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Khutbah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Title: [Knowledge: The Invaluable Tool](#)

DVD title: Knowledge: The Invaluable Tool

Opening *du'ās*. *Asalāmu aleikum*. The subject of today is again to continue from last night, the importance of knowledge. Allah Swt speaks of knowledge many times in Qur'an. He says for example in Suratu Luqmān,

Don't you see that Allah has subjugated to you everything in the heavens and the earth, and bestowed His grace, outer and inner, upon you? Yet among the people are some who dispute about Allah without guidance or knowledge, and without a Book that gives light. (31:20)

So many talks can be given on that *āyat* alone. It says, "Look around you." We are subjugated by all these natural powerful qualities of His creation. So many things have more power than us; yet, He has elevated us to the position where we are set above all those things if we have guidance, and if we use our knowledge correctly. That guidance comes from the Book that gives light, the Qur'an. That guidance shows us the way. It is a book that illumines the way for us. Allah say in Suratu-l-A'rāf,

Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment that Allah has brought forth for His worshipful slaves, and the good things from His provenance?"

On the Day of Judgment, these shall be solely for those who sincerely believed during their worldly life. In this way, We explain the signs to people who have knowledge.” (7:32)

Allah Swt tells us that we will understand these things and all the things He has given us to adorn our lives with: our prosperity, our opportunity, our minds, our intellect, the physical realities of the world we live in. We will understand these, for those of us who have knowledge. It was already explained what that meant to some degree in a previous *‘āyat*. One more quotation for now, which is in Suratu-l-‘An’ām:

Now insights have come to you from your Lord. Whoever sees does so for the good of his own soul. Whoever is blind is so to his own loss. Say to those who are blind of heart, “I am not your keeper.” (6:104)

Allah Swt has really elevated and told us that knowledge is quite important. From these verses in Qur’an we come to see that there is a great deal of personal responsibility for us to see and to understand, and to gain knowledge, and to see the world around us. Certainly, we live in times when seeing the world around us is not necessarily a pleasant thing. To try to understand it is even more difficult. I heard today on the news (I’m not sure who said it), “Everybody thinks they are an economist.” In a certain way, every Muslim thinks they totally understand Islam also. You can extrapolate that in any way you want. Everybody has their own bias. There is a whole epistemology of bias we should look at, which is partially cultural and partially part of the structure that we have to overcome to understand what real knowledge and truth is.

Allah Swt tells us not only what He has created in detail, but also the value of seeing it. Allah, the System itself, is present, is not going to stand over us in a paternalistic way and force us to see things, but gives us experiences in life that demand [us to see]. If we want to understand and live through them, and have the courage to deal with them, if we want to have the internal fortitude to deal with some of the challenges, then we, ourselves, have to make the effort to understand and keep our responsibility to Allah Swt, and develop our own capabilities with the tools He has given us, by the ‘*āyāt*/signs of Allah that are in front of us, and by the symbols that are around us. And [it is our responsibility] to understand not only the power/*qahhar*, but the mercy/*rahmat* of Allah by which He allows us, or by which we can harmonize ourselves and come into resonance with understanding or knowledge. This is given to us as an integral part of life.

[Integral to our life is] all the knowledge available to us to turn into so many things—all the technology, the techniques, the wealth, the health—the invaluable tools. Or [on the other hand,] we see the poverty, the war, and the genocide. Ask ourselves: what is it we prove when we have tens of thousands (I don’t remember the number) of nuclear warheads, when 5 or 20 could destroy the world? Why do we have to have ten or twenty thousand? What is it we are trying to prove? Are we competing with the power of Allah Swt? Why do we have this kind of a mentality? There are all kinds of explanations for it, but what’s the real wisdom in that? Is there any?

Then the techniques of wealth should not be the same as the techniques of greed. Wealth and greed are not the same. Prosperity does not mean greed. [It is] to be satisfied with what Allah Swt has given us, and to find that all that we need to live is before us. And more, so that those who may be ill or distracted, or who may have lost their way for a

while, or lost their job for a while, there is some to share. This is real prosperity in the outer. Then Allah Swt spends a lot of time in Qur'an telling us about prosperity in the inner, and health also. What about health? Is our knowledge of health really knowledge of health, or of experiences of and reactions to sickness? There are probably very few people in this room, maybe the children are an exception, who do not have a health issue. Is it a health issue? Is it a sickness issue? How are you addressing it? Is it that we have so many choices that illness gives us a problem? How do we address it on so many levels: our food and nutrition, our physical exercise, our mental and emotional state? How is it impacted by our economy, our own personal economic situation?

Allah Swt is always telling us about harmony and balance, and we have to learn how to listen, all of us. Some of us have gone a little deaf, and I include myself. Allah Swt gives us this life, hopefully with the knowledge that we have to create of this life good things. There are so many verses in Qur'an that are reminders to us of the many contexts of our lives, and the physical forces of the world around us and in our own selves. They remind us of our history, these signs of Allah, the phenomena He has created in this world, the events and circumstances. Allah says that only people with knowledge understand and know. There are so many lessons for us in that, because the people of knowledge know it is right to follow the will of Allah and to submit to Allah Swt more and more. [The people of knowledge are those] who turn to their hearts in love and compassion, who have the knowledge to understand and the ability to grasp that whatever knowledge you have is not just for us. He has made it available to everyone.

He tells us that ignorant people just pass by without knowing anything, or feeling anything, or turning their attention anywhere but to their own selves. It is also made

absolutely clear that only people with knowledge can *benefit* from Allah's commandments, and understand the wisdom of the law, and the intricacies of nature. *Benefit* in this sense means to make progress. Many people who are ignorant benefit from what Allah Swt is providing. There is no litmus test that says, if you have X amount of knowledge you will have X amount of food, X amount of sunlight, and X amount of water, you will only get the best jobs. We have to go back to the Hikam and see what knowledge is gained from what is denied to us. What is our mentality from what is denied to us that we can learn? [It is] to remember that Allah is present inside of us, outside of us, and within us. He is *hazr, nazr, mai*.

It is not a surprise that if we are looking at the earth or the heavens, or our own hearts, or the hearts of others, that the people with real knowledge/*marifah* can relate to and respect Allah Swt in such a way that there is harmony in their lives. When we have that knowledge and can understand with gratitude what we have; when we have humility, and can realize the value of that, then we can be in awe of the Creator. Qur'an stresses that point by saying: **“In the mountains there are streaks of white and red and jet black and different hues. So too, men and beasts and cattle all have different colors. But the fact is, only those of His servants who possess knowledge are in awe of this and understand.”** (35:27-28) To look at the detail either uplifts us and helps us to understand the vastness and source of this knowledge, and what knowledge is being poured upon us, or we can look with a kind of detail to protect our own ideology.

I'll return to the economist in the news today who said a plan for moving away from this economic crisis cannot be designed by people who think of their ideology first and the design second. But they have to look at the problem first and design the plan from that.

The implication is, if your ideology doesn't fit it, discard your ideology; don't discard the plan that may work. In all this, there are lessons to be in awe of. The form and foundation for a very permanent, successful, uplifted civilization on earth that Allah created for the purpose of attaining a level of physical, mental and emotional status and perfection lies in understanding what is in Qur'an. It invites human beings to study and reflect upon its own eternal message, to reflect upon the physical world and observe how it works, to find out the secrets of our own power, and to use that power with knowledge, care, concern, compassion, mercy, and understanding. The secrets of our own capabilities lie within the physical world.

In Qur'an Allah Swt stresses that people with knowledge will find the signs within themselves, hidden from the people who are blind. Blind means ignorant. The following verse emphasizes it:

Do you think Allah Swt has subjected all things in the heavens and the earth to your use, and has made its boundaries grow to you in exceeding measure, both seen and unseen? Yet there are people who dispute about God without knowledge, without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them. (31:20)

Again and again in the Holy Qur'an, Allah reveals that there is a tremendous amount of knowledge and wisdom to be gained in the creation of the heavens and the earth, but it is known and perceivable to those who can see, who endeavor to reflect, who try to understand the universe, the world they live in, and try to apply the attributes of Allah to that world, and strive hard to be sincere and humble human beings, and say "Astaghfirullah" when they make mistakes. Is that easy to do? No. Is it easily accepted?

No. The new president, 18 days in office, sits there and says something you haven't heard in 8 years. "I screwed up." He said it 5 times in 5 minutes. Is he lauded for that? No. It was that kind of honesty that got him into office. But now, the world is different. Now it's political. Some of us wonder: such a person should maybe say, "I wish I had come into office being able to build on what had come before. But instead, I'm running a septic system business. I have to pump out all the stuff from the septic tank first." That's not his attitude either. His attitude is, "Let's see if we can change things around by building." That's exactly what Allah Swt is asking us to do. He may say, "My father was born a Muslim and became an atheist, and I became a Christian," but if he keeps thinking and talking this way, not only is he a Christian, he is also a Muslim. I'm not here to talk about Obama, but about knowledge, how knowledge can be used. An educated person, with faith, who has a broad view, who is not restricting himself in a partisan way (meaning in a sectarian way) sees things differently than people who are ignorant and who are blind, and who are ideologues. I'd rather call them "ideo-clogs."

Again and again, Allah tells us about this knowledge, and [about] those who can see it, and [about] the people who are blind [who] can see nothing. Here we see stressed the importance of knowledge and the purpose of creation, and it gives a clue to the mystery of the universe. Do we need to have only religious signs that tell us when we are misguided? Do the devils come out of the trees and descend upon us like bats from the sky in an Armageddon type of symbolism? No. All the bounty can go away. All the benefits can be gone. All the 401(k) benefits, gone. Jobs will be lost. The workers will no longer work. Unemployment will go from 3% to 7.5% . 700 million jobs lost in one month—not lost. Nobody lost their job. It was ended, finished. There is no more work. This is a very modern message. It gives a clue to the history of the universe, and how we

can find the hidden treasures that are right here, like the men in the field story.

The father leaves his treasure to his sons, saying it is in the field. The three sons go dig and dig and dig to find it. Finally, after weeks of digging, they come to realize *that* was the treasure of the field, to till the field and to plant the seeds. He left them the field itself. I like the image we have been given on tv and radio in the past few days. The President stands up and says, “There is no silver bullet to cure this.” I think it is the perfect image. The silver bullet is used to kill vampires (or werewolves) people who suck your blood. . I think that is a perfect image of Congress, and the people they serve in Wall Street and industry: bloodsuckers, blood drinkers. Then there was the story of Dhul Nun. *The legend was there was a treasure near a statue that said, “The treasure is where the arrow falls.” So everyone came and shot off arrows in all directions, and dug many holes. But there was no treasure. Finally, Dhul Nun (or perhaps a shaykh) comes at noon and held the arrow and let it drop at the feet of the statue. He dug there, and found a great treasure: not jewels or money, but tools—shovels, spades and tools for tilling the land. That was the greatest treasure of all because it allowed sustainable growth.*

This is the kind of knowledge and understanding that we have available to us if we know how to acquire it. The acquisition of knowledge can provide us with a clue to the purpose of creation, just like the tools provided a clue for what could be done with the land. It opened up new doors to the secrets of the physical powers in the world that can be used by people with knowledge. Allah provided everything in this physical world to sustain us, and in the holy texts all that will sustain us in the hereafter. All it takes to gain that knowledge is to use our intellect and our humility to make these potentialities real. People who are endowed with that capability are conscious of the existence of Allah; therefore, they are standing in awe of Allah Swt, “My God, how could you have created

such a complete and complex universe? What is it you have done, and what is it we have done to deserve this? How can we make the best use of this?”

Allah says, **“And if they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflow because of what they have recognized of the truth. They say, ‘O Lord! We believe. Write our names down among those who are witnesses.’”**

(5:83) The consciousness of Allah Swt is the one point of remembrance of Allah Swt. That allows us to ponder over the phenomenon of nature and feel the Divine presence and apply the attributes of Allah to our own lives. Even people who are thoroughly wrapped up in the attraction of the material world can feel close to Allah Swt when they are struck by some terrible evil or some terrible catastrophe of loss, when they feel that all their material links they have don’t help them. This is the time of opportunity for believers, because then they too will call upon Allah Swt. No doubt.

Seek knowledge from the Qur’an, the Torah, the Injil, from whatever the holy text is Allah has provided in this universe. There is no doubt that what ever difficulties human beings are faced with, they will then realize their helplessness and remember Allah Swt. It’s better to remember Allah Swt before we are struck with these problems, obviously. The Qur’an says, **“When trouble touches people they cry to their Lord, turning back to Him in repentance.”** (30:33) I want to stress today that there are very few of us who are so corrupt that we cannot see anything of Allah’s presence. Most people can see. We just have to touch them directly. Just think how often we would have elections if there were performance standards for members of Congress. Daily?

In every society, everyone experiences some kind of strange event, some circumstance,

some coincidence in their lives, some challenge that tells us there is some power greater than ourselves. I don't mean the guys who get 40 million dollar a year salaries. We have to look to that and let it kindle our desire for knowledge. That power that is greater than ourselves also controls the greedy. So let's seek knowledge in new ways and hopefully continue to do so in the days to come as we talk about our own community, our own beliefs, and as we come to this *masjid*, sit in prayer, and pray for others as we have had the opportunity to do this week. And use the methods, because they are given to us in order to unlock the secret treasure buried just below where we are standing or sitting.

Asalāmu aleikum. Du'ās.

SECOND KHUTBAH *Du'ās.*