



The Light of Knowledge:
Seen Clearly through the Sifat of Allah

Allah (swt) in the “Qur’an within the Qur’an,” Surah al-Baqarah, reveals to us, **“And He taught Adam the names, all of them, and then made them visible before the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the name of these if you are truthful.’”** Again in al- Baqarah, He reveals to us, **“Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who securely believe, and He takes them from the shadows into the light. And those who cover up the truth are the protectors of the idols, who take them out of the light into the shadows. And they are the companions of the fire and are in it forever.”**

Knowledge is an incredible thing. When Allah (swt) is teaching us the names of things, He is not just teaching us the names of things. When He asks the angels to reveal what they are, this tells us the value of knowledge, the value that knowledge is part of this transmission of light that comes to us. So I want to discuss knowledge with you today. We know that the Qur’an is light. We know from the Qur’an that Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. This Nūr that is referred to in this verse could be called many things, but today we are going to call it the light of knowledge.

In every language there is this reflection of enlightenment: a person comes to enlightenment. A light bulb goes on in their heads. Knowledge is always associated with light, and light is associated with darkness. Knowledge is also associated with ignorance, and ignorance with darkness; hence, the reason these two ‘*āyāt* came together. This knowledge gives us some understanding of Allah (swt) and the things in the heavens and the earth. Through knowledge we see clearly, but it has to be real knowledge, not just information. Knowledge is based, not just on fact, but on experience. Knowledge comes

from what Allah (swt) has given us: it comes from the Names. It comes from the Attributes of Allah.

All knowledge begins at the Attribute of Allah. The knowledge of peace comes from Allah's peace. Any knowledge we have about justice comes from the name of Allah Al 'Adl. It may seem to be silly and simplistic, but it's not. Whatever we know is verifiable by what Allah (swt) has revealed about Allah (swt). That Nūr that is referred to as knowledge is something we can clearly see as reflection in our daily life. We can comprehend things and solve problems very effectively by understanding the Sifat / Attributes and the Names of Allah (swt). It's just as if we can see something that is in the darkness very clearly when we turn on the light. The light is the Names and Attributes of Allah (swt).

Everything that we can see is comprised of light. Inside our own minds, we know there is light and there is darkness. There are places we cannot access... I can't think of them right now... and when we turn on the light, something becomes clear to us. Against this is the world of *dhulm*/ darkness. '*Dhulm*' is more than just darkness: it is ignorance, heaviness. It's this thick ignorance. The interesting thing about ignorance is you can look at it with a great deal of understanding. You can actually remove yourself from it and see it as an entity, not just be immersed in it. So the first step is extracting yourself from that swamp of ignorance and seeing it at arm's length. If you see it at arm's length, you must be somewhere else. Then you can become elevated from that position. Allah is the Light of the universe, and in this sense, the knowledge of reality and right guidance is contained in Allah (swt) alone, and can be obtained from Allah (swt) alone.

There is no recourse but in Allah (swt), if you really understand; [otherwise], there will be nothing but darkness or ignorance. The problems and evils that will come upon this world without light are immeasurable. In fact, we see that the worst things are seen in

the light of knowledge. This is why the Jahaliyya was so important. It was the context against which the Nūri Muhammed and insight comes. Everything that is done in public, everything that is *fitna*, is seen. The Prophet (sal) in his wisdom said that things of darkness belong in darkness. That's where they belong. If you are not going to overcome them, then you have to go into the darkness with them. You can't do this in light. It is not allowable in the light. In the passage from Surah al-Baqarah, we see that those who come out of the depths of darkness by the light of knowledge are people who are free of the ignorance. Allah said in Surah Ibrahim, **“O Muhammed, this is a Book which We have sent down to you so that you may bring mankind with the help of their Lord out of the darkness and out of ignorance to knowledge.”**

How is that? (Shaykh opens the Qur'an and simulates being overwhelmed by the light that it exudes!) Wow! Turn out the lights, close the windows. Where is the light? Where is it? You have to interact with it. You have to turn the switch on. The light, therefore, is inside of us to be turned on. This (the Qur'an) is the switch. It tells us where to find it. We stress over and over again in the teachings we give and have been given. We see in the Hadith and in the Qur'an that the Prophet Muhammed (sal), with the help of Allah, brought people from darkness and ignorance and disbelief into knowledge and the light of Islam.

These words “*nūr*” and “*dhulm*” are invariably used for the light of knowledge and darkness of ignorance. When we look at Qur'an and see how much these words are used, we can see the importance and significance of knowledge, because without knowledge human beings can't know that Allah created them; can't know anything about the intention of that creation, how to live in that creation with this life, anything about the length of this life and its purpose, anything about the interface between human beings and other human beings or life itself or the planet itself, or the purpose and objective of

existence in the most theological and philosophical sense. We can't know without these moments of light.

Human beings were created and assigned a very special task. We were entrusted with the *khalifat*, and above all, given freedom of choice and freedom of action. Consequently, when our choices and actions are restricted, we find even on the most base social level that there is rebellion, revolution, whether we look at Egypt and Tahrir Square, or the Occupy Movement in the U.S. When these two things are restricted, people react. Why? Where are they reacting from? Just from a sense of social justice? No, it's extremely visceral. It's not theological in the sense that people are going to quote paragraph or verse of the Qur'an, Bible or Torah to tell you why they are acting the way they are acting. It's visceral. We know that in this mission we were given as the *khalifas*, that it required choice and freedom of action; otherwise we wouldn't know what was a value or not a value. Consequently, we become responsible and answerable for the actions committed on this earth – not just ours, everyone's.

Obviously, Allah wouldn't leave human beings unguided in this very difficult position, a task which Allah's other creations, the heavens, the earth, and the mountains were afraid of taking upon themselves. But Allah (swt), knowing the difficulties and the drawbacks, first equipped us with a wealth of light and potential knowledge in the form of our intellect and insight, through which we gain our knowledge and live a much better life. Along with that is self discipline and choice, and many aspects that come with intellect and insight. The Qur'an reminds us of Allah's Grace in bestowing upon us these means of acquiring knowledge and in that sense, naming and knowing Him in this universe. He said:

It is He who brought you forth from the wombs of your mother. And when you knew nothing, He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and

affection that you may give thanks to Allah. It is He who created for you the faculties of hearing, sight, feeling and understanding, and little thanks do you give.

Why do we give little thanks? It's not apriori that you have these things and therefore you understand what they are used for. You have sight, intellect, hearing, feelings and memories. That doesn't mean you are going to appreciate that you have any of those things, let alone what they are pointing to. Something else has to happen: we have to make choices. We have to observe. We have to have guidance. There are many people who don't make the right use of their capacities for gaining knowledge. There are many people who don't live by guidelines of goodness and righteousness, who would rather waste their time and energy doing things that are unjust or unfair, or usually a mixture of both. Most of us are more a stew than we are one dish.

We all have our blind spots, our reasons, our excuses; and many things pulling on us. We can be very righteous in one way, and very off the track in another way. That's what life's journey is about. It takes patience and forgiveness and understanding and potential. The Qur'an reminds us that we have to be attentive and vigilant. What's another word for vigilance? *Muraqabah*. We have to reflect on things. We have to learn there is still time to learn. **“Many of the jinns and humans We have made for hell. They had not hearts wherewith they understood, eyes with which they could see, and ears with which they could hear. They are like cattle; nay, even worse. They are a people who have become utterly heedless.”** There is a difference between being heedless and just not getting the message right away. There is a difference between being heedless and wanting to understand and wanting to change. Being intentionally heedless, not listening, not caring is a lot different than caring but not being able to effectively change right away. So we have to have patience.

A very important warning is necessary to all of us who are heedless to any extent. That warning comes in Qur'an also. **“And pursuing not that which you have no knowledge, for every act of feeling, seeing, and hearing will be inquired into on the Day of Judgment.”** There is a time frame here, a horizon. That's called life. This is a clear indication that in social and personal matters, people should not indulge in certain things that they have control over: gossip, cheating, injustices, intentional dishonesties, creating fear in others, committing acts of violence on one another, lest they commit another sin and abandon what they know is true. If we abandon what we know is true, we work our lives around our sins and wrongdoings. If we abandon those things, we are free. What does it mean to abandon what is wrong, or *fitna*? It means living the Names of Allah (swt).

Living the Names of Allah (swt) means that Allah told Hazrat Adam these Names / Attributes, and he was told to teach those to the angels. It means all of the capabilities and potentials inherent in those Attributes of Allah (swt) that are reflected in each human being have to be brought to the consciousness. They have to be lived. We are not like the angels who cannot help but live the way they were created. **“Glory to you of all knowledge! We have none except that which You have taught us. It is You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom, Allah.”** This is what the angels said. It is because of this knowledge we gained a recognition or status above the angels, above the other aspects of creation. Without the wealth of knowledge of the names, we would have been powerless to do anything on this earth. What does it mean to know the names? It doesn't mean that your name is this, and that name is that. It means to know the essence and the meaning of those names.

Everything that was named was named with a quality, an essence, just like every flower has an essence to it. Like in Homeopathy we say, there is a simple substance in everything. It has a curative power, the power to stimulate the larger body to cure itself.

That's exactly what the names have. The names have qualities in them that can stimulate the individual to heal themselves, to refine themselves, to take knowledge and use it in a good way. Every function that something does has a name. We have the name The Opener for anything that opens, and The Peaceful for anything that engenders peace. That's why Allah (swt) can say, **"We created man in the best mold."** The mold is made out of those reflections of those names. That is why Allah said that He created us with the purest of nature and has lifted us above everything else. The angels have to obey Him and cooperate with Him in everything; we have a choice.

The importance of knowledge is shown by the fact that it is one of the most outstanding Attributes of Allah (swt), according to the scholars, according to the philosophers. It is the second most important attribute of Allah after the creation itself. We were promised Divine Guidance through the messengers and prophets that came before, and that was to do one thing: to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. It's not always easy. It's not black and white all the time. The purpose of distinguishing is to attain balance. Balance is one of the most important aspects of life. It's true that Allah (swt) comprehends the nature of all things, because they are within Him and they are His creation; but it's true also that Allah can reach out of the deepest recesses of things by that knowledge, and Allah's knowledge embraces all things.

Knowledge in and of itself is the key to the doorway of infinite understanding. Again, distinguish between intellectual knowledge and the knowledge that comes from living and understanding these Attributes of Allah as manifest in our creation and in our selves. *That* knowledge pervades everything. There is nothing in the universes that has not been touched by that knowledge. To the extent His knowledge embraces everything in the universe, Allah (swt) knowledge is personal and direct and expressed in the Qur'an in the following way: **"Allah encompasses all and He knows all things. He is all pervading, all knowing, all embracing."**

In these verses and other ‘*āyāt* of the Qur’an, the word “*wasīm*” means extensive, vast, opening, spacious. “*Wasīm al Rahmat*” means the abundancy of mercy, for example. These are the names the angels were told, not names like, “That’s Bob; that’s Joe.” Names are qualities, intricate and central qualities of everything. This is something of the abundance of that. This is compassion that comes from the abundance of compassion. Everything we do, everything we have done, everything we know, everything we would like to know is encompassed in that Divine Presence and can only be understood if we familiarize ourselves with Allah. We can familiarize ourselves with Allah if we just take the time and contemplate the Names of Allah (swt). What is that? *Dhikr*.

Once again the same story, when you look outside and see the beautiful day today, you see the Jamal and Jelial of Allah. You look at the mountain, and you realize that’s what you are seeing—the abundance of light, the abundance of majesty, the abundance of provision in the garden still at this time of year. Eventually, it becomes the way we see and the way our life is influenced. Then we begin to feel the presence of Allah in everything. Then we watch what we say and we watch what we do, and try to repair damage, and apologize when it’s needed, and repent when it’s needed, and forgive when it’s needed, and we stop self-referencing everything, because we are in the Divine Presence. There is nothing that bores Allah more than a believer talking about themselves—if you don’t mind the metaphor.

Can you imagine coming before Allah (swt) in some quasi-physical way and talking about yourself? “I’d just like you to get to know who I am. May I introduce myself to You, Allah. Here’s my resume, in case you’d like to read it.” It’s absurd, but we do it every day. We reference everything to our own self, instead of referencing everything to Allah. Everything we would like to know is encompassed by that Divine Presence.

We understand that if we choose that which is destructive and goes against the value of community; if we choose that which is harmful to us, which makes us vulnerable to the wrong times, to the evil and the darkness in this world, then we move away from knowledge and from the truth. We become more and more ignorant and make more and more excuses, and become more and more wrapped up in our own selves. We will make one ignorant decision after another, because our choice won't go away. That's what we were born with, but it's the value of the choice that will change. So we have to listen and see and realize that Allah (swt) knows even the most hidden things. Allah has full knowledge of our secrets. It is not the kind of knowledge that you and I have. It's the way you know something in your heart.

In fact it is said that Allah knows the deepest secrets of our hearts, and we know that Allah (swt) conceals things and reveals things. We don't realize that what we think is being concealed and revealed is our choice. We can blame or praise Allah (swt) for something that is concealed or revealed, but really we should be blaming ourselves for manipulating things to be the way we want them. When Allah (swt) protects us by concealing things, we shouldn't be the one who is revealing things. We should be humble and grateful. Why? Those things are just transient. If we are committed, things will change. If we are patient, things will change. Instead of stopping and focusing on what is miserable, bad, disappointing, what is fearful, what is doubting—understand what we are passing through.

Knowledge is a lot different than what you learn in school and memorize—a poem or a piece of music. True knowledge is true understanding, and that understanding is measurable by the good acts that we do, the goodness in our heart, the forgiveness in our heart, the love in our heart. We have to remember for that. We have to remember Allah. I hope and pray that we remember Allah when we are in dispute, when we are not guiding

ourselves properly, when we are forgetful of all things, when we are saying what we should be doing. We should understand what the benefits are. When we remember Allah, He will bring us back to the truth and to the light. People who have real knowledge don't doubt. They are sure. I pray that each one of us becomes more and more sure of our self and of Allah. These are words I spoke today, but I hope they are not empty. They have a lot of meaning. They may be words that test us and try us and make us reflect. If we practice, we realize that Allah (swt) is present even in the most difficult of circumstances. In that presence, you find yourself.

...by the grace of my Lord, whether I am grateful or ungrateful. If any is grateful, then truly his gratitude is a gain for his own soul. But if any are ungrateful, then truly, my Lord is free of all needs and supreme in honor.

Asalaamu aleykum.

SECOND KHUTBAH. Thank you very much for last night. I appreciate the good wishes and good words. May Allah bless us with more to do in service to Him. Thank you for all the time you spent in making a wonderful evening. May Allah bless all those who participated in the creation of the beautiful environment, the evening, the cooking, the generosity that you have shown toward me. May Allah bless our *shaykhs* who made this all possible.