

The Virtues of Knowledge and the Virtues of its People

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From the book *“al-Jaami’ fi Talab al-‘Ilm ash-Shareef ”*

Part 1: The Evidence from the Book of Allaah, the Most High, for the Virtue of Knowledge and the Virtue of its People

1. The statement of Allaah, the Most High:

“And He taught Adam the names of all things...” [Baqarah, 31-33]

Al-Qurtubee, may Allaah be merciful to him, said, “His, the Most High’s statement: “He said: O Adam, inform them of their names.” In this, there are five points:

‘The first: His, the Most High’s, statement: “...inform them of their names...” Allaah commanded him to teach them their names after he recited upon the angels so that they would know that he was more knowledgeable, concerning that which they questioned him, to remind them of his virtues and his high status. So he became superior to them because He put them before him and made them prostrate to him and made them his students and He commanded them to learn from him. So he received the level of valour and prominence because he was made to be prostrated to and (because he was) chosen for knowledge.

‘The second: And in this verse, there is evidence for the virtue of its people. And in the Hadeeth, ‘And verily, the angels lower their wings out of pleasure, for the seeker of knowledge.’ In other words, they become humble and submissive. And they only do that, specifically for the people of knowledge, from all of Allaah’s creation. (This), because Allaah, the Most High, enjoined that upon them (i.e. the angels) for Adam (pbuh) so they integrated this etiquette within their manners. So the more knowledge that becomes apparent to them, in a human, they submit to him and become humble to him and subdued, glorifying knowledge and its people as well as their being pleased with the seeking of it (i.e. knowledge) and acting with it. So this is concerning the students from them (i.e. mankind), so how would it be with the scholars from them and their religious authorities? May Allaah make us from them and among them. Verily, He is the Owner of great virtue.” [“Tafseer Al-Qurtubee ”, Vol. 1/288-289]

2. Allaah, the Most High’s, statement:

“And He revealed to you...” [An-Nisaa’, 113]

And this verse indicates the virtue of knowledge directly because of his, the Most High’s saying: “And He taught you

that which you knew not.” And Allaah, the Most High, described this knowledge as a great virtue as He, Glory be to Him, said:

“And the virtue of Allaah upon you is great.”

And just as Allaah, the Most High, bestowed the blessing of knowledge upon our Prophet (pbuh), in this way, He blessed the rest of the Prophets as He, the Most High said, about Ibraaheem (pbuh):

“O my father, knowledge has reached me which has not reached you so follow me and I will guide you on a straight path.” [Mariam, 43]

And He, the Most High, said about Ya'qoob (pbuh):

“And verily, he is one with knowledge because of what We taught him but most of the people know not.” [Yusuf, 68]

And He, the Most High, said about Yusuf (pbuh):

“And like that, your Lord will choose you and will teach you the interpretation of dreams.” [Yusuf, 6]

And He, the Most High, said about Dawood (pbuh):

“And Allaah gave him the Mulk and knowledge and taught him from what He willed.” [Al-Baqarah, 25]

And He, the Most High, said about Sulaymaan (pbuh):

“And Sulaymaan inherited from Dawood...a clear virtue.” [An-Naml, 16]

And He, the Most High, said about 'Eesa (pbuh):

“And Allaah said: O 'Eesa, son of Mariam...Taurat and the Injeel.” [Al-Maa'idah, 11]

And like Allaah, the Most High, bestowed the blessing of knowledge upon His Prophets, likewise He blessed His believing slaves; the followers of the Prophets (pbuh) as He, the Most High said:

“And so that I will complete My favour upon you...that which you did not know.” [Al-Baqarah, 151]

And He, the Most High said:

“And Allaah has blessed the believers...the clear misguidance.” [Aal-Imraan, 164]

3. His, the Most High's, statement:

“And say: My Lord increase me in knowledge.” [Taha, 114]

Al-Bukhaaree, may Allaah be merciful to him, mentioned it in: “The Chapter of the Virtue of Knowledge”, in the beginning of “The Book of Knowledge” in his Saheeh, and Ibn Hajr, may Allaah be merciful to him, commented, “The saying of Allaah, the Powerful, the Mighty: “And say: My Lord increase me in knowledge.” In (this verse) it is clear that its indication of the virtues of the knowledge because Allaah, the Most High, did not command His Prophet (pbuh) to seek an increase in anything except for knowledge. And the meanings of the knowledge is the Sharee'ah-based knowledge from which we benefit. (And that is) knowing what is obligatory upon the Mukalif (i.e. the one who is responsible, of age and sound mind etc.) from the matters of his religion in his worship and everyday interactions. Also, the knowledge of Allaah and His attributes and what is obligatory from following His commandments and negating from Him all imperfections. And the basis of that, is the Tafseer and the Hadeeth and Fiqh.” [Fath Al-Baree”, Vol. 1/141]

4. His, the Most High's, statement:

“So he found a slave from our slaves...a guidance from what you have learned.” [Al-Kahf, 65-66]

These verses are regarding Moosa and Khudhr, upon whom be peace, and they resemble the aforementioned verse about our Prophet (pbuh): “And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge,” in that, here, Moosa sought an increase in knowledge and strove for its sake and to attain it, even if it were from him, who was beneath him in virtue.

And the Messenger of Allaah (pbuh) said, “While Moosa was among a group of Banee Israel, a man approached him

and said, ‘Do you know anyone who is more knowledgeable than you?’ Moosa said, ‘No.’ So Allaah revealed to Moosa, “Yes, Khudhr!” So Moosa sought a way to him and Allaah made a fish (to be) a sign for him and it was said to him, ‘If you loose the fish, then retrace (your steps) and you will find him. And he followed the traces of the fish in the ocean and his servant said to Moosa, ‘Do you see when we went beyond that rock, then I forgot about the fish and verily, none caused me to forget except the Shaytaan.’ He said, ‘That is what we were waiting for.’ So they both returned upon their path until they found Khudhr and it was from their matter, which Allaah, the Powerful, the Mighty informed in His Book.” [Narrated by Bukhaaree, #74]

And this is clear, as an evidence, for the virtue of knowledge because Moosa (pbuh) strove to seek knowledge despite the fact that he was from the Uli Al-‘Azim (i.e. the five most formidable Messengers; Nuh, Ibraheem, Moosa, ‘Eesa, Muhammad, peace be upon them) from the Messengers. Even if it were from someone who was lessor than him in virtue and that was Al-Khudhr. Concerning the levels of virtue between them, Ibn Hajr, may Allaah be merciful to him, said, “And Al-Khudhr, even if he was a Prophet, he was not a Messenger according to the consensus. And the Messenger is superior to a Prophet, who is not a Messenger. And (even) if we were to accept that he was a Messenger, then the Message of Moosa was greater and his Ummah (i.e. nation) was larger so he is superior. And the extent of Al-Khudhr, would be that he was like on the Prophets of Bane Israel and Moosa was their best. And if we say that Al-Khudhr is not a Prophet, but rather a Walee of Allaah (i.e. saintly person), then the Prophet is superior to a Walee. And this is a matter wherein there is no doubt from the point o view of intellect of textually and the one who leans to opposing that is a Kaafir, because it is a matter, which is known from the necessity of legislation.” [“Fath Al-Baree ”, Vol. 1/221]

5. Allaah, the Most High’s, statement:

“Allaah bore witness...He is the Mighty and Knowledgeable.” [Aal-Imraan, 18]

Ibn Al-Qayyim, may Allaah be merciful to him, said about this verse, “He, Glory be to Him, used as a witness, the people of knowledge for a matter that has been testified for, and that is His Tawheed. As He said, “Allaah bore witness that there is no deity besides him and angels and the people of knowledge acting upon justice...” And this indicates the virtue of knowledge and its people from different aspects. Firstly, is their being used as a witness instead of the rest of humanity. And secondly, the joining of their testimonies with His testimony. And thirdly, the joining of that which the testimony of His angels. And fourthly, is that – within this – is their approval and judging them to be honourable and just because Allaah does not use the testimony of His creation except for the honourable and just (ones). And from that, is the known narration from the Prophet (pbuh), “This knowledge will be carried by the honourable and just ones of every nation. They protect it from the altering of the extremists and the fraudulent (additions) of the falsifiers and the (false) interpretations of the ignorant ” – until he (i.e. Ibn Al-Qayyim) said – “The sixth, is that He, Glorified be He, used Himself as a witness and He is the greatest of witnesses and then the best of creation and these are His angels and the ‘Ulamaa (i.e. scholars) of His slaves and this is sufficient for their virtue and nobility.” [“Miftaah Daar As-Sa’aada ”, Pg. 48-49]

And Al-Qurtubee, may Allaah be merciful to him, said, “In this verse, there is an evidence for the virtue of knowledge and the nobility of the ‘Ulamaa and their virtue. (This is) because, if there were anyone more noble than the ‘Ulamaa, Allaah would have joined them with His Name and the name of His angels, just as He added the name of the ‘Ulamaa.” [“Tafseer Al-Qurtubee ”, Vol. 4/41]

And Abu Haamid Al-Ghazalee, may Allaah be merciful to him, has words similar to these, concerning this verse in “Al-Ihya ”, Vol. 1/15.