were of varying levels. And the one whom I benefited from his company the most was the one who used to apply what he knew, even though there were those who were more knowledgeable than him.

I met a group from the people of hadeeth who memorized and knew a lot, however they would permit backbiting under the guise of jarh wa ta'deel (ed.: "accreditation and disreputation", science of criticism of narrators), they would take monetary payment in return for narrating hadeeth, and they would be hasty in giving answers, even if they are wrong, lest their status diminishes.

I met Abdulwahaab Al-Anmaatee, he used to be upon the methodology of the salaf. One would never hear backbiting in his gatherings nor would he take payment for teaching hadeeth. Whenever I read a hadeeth that contained in it a heart-softener, he used to cry continuously. I was very young at that time, (but) his crying affected my heart. He had the calm of those whose description we hear about from the narrations.

I met Abu Mansur Al-Jawaaliqee, he was very quiet, very careful about what he said, precise, and scholarly. Sometimes he would be asked a question, which may seem easy; one that our young ones would rush to answer, however he would withhold from answering until he was certain. He used to fast a lot and remain quiet often.

Thus, I benefited from these two more than I benefited from the others, and I understood from this that: guiding people by one's action is more inspiring than doing so by words. So Allah, Allah, one should implement what he knows for it is indeed the greatest foundation. And the miskeen, the true miskeen is the one who wasted his life learning what he does not practice, thus he loses the pleasures of the dunyah and the goodies of

the akhirah. (In addition to) Coming forth bankrupt (on the day of judgment) with strong evidences against himself.”

333. If you attend a study-session, behave only like someone who wishes to increase his knowledge and to win greater recompense from God. Do not behave like someone who is content with what he has, who is looking for some fault to criticise or a curious detail to hawk around. This would be the behaviour of vile men who never succeed in their studies.

If you come to it with good intentions, you will always obtain the best results. Otherwise, to stay at home would be less tiring for your body, more worthy of your moral conduct and more salutary for your religious life.

334. If you do attend under the conditions that we have indicated, take care to adopt one of these three attitudes and there cannot be a fourth: [First,] you may keep quiet in the silence of ignorance. Thus you will obtain the reward of your intention in attending the study-session, praise for your reserve, dignity in your behaviour and the friendship of those you mix with.

335. [Secondly,] if you do not behave like this, ask the questions which someone would ask who wished to learn. Then you will obtain, in addition to the four advantages just mentioned, a fifth, which is to increase your knowledge. What characterizes the questions asked by someone who wishes to learn is that he only asks about the points he does not know, not those he does know. To ask about what one already knows is a proof of ineptitude and a weak spirit, it is only palaver and a useless waste of time for oneself and for others. By doing this you will only provoke dislike and it will only be pure verbiage. So do not play games, it is a bad fault. If the person you are asking replies satisfactorily, stop questioning. If his reply is not satisfactory, or if you do not understand it, say to him, "I do not understand", and ask him to elaborate. If he does not explain himself more clearly, if he keeps silent or if he repeats what he said before

without adding anything, keep silent, otherwise you will only bring upon yourself trouble and dislike, without obtaining the desired enlightenment. [Thirdly,] you can riposte as a scholar would, that is to say that you can reply to the arguments advanced in a way that refutes them clearly. If you are not capable of replying in this way, if you are able only to repeat yourself or to reply using arguments which your adversary will not find convincing, do not insist for you will not gain by your repetitions any extra result or any information. You will only succeed in annoying yourself and starting a hostility between the two of you which could have serious consequences.

337. Guard against the questions that a prejudiced man would ask or the ripostes of a show-off who is bent on being right without knowing anything about the matter. These two attitudes are bad: they witness to absence of piety, a great tendency to verbiage, a weakness of spirit and considerable vanity. Let us commend the matter to God who is our best support.

338. If certain statements are put to you verbally, or if you come across a written text, guard against reacting violently, which will bring about excesses in language, before you have assured yourself by irrefutable proof that the ideas expressed are erroneous.

Neither should you accept them with the enthusiasm of someone who is credulous and convinced until you have assured yourself of their veracity by an irrefutable proof. In the two cases, you would be shutting your eyes and turning away from knowing the truth. On the contrary, consider what is being put to you as one would who is neither against it nor for it, one who wants to understand, to the best of his ability, what he has heard and read in order to increase his knowledge, to adopt the new ideas if they are good or reject them if they are erroneous. It is certain that if you behave like this you will be generally rewarded, greatly praised and your merit will be recognized.

339. A man who is content with the small fortune that he has and does not envy your opulence is as rich as you, even if you are a Croesus. If this

man resists the bait of gain to which you have succumbed, he will be much richer than you.

340. Anyone who rises above the things of this world to which you kneel is mightier than you.

341. It is a pious duty for Muslims to teach the good and to practice it. Anyone who does both these things at once is doing two virtuous deeds to perfection. But a person who contents himself with teaching the good without practicing it is acting well by teaching and acting badly by failing to put his teaching into practice, so mingling a good with a bad deed. This case is preferable to that of the person who would not teach the good any more than he would practice it. Such a man, although not virtuous, is more worthy of imitation, he is less blameworthy than someone who forbids the teaching of good and opposing anyone who practices it.

342. If it was only a man completely without sin who had the right to forbid evil, if it was only the man of perfect virtue who could teach the good, nobody yet would have forbidden evil or ordained the good since [the death of] the Prophet peace be upon him. This should be enough to make clear to you the corruption, wickedness and opprobrium of anyone who might think this.

343. Abu Muhammad – may God be satisfied with him said, “Here someone contradicted, protesting, ‘When alHasan [al-Basri] – may God be satisfied with him – forbade something [bad], he never did it himself, and when he ordained something [good], he himself put his orders firmly into practice. Wisdom requires that we do the same, for it has been said that: nothing is more odious than to preach something and not practise it, or to preach against an action and then to do it.’”

344. Abu Muhammad replied, “The person who said that was lying. There is something more ugly, that is, not to preach good and not to preach against evil and also to allow oneself to act badly and not to do good.”

345. Abu Muhammad added: Abu al-Aswad al-Du’ali said this: Do not forbid a vice that you are given to yourself, for great shame will fall on you. Start with yourself and forbid yourself your own misdeeds. If you

stop devoting yourself to them you will become a wise man. Then your sermons will be accepted, people will take their example from your knowledge and your teaching will be profitable.

346. Abu Muhammad continued: Abu al-Aswad wished to condemn only someone who has done a deed after forbidding it to others: such a deed would be doubly bad for having been committed by the very person who forbade it. The poet was quite right for this is what the Almighty said, "Will you command people to do good and forget to do it yourself?" [Qur'an 2:44]. It cannot be believed that Abu al-Aswad wanted to express any other idea. As for thinking that he did not want to be condemned for a bad deed, God protect him from that! That would have been to act like a wicked man.

347. Here is a true story about al-Hasan: When he heard someone say that only a person who did no evil had the right to forbid evil, he replied, "Satan would like us to believe that, and then nobody could forbid evil or ordain good."

Abu Muhammad confided: "Al-Hasan was right, and that is what we said before."

348. May God grant that we may count among the number of those whom He permits to do good and to practice it, and among the number of those who see the straight road, for no one is without faults; someone who perceived his own weaknesses will forget those of others. May God permit us to die in the Sunna [law] of Muhammad. Amen, O Lord of the Worlds!

## Muadh ibn Jabal on Knowledge

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The Prophet sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam said about Mu` aadh ibn Jabal: "Verily, when the people of knowledge will be present before their Lord, the Mighty and Sublime, Mu` aadh will be one step ahead of them."

[Saheeh, Ibn Sa` d, Aboo Nu` aim, at-Tabaraanee]

He, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, also said about Mu` aadh: "...the most knowledgeable of them [my Ummah] about the lawful and the prohibited is Mu` aadh bin Jabal..." [At-Tirmidhee, Ibn Hibbaan, ibn Maajah, al-Baihaqee, al-Haakim, who declared it Saheeh, and adh-Dhahabee and al-Albaanee agreed with him.]

Ibn Taymeeyah writes in al-Wasiyyah: "Part of Mu` aadh's excellence further is that the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, sent him to the people of Yemen as a preacher on his behalf, a caller, a teacher of understanding in the Deen, a giver of religious verdicts, and a judge."

This is Mu` aadh, radhiallaahu ta` aalaa ` anhu, to whom the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam, also said: "O Mu` aadh! By Allaah, truly I love you." [Aboo Daawood, an-Nasaa'ee, ibn Hibbaa, Aboo Nu` aim, Ibn Khuzaimah and al-Haakim, who declared its isnaad to be saheeh, and adh-Dhaabee agreed]

Aboo Nu` aim reports some sayings of Mu` aadh himself about the excellence of knowledge, among which we find the following:

"Knowledge is a comforting friend in times of loneliness, it is the best companion during travels, and it is the inner friend who speaks to you in your privacy. Knowledge is the discerning proof of what is right and what is wrong, and it is the positive force that will help you surmount the trials of comfort, as well as those of hardships. Knowledge is your most powerful sword against your enemy, and finally, it is your most dignifying raiment in the company of your close companions."

"Through knowledge, Allah, blessed be His Name, raises some people in rank, and He makes them leaders in righteousness and models in

morality. The vestige of their faith is avidly sought, their deeds are emulated perceptively, and people will seek and sanction their opinions solicitously and unequivocally. The heavenly angels seek their company and anoint them with their wings, every fresh or withered life they pass by implore Almighty Allah to forgive them their sins, even the fish in the oceans, the beasts of the lands and every bird of prey and migratory bird pray and solicit the mercy of Almighty Allah on their behalf. This is because knowledge revives the dead hearts and drives them out of darkness into light, and because knowledge is the light of the inner eyes that cures one's blindness and restores his inner sight."



## Lessons from the story of Mūsā and Khidr

From the greatest forms of worship a Muslim can perform, is seeking knowledge purely for Allāh's sake. Over the last few decades, Muslims in the West have become increasingly active in seeking knowledge, whether it be in the traditional ways of sitting with scholars and enrolling in institutions, or utilising newer technologies for learning. However, like all other acts of worship, seeking knowledge has guidelines and a methodology which we must follow set out by the One for whose sake we seek knowledge. Amongst the sources we can learn these guidelines from is none other than the final revelation sent down to mankind, the Qur'ān, and one story in particular offers much for those seeking knowledge in the 21st century to reflect on. This is the story between a messenger of Allāh, Mūsā (peace be upon him) and Khidr.

There are many Islamic texts that highlight the importance and virtues of knowledge. In fact, as the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim"[1]. From the texts that highlight the virtues of knowledge, Allāh says in the Qur'ān: "Allāh raises those who believe and have knowledge in degrees"[2]; and the Messenger of Allāh (peace be upon him) said: "The angels lower their wings over the seeker of knowledge, being pleased with what he does. The inhabitants of the heavens and the earth and even the fish in the depth of the oceans seek forgiveness for him."[3] –

Before we begin the story and extract the benefits, let us acknowledge the station of the one seeking the knowledge. Mūsā (peace be upon him) is from the greatest Prophets of Allāh. We know his position and superiority over not only some of the other Prophets, but also mankind in general. Allāh referred to him as from the "ulul-'azam"[4] – the five major Prophets with exceptionally "strong will" – these are namely: Nūh, Ibrāhīm, Mūsā, 'Īsā and Muhammed (may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon them all). Mūsā was also a Prophet and Messenger upon whom revelation descended, Allāh spoke to him directly and as a result he became known as the Kalīm of Allāh.

So the story begins at the time of Mūsā with Banī Isrā'īl gathered around him, as mentioned in Sahīh al-Bukhāri. Mūsā's people ask him if there is anyone on Earth more knowledgeable than him to which Mūsā replies that he thinks there is none on Earth more knowledgeable than him, on account of him being a Prophet. Allāh then reveals to Mūsā that despite him being a Prophet, there is a slave of His that is more knowledgeable than him.

Even before the journey has begun, we can extract the first benefit. A person should never be impressed with himself no matter how much knowledge he has. As students of knowledge, we should always remain humble. The reality is when a person attains more knowledge, he actually realises how little knowledge he has.

An individual has to refer back to Allāh because all knowledge comes from Allāh. No matter how much we try, we will never acquire knowledge except by the permission of Allāh. The knowledge that we do have should make us constantly ask Allāh to

bestow more knowledge on us. Take note of what Allāh told the Prophet (peace be upon him): “Say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge.”[5] –

Upon being told that there is someone with more knowledge than him, Mūsā set out to find this person so he may learn from him. From this, we learn the virtues of travelling to acquire knowledge. When Mūsā heard someone has more knowledge than him, he quickly went out to search for that knowledge. When one goes out to seek knowledge, for every step taken, it is recorded in his or her book of good deeds.

Also from the benefits of Mūsā travelling to seek knowledge, we learn that a person should be keen on acquiring knowledge from the scholars. They are the ones whom knowledge should be taken from. Mūsā was Prophet of Allāh and the Kalīm of Al-Rahmān but despite that, when he heard Khidr had some knowledge that he did not, he immediately went out to seek that knowledge.

The story also gives an indication of the virtues of the scholars. Mūsā strove for that knowledge that Khidr had and Khidr is from the scholars. There are many texts that highlight the virtues of the scholar. Allāh says: “Say to them, are they equal? Those who know and those who don’t?”[6] and Allāh has commanded us to refer back to the scholars when He says: “Ask the people of knowledge if you do not know.”[7] –

Allāh revealed to Mūsā: “At the junction of the two seas there is a slave of Ours who is more learned than you”. Mūsā asked: “O my Lord, how can I meet him?” Mūsā was then told: “Take a fish and put it in a basket (and set out), and wherever you will lose the fish, you will find him.”[8] –

So Mūsā began his journey:

And [mention] when Moses said to his servant, “I will not cease [traveling] until I reach the junction of the two seas or continue for a long period.”[9] –

Mūsā took a companion with him, Yūsha‘ b. Nūn (peace be upon him) – from this we learn the benefit of having a companion with you when seeking knowledge. Good companions encourage you to do good deeds. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “A good friend and a bad friend are like a perfume-seller and a blacksmith: The perfume-seller might give you some perfume as a gift, or you might buy some from him, or at least you might smell its fragrance. As for the blacksmith, he might singe your clothes, and at the very least you will breathe in the fumes of the furnace.”[10] Mūsā said he will not give up until he reaches the two seas or a “huqub” passes. `Alī b. Abī Talha reported that Ibn `Abbās said that “huqub” means a lifetime. This shows the determination Mūsā had when seeking knowledge. –

So when they had passed beyond it, [Moses] said to his boy, “Bring us our morning meal. We have certainly suffered in this, our journey, [much] fatigue.”

Mūsā and Yūsha‘ got tired on the journey so they stopped to eat – this shows the importance of having patience when seeking knowledge and knowing that we may get physically tired when seeking knowledge or performing good actions. Whenever we do perform any act of worship to please Allāh, we should exert ourselves. –

He (Yūsha') said, "Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I forgot [there] the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan – that I should mention it. And it took its course into the sea amazingly".

Yūsha' forgot about fish when it took off but Mūsā didn't blame Yūsha' nor did he become irate with him. We learn from this that we should make excuses for our brother when seeking knowledge. We shouldn't be from people who always blame others but we should work to rectifying the mistakes, it is from good character to forgive. Allāh says: "...and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allāh should forgive you? And Allāh is Forgiving and Merciful." [11]

Both Mūsā and Yūsha' forgot about the fish – it is mentioned that shaytān made them forget. Shaytān causes the children of Adam to forget knowledge and acting upon it. To avoid this, we should always seek refuge in Allāh and remember our adhkār when seeking knowledge or otherwise. Allāh says: "Verily, those who fear Allāh, when an evil thought comes to them from Satan, they remember (Allāh)." [12]

[Moses] said, "That is what we were seeking." So they returned, following their footprints.

After they remembered about the fish, Mūsā and his companion went back to the place where the fish jumped out. We are reminded from this that we can go back and rectify our mistake if required. The most important matter is coming back to the truth even if we erred. The objective is the truth and the truth deserves to be followed more than anything else.

"And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy from us,"

Allāh described Khidr as a slave even though he holds such a high position. This is in fact praise from Allāh as Allāh also called His Final Messenger, the greatest man to ever walk upon this Earth, a slave. Allāh then describes Khidr, he mentions that he has "knowledge and mercy from Us". Allāh describes Khidr as having mercy, if one has knowledge, then they should also have mercy. The most knowledgeable of mankind is the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Allāh says about him: "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds. [13] And the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Those who are merciful will be shown mercy by the Merciful. Be merciful to those on the earth and the One above the heavens will have mercy upon you." [14]

"And We taught him knowledge from Ourselves."

This ayah highlights the fact that knowledge comes from Allāh; it doesn't come from one's power or intelligence but knowledge is a gift bestowed by Allāh upon whom He wills. However, there are reasons Allāh bestows knowledge on some. Among the reasons is that one has fear of Allāh as Allāh says in the beginning of Sūrah al-Baqarah: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh." [15]

Moses said to him, “May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgement?”

Upon meeting Khidr, Mūsā sought permission to learn from him so he may benefit from his knowledge and wisdom. We should have a desire to be in the companionship of and to follow the people of knowledge. The way in which Musa asked Khidr to accompany him also highlights his humility and great respect for Khidr on account of holding knowledge. This is an example of the manners that a student of knowledge should have with his or her teacher.

It is of utmost importance to the seeker of knowledge to have the best of manners especially with his interaction with non-Muslims. In many cases, the first impression non-Muslims will have with Muslims is through their mannerisms. The knowledge gained will lead to good manners and when implemented will leave a positive impression on non-Muslims. This will then motivate them to research further into Islam and incline towards it.

He [Khidr] said, “Then if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I make to you about it mention.”

Khidr tells Mūsā to not ask him until he makes mention of it himself. This highlights the importance of the student of knowledge to not be hasty when seeking knowledge. Certain issues and rulings take their time in understanding, so we shouldn't be quick to make a judgment until we know the reality of the issue. Seeking knowledge is also to be sought in stages and not in one go. The entire Qur'ān was revealed in stages to be recited in stages as Allāh says: “And those who disbelieve say, “Why was the Qur'ān not revealed to him all at once?” Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have spaced it distinctly.[16] One of the scholars of the past said: “Whoever wants to seek knowledge in one go, will lose it in one go.”[17]

Thereafter, Khidr accepted Mūsā to be his student and he began his path to seeking knowledge with Khidr. Khidr not only imparted his knowledge to Mūsā but also showed practical examples. Knowledge is of no benefit if it is not followed by action. As the great scholar al-Khatīb al-Baghdādi said: “Knowledge calls for action so either the call is answered or the knowledge will be removed.”[18]

These are from amongst the benefits a seeker of knowledge can learn from the story of Mūsā and Khidr and it is incumbent upon the seeker of knowledge to equip himself with the tools and manners required before embarking on this sacred path.

[1] Sunan Ibn Mājah (224)

[2] Al-Qur'ān 58:11

[3] Abu Dāwūd (Book 13, Hadīth 1388)

[4] Al-Qur'ān 46:35

[5] Al-Qur'ān 20:114

[6] Al-Qur'ān 39:9

[7] Al-Qur'ān 16:43

[8] Sahīh Bukhāri, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 249.

- [9] Al-Qur'ān 18:60
- [10] Sahīh Bukhāri
- [11] Al-Qur'ān 24:22
- [12] Al-Qur'ān 7:201
- [13] Al-Qur'ān 21: 107
- [14] Sunan At-Tirmidhi 1924
- [15] Al-Qur'ān 2:2
- [16] Al-Qur'ān 25:32
- [17] Fadl al-Ilm by Arsalan
- [18] Al-Jāmi by al-Khatīb and Dham man laa Ya'mal bi 'Ilmihi