



In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God and peace be upon His Messenger, and his family and Companions and on those who summon people to his message

How many of us, Muslims think that knowledge is about completing a degree in one of the secular fields or sciences while having the basic knowledge of Islam that requires one to perform obligatory acts of worship?

What is knowledge?

Ilm is knowledge in Arabic, and its usages are both general and specific. In general usage it means any type of true information, and when used under the category of *Istilaah*: meaning of the word moving from its original meaning to a specific meaning by scholars it is made specific to the knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah.

In His Book, Allah refers to “*ilm*” knowledge as He taught His Prophets and Messengers and sought others to seek knowledge through His signs and teachings as He says in *Surah Al Baqarah*; verse 31:

“And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, “Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.”

He gave Musa (a.s) and His people the criterion (knowledge of what is right and wrong) as He says in *Surah Al Baqarah* verse; 53: *“And (remember) when We gave Musa (Moses) the Scripture [the Taurat (Torah)] and the criterion (of right and wrong) so that you may be guided aright”*.

And Allah also says in *Surah Ibrahim*; verse 5: *“And indeed We sent Musa (Moses) with Our Ayat (signs, proofs, and evidences) (saying): “Bring out your people from darkness into light, and make them remember the annals of Allah. Truly, therein are evidences, proofs and signs for every patient, thankful”*

These verses are clear proof that Allah provided mankind with knowledge, knowledge that would benefit him on earth, and He also sent the angels (Jibraeel a.s) and prophets to guide the Messengers as he sent Khidr to Musa (a.s) as He advices us in *Surah Al Khalf*; verse 66: *“Musa (Moses) said to him (Khidr) “May I follow you so that you teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)?”*

Here, Khidr was a slave of Allah who had knowledge of certain things that Musa (a.s) did not know and Allah directed Musa (a.s) to learn from him. There are many lessons to be derived from this story. Although Musa (a.s) was a prophet and a messenger who was given the miracle of Magic, prophets also required to gain more knowledge, humility, patience, etc.

And Allah sent his angel, Jibraeel (a.s) to Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessing be upon him) with the final revelation of the Quran.

When the Quran was revealed to His Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) the very first order sent down to him in *Surah Al Alaq; verses 1 - 5*: “*Recite in the name of your Lord who created, Created man from a clinging substance. Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous - Who taught by the pen -Taught man that which he knew not*”.

The lesson here is that although the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) was illiterate, Allah gave him the ability to bring out from within him the knowledge that Allah required him to acknowledge, and thus each one of us has the capacity to bring out the natural disposition of knowing (seeking knowledge of the religion) our Lord, Most High and Exalted.

And He also says in *Surah Taha; verses: 114* “*So high [above all] is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge" (Rabbi Zidnee Ilmee)*

Here Allah requires the Prophet (peace and blessing upon him) to learn and understand the *Shariah* so that he is able to guide those who follow him. The last verse is also used as a supplication (*dua*) by seekers of true and beneficial knowledge of the religion (*deen*).

Therefore, in Islam, knowledge is specific to *Ilm al Sharie*, which has been cascaded down to us from the Prophets and Messengers (peace and blessing be upon them all).

The righteous companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) gained “*ilm*” knowledge from him. Likewise the inheritors of the Prophets and Messengers are the scholars. The Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) said: “*...and certainly the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets and the Prophets did not leave wealth as an inheritance, they only left behind knowledge, so whoever takes from it, has taken an abundant portion...*”

In *Surah Sabah; verse 50*: Allah also refers to the human nature of the Prophet (please and blessings be upon him) and says: “*If I should err, I would only err against myself. But if I am guided, it is by what my Lord reveals to me. Indeed, He is Hearing and near.*”

Benefits of Knowledge

Knowledge reaps benefits, in Islam, the greater the act of worship is, the greater the way to it. For example one of the greatest and obligatory acts of worship is *Salah*. Therefore, to perfect our *Salah*, we need to have the correct knowledge as to how it is performed through the commands of Allah in His Book and the guidance of His Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) as the validity of worship is only based on correct knowledge.

The knowledge here refers to having the knowledge of the verses of the Quran to be recited in ones *Salah*, the pillars of *Salah*, the types of *Salah*, obligatory and voluntary *Salah*, the method on how the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon) prayed and so on. Therefore greater the knowledge on how to perform *Salah*, the greater the reward of its actions.

When the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) said “*If Allah wants good for a person, He makes him understand the religion. I am just a distributor, but the grant is from Allah. (And remember) that this nation (of true Muslims) will keep on following Allah's teachings strictly and they will not be harmed by anyone going on a different path until Allah's order (the Day of Judgment) is established.*”

Here, the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) clarifies that all that is good or praiseworthy comes from comprehending the religion (the Quran and Sunnah) and he is only a Messenger guiding us to seek knowledge of the religion which would lead us to righteousness and reward in the Hereafter.

And the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him) also encouraged us to seek knowledge said:

"Allah makes the way to Jannah easy for him who treads the path in search of knowledge"

And no doubt, this is an advice from the greatest of all of Allah's Prophets and Messengers. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) advises us to seek knowledge, but not any type of knowledge, here he requires us to seek knowledge of the religion, the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Secondly, true knowledge is from being able to understand the revelation in its original script which Allah chose to reveal it. Arabic was known to be widely spoken amongst the Arabs in the highest linguistic form before the advent of the last Prophet (peace and blessing upon him).

People who accepted Islam during the widespread of the Islamic civilization were not necessarily Arabs but they sought Islamic knowledge by their own eagerness to learn their religion and studied the language in order to comprehend and act upon it.

Shaykh-ul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah said *"...the Arabic language is from the religion and knowledge of it is an obligation. Understanding the Quran and the Sunnah is an obligation, and they cannot be understood except by understanding the Arabic language. Whatever it takes to complete an obligation is in itself an obligation."*

Scholars including, Ibn Hajr in Fath al Bari agree that the word *ilm* refers only to Islamic Knowledge. He says it is a clear proof of the superiority of knowledge, hence what is meant by knowledge is the Islamic knowledge, or *Ilm al Sharie*. This becomes obligatory to know to fulfill the requirements of fully understanding the *Shahadah*, the meaning of *Tawheed* (His Oneness), Names and Attributes of Allah, the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings upon him), the fundamental principles of Islam, the pillars of *Eemaan*, Allah's commands and prohibitions, etc.

Therefore seeking knowledge is compulsory in Islam. And true and beneficial knowledge refers to the knowledge of the Quran and Sunnah recorded in the Arabic Language which provides us a true and accurate understanding of the meaning of the guidance that Allah refers to in *Surah Al Baqarah; verse 2 wherein He says: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah"*

Meaning the Quran and the Sunnah is for believers who understand in its guidance and act upon it.

Istilaah (e.g. in General usage (Luga), Bida'ah means anything that is new and innovated and in Istilaah, it means opposite of Sunnah)

Quran: 2:31

Quran: 2:53

Quran: 14:5

Quran: 18:66

Quran: 96:1-5

Quran: 20:114

Reported by Abu Dawood, At-Tirmidhee and Ibn Hibbaan

Quran: 34:50

Bukhari

Muslim

Quran:2:2