

Lesson 10

4-15-10 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 435-438.

Summary

In conjunction with *taqwa* (God-consciousness), there exists *ilm* (knowledge) and *amal* (practice). For how can we be conscious of God (the Almighty) if we do not have knowledge, and what is the point of having knowledge if we do not act upon it? The Qur'an stresses the importance of knowledge (*ilm*). For example, the **Qur'an (58:11)** states, *inter alia*,

“Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in rank.”

Also, the **Qur'an (39:9)** states, *inter alia*,

“Say, „Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only those who possess intellect take admonition.”

Knowledge has different levels and degrees. There are those who are more knowledgeable than others. Also, some types of knowledge may be better or more beneficial than other types of knowledge. Knowledge is essential for every civilization. Without knowledge, a society cannot survive, let alone move forward. Islam insists on acquiring knowledge. Regarding the Qur'an, what were the first verses revealed?

“Read in the Name of your Lord who created; created man from a clinging mass. Read, and your Lord is the most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.” (Qur'an (96:1-5)).

So, one should acquire knowledge as much as possible. This knowledge does not have to be just religious knowledge. Any knowledge that brings benefit is important. However, as said before, some types of knowledge may be better than other types of knowledge, and it is only natural that knowledge that can benefit one in this life and the hereafter will have greater importance than knowledge that

merely benefits one in this temporary world. *Ilm* helps one come closer to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, in a metaphysical sense. (Jalali, page 436).

For example, one needs to know what is right and what is wrong. Also, when one acquires knowledge, the beauty of this world (our existence) and its complexities naturally become apparent, which may strengthen one's connection with God, the All-Wise. For example, when I was studying physics and engineering, I became aware of some of the magnificent physical theories, laws, and relationships of the Universe, and that made me truly realize that Something must be in charge of all of these things. It does not make sense that this Universe is a product of randomness. There is no limit in acquiring knowledge. The **Qur'an (12:76)** states, *inter alia*,

“We raise in rank whomever We please, and above every man of knowledge is one who knows better.”

We should always try to learn more. Furthermore, following any creed without knowledge is *haram* (forbidden) in Islam. The **Qur'an (5:104)** states

“And when they are told, ‘Come to what Allah has sent down and [come] to the Apostle,’ they say, ‘Sufficient for us is what we have found our fathers following.’ What, even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided?!”

One cannot just say my ancestors or family did this and so I will also do this. What if it is completely wrong and against Islam? No, one must break the chain of ignorance by acquiring knowledge (of course, issues of conflict with family must be dealt with in a respectful manner and with wisdom and tact). The *ahadith* (traditions) also stress upon the topic of knowledge. They mention that *whoever has knowledge is rightly guided and that whoever does not know may go astray*. (Jalali, page 437).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that *it is a duty to seek knowledge*. He also said to *learn from those who know*. Additionally, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said, “Strive to acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave.”¹

From a personal point of view, knowledge and education have truly benefited my family. My grandparents were poor farmers in India. My father told me that when he was young, sometimes there was not enough food to eat. However, my father was able to get an education and become a pharmacist. Eventually, he had an opportunity to come to the United States to practice pharmacy, provide for his whole family, and properly educate his children. The education he acquired allowed him to do all of this. All praise is due to Allah, the All-Generous.

Today, I am able to provide for my family because of the education I received, the education my parents worked hard for to provide for me. Without education, I am not sure where I would be. I may have been in India struggling to get by. I know other people who did not pay much heed to education, and they always tell me that they regret not studying because of the lack of opportunities or obstacles they are

facing. Now, please do not get me wrong. I am not saying that being a farmer or living a certain type of lifestyle is bad and that one should become educated only to live comfortably.

Actually, Allamah Tabataba'i identifies *ahadith* regarding the virtues of farming.² For example, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said that "A Muslim who plants a tree or grows a crop of which people, birds and grazing animals eat receives the reward for almsgiving."³

All I am saying is that education was able to benefit my family. Even if you want to be a farmer, be an educated farmer. Why? Because knowledge will help you be a better farmer. For example, you may learn how to grow better crops or you may learn how to farm more efficiently. Or, you may truly appreciate farming and be thankful to God while some other farmers may still be stuck in their ignorance and superstitions.

Acquiring education or knowledge does not only mean getting a degree (*e.g.*, students may sleep in their university classes and not study, but as long as they pay their money and get a piece a paper at the end, they apparently are qualified as educated). One can read, study, ponder, and learn without entering the business world of modern academics. You see, knowledge, as mentioned before, has many levels and types. Knowledge can be used to benefit oneself and/or others in this material world, knowledge can help oneself to fight off superstition and ignorance, and knowledge can help one get closer to Allah (the Most High). No matter what you do, acquire knowledge.

1. Tabataba'i, Muhammad Husayn. *Islamic Teachings: An Overview*. Trans. R. Campbell. Alavi Foundation, 2000, page 158. 47

2. See Tabataba'i, page 196. 48

3. Tabataba'i, page 196. 49

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