

***The Pursuit of Knowledge***  
***(Anniversary Meeting: Beginning Year 14)***



Prepared for:  
**Quran Study Group**  
**28 Sha'baan, 1442 / April 10, 2021**

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## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Surely all praise is due to Allah the Omniscient, the Wise; Sustainer of All that Exists. He is the One Who taught the Quran and created the human one. Then, He sent the Book down onto the heart of His servant and messenger, Muhammad, so that he would take us from the darkneses into the light, by His permission. And, He is compassionately responsive to His servants. We glorify Him with praise and we seek forgiveness from Him. We ask him for all good and we seek refuge with Him from every evil. Then, we bear witness that there is no god except Allah and we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.*

### About the Quran

هَذَا بَلَّغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا بِهِ، وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌُ وَاحِدٌ وَلِيَذَّكَّرَ  
أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

*This is an eloquent message for the human ones, that they will be warned by him (the message) and so they will know that He is only One to worship and serve. And, so that those of deep understanding will repeatedly remember.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 14: ayah 52)

As we begin our 14<sup>th</sup> year of monthly gatherings for the purpose of gaining knowledge from the Book of Allah, it seems very appropriate to focus on our process and evaluate our progress. *Are we sure footed on this path? Are we acquiring what is beneficial? Has our understanding deepened? Are our hearts expanding in love and appreciation ad respect and honor and desire for the guidance, mercy and wisdom embedded in the Noble Message? Are we companions of the Book seeking to deepen that relationship and bond with others who have taken the same path?*

In the ayah above the word **اذن**, which is translated as “*this*”, is referring to the Quran / the Kitaab and it is a message or words having particular and noteworthy characteristics. They reach the intended target and attain the desired goal. There are three stated purposes in this ayah: 1. *that human beings will be warned;* 2. *that they will factually know of the Oneness of Allah (tauheed);* 3. *that those whose deeper comprehension is active will find repeated occasions that stimulate remembrance.* These two final purposes are related to innate knowledge, the knowledge inherited from the initial lessons, the knowledge that is part of human reality.

The two repeated purposes stated for Messengers in the Quran are مُبَشِّرِينَ و مُنذِرِينَ – givers of good news and warners.

يَن... و مَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَ مُنذِرِينَ

***And We only send the Messengers as givers of good news and warners ...*** (Interpretation of Quran Surah 18: part of ayah 56). Also see: Surah 2: 213; Surah 4: 165; Surah 25: 56 and Surah 48: 8

The nature of these messages generates opposite emotions – hope and happiness and fear and apprehension.

### **Commentaries**

**Study Quran:** *People are meant to reflect deeply and ponder over the Quran’s verses in order to understand the fact that He is the One God. This awareness will then cause them to worship Him truly and turn away from every kind of false god, such as the passing attractions of this world, their own caprices, or Satan.*

**Ibn Katheer:** *That they may be warned thereby, or to receive and draw lessons from it (the Quran), using its proofs and evidences that testify that there is no true deity except Allah.*

**Abdullah Yusuf Ali:** *Here is another aspect of the Truth of Unity. God – الله -being One, all justice is of one standard, for Truth is one, and we see it as one as soon as the scales of phenomenal diversity fall from our eyes. The one true Reality then emerges. Blessed are those who treasured the Truth in their souls already in their life of probation.*

### *The Pursuit of Knowledge*

فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِذُنُوبِكُمْ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ ﴿١٩﴾

*And, know (each of you) that certainly there is no deity except Allah. So, seek forgiveness for your sins and for (the sins of) believing men and believing women, for Allah knows your moving about and your place of dwelling.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 47: ayah 19)

Knowledge of the Unity / Oneness/ Tauheed of Allah is the governing knowledge. Without this certainty, all other knowledge is flawed. Without this central and balancing anchor human intellect can be corrupted. The Quran, particularly the beginning suwar (*plural of surah*), are full of educational ayaat to stimulate and purify our realization of Allah – i.e. *Know that Allah...; Don't you know for a certainty that Allah ...?*

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ  
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

*Don't they know that Allah is He who accepts the repentance from His servants and He receives the charity and, that surely Allah, He is the One Who Turns (to you) Often, the One Who Responds With Compassion.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 9: ayah 104)

There are ayaat about His presence – Surah 2: 194; Surah 9: 36, ayaat about His greatness (knowledge, wisdom, vision, etc.) – Surah 2: 209, 231, 235, 244, 260, 267, and ayaat of His stern and strict punishment – Surah 2: 196; Surah 3: 4 and

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾

*Know that Allah is surely severe in retribution and that Allah is, without doubt, Forgiving, Compassionate.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 5: ayah 98)

We are instructed, we are ordered, and we are questioned.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا اسْتَجِيبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا  
يُحْيِيْكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحُوْلُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهٖ ۗ وَاَنَّهُۥ  
۞۲۴۞ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ

**Oh, you who believe, strive to respond to Allah and His Messenger as He calls you to that which gives you life. And, know that Allah comes between a person and her / his heart, and that it is certain to Him you will be gathered.** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 8: ayah 24)

**Doesn't Allah clearly know what is in the chests (hearts) of all the creation?** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 29 part of ayah 10)

This question yields many thoughts about the “knowing” of Allah, but also about the reality of beings – all beings; that they have hearts and that there are contents in those hearts and that Allah is considering, with His infinite knowledge, the contents of those hearts.

Allah – عزّ و جَلّ – teaches us and gives many imperative statements insisting that we know, from the beginning of revelation to the end. For example:

اَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ  
۞۱۞ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ۞۲۞

**Read / recite with the Attribute of your Evolver Who has created. He created the human being from a clinging clot.** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 96 ayaat 1 – 2)

The very first word of Revelation indicates that we have knowledge given to us by Allah, and that we must access it with the guidance and presence of Allah. We know by the words of Allah that He is the Instructor.

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ  
۞۴۞ عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمِ ۞۵۞

**The One Who teaches by the pen; teaches human ones what they did not know.** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 96: ayaat 4 -5)

Then, Allah, in Quran, and the Prophet, in Hadith, instruct us to seek knowledge.

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا ﴿٢٤﴾

**Do they not, then, intensely stud the Quran? Or, are there locks on some of the hearts?**  
(interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 47: ayah 24)

The Prophet said: **“Seeking knowledge. Is an obligation for every Muslim.”** (Recorded by Ibn Majah and Baihaqi)

### Seeking Knowledge

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَسَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧﴾

**And We did not send before you any except men to whom We gave revelation. Then, ask the People of Remembrance (who remember the Scriptures), if you don’t know.** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 21: ayah 7)

**Commentary – Study Quran:** Some understand “People of the Reminder” to mean the learned people among Jews and Christians ... who would be able to tell the Quraish that God always sent human beings as prophets and messengers.

With the message contained in this ayah, one can see how Allah honors and holds in esteem people – individuals and groups – who have knowledge, who guard knowledge and who share knowledge. In Quran, Allah asks:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَنْتِ عَانَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةً رَبِّهِ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾

**Is the one who spends the night as a devoted servant prostrating and standing in apprehension of the final time and hoping for the Mercy of her / his Determiner? Say, “Are those who know equal to those who don’t know?” It is only those possessing deep understanding who receive the reminder.** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 39: ayah 9. Also see Surah 13: 19)

Note that “the final phrase of the rhetorical question is elided, implying “Is he like those mentioned in the previous verse?” Or, is Allah just leaving the reader to fill in the missing words. This is one of the styles used by Allah in Quran.

Also, Allah (swt) records the story of Prophet Musaa (as) in search of knowledge. He opens this story with words that show Nabi Musaa’s determination.

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ  
الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾

*And when Musaa said to his assistant “I will not quit (this effort) until I reach the junction of the two seas or until much time has passed.”* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 18: ayah 60)

Knowledge is valuable enough to expend time and effort in the pursuit of it, to fine tune the heart to recognize beneficial knowledge and to be bold and confident enough to insist that it should be given to you.

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِمَّا  
لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾  
قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

*Then, they found a servant from among our servants to whom We had given mercy from Ourselves and whom We taught knowledge from Our own presence. He (Musaa) said to him, “May I follow you in order that you will teach me from what you were taught as correct manners of acting?”* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 18: ayaat 65 – 66)

This individual, whom Musaa encountered, is said to be Khidr or Khaader (*The Green One*) because wherever he prayed or stood, everything around him became green. He is considered by some to be a Prophet, as he was given direct and immediate knowledge from Allah.

**Commentary – Study Quran:** *Upon encountering Khidr, Musaa immediately asks ..., which reveals Moses’ genuine quest for inner knowledge for its own sake, his lack of pride and his willingness to humble himself before one more knowledgeable than himself, despite his own station as a prophet.*

Then, when one recognizes the blessing given it is incumbent on us to be grateful.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَىٰ  
كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

*And, of a certainty, We gave Da’ood and Sulaiman (as) particular knowledge and they both said, “Praise belongs to Allah, the One Who has favored us above many of His believing servants. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 27: ayah 15)*

### Limits of Knowledge and Caution in the Pursuit

#### Limits of Human Knowledge

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

*They (humans) know the apparent of the life of this (physical) world but, as to the finality they are heedless. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 30: ayah 7)*

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ ط  
وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ  
تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

*Certainly, with Allah is the knowledge of the Hour, and He repeatedly sends down the rain, and He knows what the wombs carry. And no person / soul has knowledge of what s/he will earn tomorrow. Nor is any one informed regarding in which land s/he will die. Indeed, Allah is the Knower, the Well Aware. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 31: ayah 34)*

The five things mentioned here are also contained in a Hadith related by Ibn Umar, “*The keys of the unseen are five and no one knows them except Allah. None knows the time of the hour except Allah; none knows what is hidden in the wombs except Allah; none knows what is in store for tomorrow except Allah; no one knows in which land they will die except Allah; and no one knows when (and where) it will rain except Allah.*”

“*If Allah wants to take the soul of a servant in a particular land, He would place within that servant a need such that s/he would not cease until s/he had reached that land.*” (Study Quran)

#### Limits of Angelic Knowledge

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ  
أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾



قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ  
الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾

*And He taught Adam the distinguishing reality of beings, all of them. Then, He presented them to the Angels and said, “Inform Me about the nature of these beings, if you are truthful.” They said, “Glorified are You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us over time. Surely You, You are the All Knowing, the Wise.”* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 2: ayaat 31 – 32)

### Limits of Jinn Knowledge

فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةٌ الْأَرْضِ  
تَأْكُلُ مِنْ سَعَتِهِ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَنْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ  
مَا لِبَشَرٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴿١٤﴾

*Then, when We decreed death for him (Prophet Sulaiman), nothing indicated his death to them except a small creature of the earth eating his staff. Then, when he fell down, the Jinn clearly saw that if they had known the imperceptible, they would not have continued in the humiliating punishment (of their tasks).* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 34: ayah 14)

وَأَنَا لَا نَدْرِي أَشْرَأُ رِيدَ يَمَنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْ أَرَادَ بِهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

*And, truly, we are not certain whether evil is intended for those on the earth or if their Evolver wants right guidance for them.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 72: ayah 10)

### Caution in the Pursuit

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ  
أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

*And, don’t follow after that of which you have no knowledge. For surely, the hearing and the sight and the feelings (sentiments), all of them will be asked about.* (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 17: ayah 36)

**Commentary – Study Quran:** ...one should not follow a path or a guide without knowing whether one will be led or mislead ...

**Wisdom of the Servant**

*Know that Allah sends down decrees upon them and at the same time conveys to them illumination (helping them to bear the decree). The ability to bear such decrees is from their Lord, not from within the people themselves! Thus, people are strengthened under every hardship and are able to endure every difficulty. (The Book of Illumination)*

**DUAH**

رَبَّنَا وَعَايِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلَىٰ رُسُلِكَ وَلَا تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا

تُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ ۝ ١٩٤

***Our Sustainer, give to us what you promised by way of Your messenger and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, You do not fail in Your promise.*** (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 3: ayah 194)