

مَكَانِبُ
طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ
وَمُرُقُ تَحْصِيلِهِ

STAGES & MEANS

OF

SEEKING KNOWLEDGE



BY SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SA'IED RASLAN

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USA

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INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah. We thank Him, seek His assistance, and ask for His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evil of our own souls and from our wicked deeds. None can guide whomever Allah allows to go astray, and none can mislead whomever Allah guides. I testify that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah without a partner and that Muhammad (ﷺ) is His servant and Messenger;

Allah says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُونَّ إِلَّا وَآسَمُ

﴿١٠٢﴾ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who believe! Fear Allah {by doing all that he has ordered and by abstaining from all that he has forbidden} as he should be feared. {Obey him, be thankful to him, and remember him always}, and die not except as a Muslim {in

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the state of Islam} {With complete submission to Allah."¹

Allah says,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

"O mankind! Be dutiful to your lord, who has created you from a single person {Adam}, and from him {Adam} he created his wife {Eve}, and from them both he created many men and women, and fear Allah through whom you demand (your mutual rights); and (do not cut the relations of) the kinship. Surly, Allah is ever an all watcher over you." ²

Allah says,

1 - Al-Imran (3:102).

2 - Al-Nisa (4:1).

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﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ
أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا
عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

“O you who believe! Keep your duty to Allah and fear Him, and speak (always) the truth.[70]. He will direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive your sins. And whosoever obeys Allah and his Messenger he has indeed achieved a great achievements.”³

To proceed,

The most truthful speech is the book of Allah (the Qur'an) and the best of guidance is that of Muhammad (ﷺ), the worst of evils are the newly invented matters (in religion), and every innovated matter (in Islam) is a bid'ah and every bid'ah is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the hell fire.

Our Salaf are guided to goodness, persistent on piety, and relentless in seeking and teaching knowledge. And they – may Allah have mercy on them – did not move except with a Sunnah, and they did not remain

³ - Al-Ahzaab (33:70-71).

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still except with a Sunnah; subsequently their method of learning and teaching was upon the Book and the Sunnah without any deviation. The Salaf Salih worked more than they spoke. Their dedication was not initially directed at laying down the fundamentals of Islamic disciplines and authoring books. Rather, they dedicated their life for their students who would follow their life pattern so they would all end up in paradise if Allah wills.

In present time, however, some people who are members of this nation have abandoned their [rich] heritage and started following Westerners whose sole profession is idle talk and mere blabber; not to mention their pretension to have knowledge. Those people not only accused our Salaf wrongly with "Intellectual Sterility" allegedly because our Salafi practical teaching methods were inconsistent with the "Modern methodology" but also leveled a train of serious accusations against this religion. However, Allah is the only One, who knows that religion and our Salaf are innocent of such malicious accusations, and He knows that the modernists are nothing but a group of liars.

In the following chapters, you shall discover some of the major methodological guidelines for education our Salaf have drawn up. You shall end up with the conclusion that our Salaf have been and will always be -as long as Allah wills- in the forefront of any discipline they studied. All trust is placed in Allah.

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Written by

Abu Abdullah, Muhammad Sa'eed Raslan

May Allah forgive him and his parents

FIRST SECTION: STAGES OF LEARNING

FIRST SECTION: STAGES OF LEARNING

The Gradual Strategy:

Allah is the One, who created the human being, and He solely knows what is best for him, what will guide and direct him. He is "al-Rabb" the One, Who handles protection, cultivation, and education of the human being. Allah set education in gradual stages starting from the birth of the human being until death. For instance, the child's parents are ordered to teach him praying—before he reaches puberty—in a gentle yet resolute manner despite the child's unaccountability. However, once the child reaches puberty, the affair becomes serious without any room for play. And if the prayer were to be made obligatory before puberty, it would be an overburden on the child. The religion began as though it was a small child developing, until when its development was complete, the Ummah was aware it was fully developed until the Day of Judgment. And it would be a witness upon the previous nations because it was the seal of the nations.

Initially, the religion started with easiness and gentleness which factored in creating a harmony between it and people's hearts. Afterwards, laws of Halal and Haram were legislated. The initial stage had smoothed out people's hearts and prepared them to refrain from the forbidden acts they previously used to

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commit [i.e. Shirk, usury, consuming alcoholics, etc.]. Without this initial stage, refraining would have been extremely difficult.

Consider the following hadith: Yusuf bin Mahk narrated, "While I was with Aisha, the mother of the Believers, a person from Iraq came and asked, "What type of shroud is the best?" `Aisha said, "May Allah be merciful to you! Does it matter?" He said, "O mother of the Believers! Show me (the copy of) your Qur'an," She said, "Why?" He said, "In order to compile and arrange the copy I have of the Qur'an according to it, for people recite it with its Suras, not in its proper order."

`Aisha said, "What does it matter which part of it you read first? (Be informed) that the first thing that was revealed thereof was Suras of Al-Mufassal where the Paradise and the Fire are mentioned. When the people became firm upon Islam, the verses regarding Halal and Haram were revealed. If the first thing to be revealed was: '**Do not drink alcoholic drinks.**' People's reaction would be, 'We will never leave alcoholic drinks.' And if it had been revealed, '**Do not commit illegal sexual intercourse,** they would have said, 'We will never give up illegal sexual intercourse.'

While I was a young girl of playing age, the following verse was revealed in Mecca to Muhammad (ﷺ):

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﴿ بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوْعِدُهُمْ وَالسَّاعَةُ أَدْهَىٰ وَأَمَرٌ ﴾

“ Nay! But the Hour is their appointed time (for their full recompense), and the Hour will be more grievous and more bitter.”⁴

Surah Al-Baqara (The Cow) and Surat An-Nisa (The Women) were revealed while I was with him.” Then `Aisha took out the copy of the Qur'an for the man and dictated to him the verses of the Suras (in their proper order).”⁵

Ibn Hajar commented, “The phrase **'verses regarding Halal and Haram were revealed,'** signifies the Divine wisdom in the gradual revelation of the Quran. The first ayaat to be revealed were about Tawheed, the promise of paradise for the believing and obedient servant, and a warning of hell-fire for the disbeliever and the disobedient. Following this period, the general atmosphere was prepared to receive the revelation of laws. This is illustrated in her statement, **“Were the law forbidding alcoholic drinks revealed firstly, the people would reject and persist in drinking them.”** The reason of rejection lies in the natural disinclination to abandon long-standing habits.”⁶

⁴ - Al-Qamar (54:46)

⁵ - Recorded by al-Bukhari.

⁶ - Fath al-Bari: 8/657.

The Wisdom Behind The Gradual Revelation Of The Quran

Ironically, the disbelievers had suggested full revelation of the entire Quran all at once. Nevertheless, Allah rejected this suggestion and explained the purpose behind the gradual revelation of the Quran. He says,

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلاً ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ ﴾

“And those who disbelieve say: “Why is not the Quran revealed to him all at once?” Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages (32) And they do not come to you with an argument (to oppose or to find fault in you or in this Quran) except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation (that rebuts their argument).”⁷

⁷ - Al-Furqan (25:32-33).

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Allah also says,

﴿وَفَرَّأْنَا أَنَا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْتَبٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ نَزِيلًا ﴿١٧﴾﴾

“And [it is] a Qur'an which We have separated [by intervals] that you might recite it to the people over a prolonged period. And We have revealed it in stages.”⁸

The original Arabic structure translated as **“And We have revealed it in stages”** places emphasis on the gradual revelation of the Quran for otherwise a full revelation would have caused rejection of the Quran.”⁹ Al-Qurtubi commented.

Other purposes behind the gradual revelation of the Quran:

- 1- To educate this nation in a gradual process in both aspects of knowledge and practice. This general purpose includes several significant dimensions:
 - A- To ease the memorization of the Quran for this Arabic nation. This nation was illiterate. Writing tools were not available for even the rare number of writers. This nation was busy in its daily life and defending sternly its newborn

⁸ - Al-Isra' (17:106).

⁹ - Tafseer al-Qurtubi: 3956.

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religion. Given this atmosphere, a full revelation of the Quran would practically render them disabled to memorize it. Therefore, the Divine wisdom required a gradual revelation in order to ease its memorization and recalling it when necessary.

- B- To ease its understanding.
- C- To prepare them to get rid of their false beliefs, invalid worship and indecent habits. Such could never have happened except with a step-by-step process represented in the gradual revelation of the Quran. Islam aided them to overcome successive obstacles in each step of the way. The method Islam followed is giving precedence to the most critical issues then the lesser ones all the way until they were completely purified without the slightest feeling of discomfort or burden throughout this long process. This policy proved to be very efficient and full of wisdom. It was necessary for the education of this nation in particular because this nation was known for its stubbornness and stern defense of its legacy even if it requires bloodshed for nothing but preserving self-esteem.

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D- To prepare them to embody the true beliefs, valid acts of worship, and upright morals by virtue of this great policy of graduality. For this particular reason, Islam started with weaning them off Shirk and indecency by means of enlivening their hearts by planting beliefs of Tawheed and the eventual accountability [in the Day of Judgment]. They become familiar with these concepts after they were introduced to the proofs of the resurrection, self-accountability, and reward.

The next stage was centered in introducing them to acts of worship. The obligation of prayer was legislated before Hijrah. Zakat and Fasting were obligated in the second year of Hijrah; pilgrimage was the last to be obligated in the sixth year of Hijrah.

- Likewise, the same gradual process applied to ridding of their ill habits. Major sins were strongly condemned then the minor ones were gently prohibited. In addition, deep-rooted habits like the consumption of alcoholics were forbidden in a gradual and wise manner. This forbiddance saved them from an eventual nightmare.

This elaborate plan proved to be insightful and effective as opposed to the arguably civilized nations who went bankrupt in the course of

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banning alcoholics but failed to do so; the American attempt is a live example.¹⁰

Doesn't this Islamic policy prove the superiority of Islam in ruling, behaving, and educating the public? Indeed, it does. History is the best proof of it.

¹⁰ - The United States of America made an attempt in the twentieth century to ban alcoholics. Before issuing such legislation, wide campaign in the media was launched to prepare the American citizens for such forthcoming law. The entire country's institutions were on the run to aid this campaign. Books, pamphlets, lectures, and statistics were published by scholars, doctors, and everyone involved in such wide operation. The amount of money spent on this complain reached approximately 65 million dollars. 9 million pages were written to express the harmful impact of alcoholics. Tens of millions of dollars were spent to pass this legislation. It was passed in 1930 and stated the ban on selling, buying, manufacturing, exporting, and importing alcoholics. Do you know what the result was? Statistically, 200 people died, half a million imprisoned, fines for violation of this law reached 4 million dollars, fortunes worth thousands of millions of dollars were confiscated because of violation, and eventually the U.S government abolished this law by the end of 1933. This wide campaign officiated by the government had not succeeded to instill this law in their citizens, which subsequently led to violation of it and it was later abolished. The reason is that this law had no power over the people's hearts; the kind of power that leads them to respect and obey this law. Quran, on the other hand, banned alcoholics with a single phrase, "Don't consume it." It influenced greatly and led to full obedience. Alcoholics were spilled voluntary. The sole motivator was faith, obedience, and respect to the Islamic laws; not out of fear of government. Summarized from "Usul al-Dawah: 48".

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E- To brace up the hearts of the believers and to arm them with patience, determination, and certainty through the successive revelation of stories of the Messengers and Prophets, their struggle with their respective nations, and the victory, power, and reward Allah prepared for His righteous servants.”¹¹

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ بِالتَّعَلُّمِ، وَإِنَّمَا الْحِلْمُ بِالتَّحَلُّمِ،
وَيَتَحَرَّرَ الْخَيْرَ يُعْطَهُ وَ مَنْ يَتَوَقَّ الشَّرَّ يُوقَهُ

“Knowledge is obtained only through learning, and forbearance is obtained only through embracing it. Anyone who seeks goodness shall have it, and anyone who avoids evil shall be saved.”¹²

Ibn Hajr commented, “The only recognizable knowledge is the one taught by the Prophets and inherited to the succeeding generations.”¹³

¹¹ - Manahil al-'Irfan: 1/55.

¹² - Al-Khateeb recorded it in al-Tareekh. Others recorded it with a different chain of narration. Al-Albani graded it as Sahih in al-Saheehah: No. 342.

¹³ - Fath al-Bari: 1/194.

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The Meaning Of "Graduality" In Knowledge.

Learning knowledge is obviously a step-by-step process as the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us. The scholars of this nation -may Allah have mercy on them- understood this rule perfectly, followed it in their educational life, and taught it to their students.

Husayn said, "A woman came to the class of Abu Haneefah, and he spoke for a lengthy time. She asked a question to him, and his companions, and neither him nor his students had a good answer. She then went to Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman and asked him the same question. He answered her. She returned to Abu Haneefah and said: You all misled me, I listened to your speech, but you did not have a good answer. Afterwards, Abu Haneefah went to attend Hammad's class. Hammad asked him, "Why did you come?" Abu Haneefah answered, "I came to learn Fiqh." Hammad instructed him, "Learn three issues every day and do not exceed this amount until you have a good grip on this discipline." He kept attending the class until he mastered the discipline. And the people used to point him out."¹⁴

¹⁴ - Recorded by al-Khatib.

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Al-Khattib commented, "Every beginner in learning Fiqh should start with a small portion depending on how good his intake is. Allah says,

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا ﴾

"And those who disbelieve say: "Why is not the Quran revealed to him all at once?" Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages."¹⁵¹⁶

Al-Zarnooji -rahimahullah- said, "Imam Sharf ul-Din al-Uqayli - rahimahullah- used to say, "My opinion regarding learning knowledge is in agreement with what our teachers taught us. They used to teach beginners level one books because they are understandable, easy to memorize, enjoyable, and common. A beginner should not write down something he does not understand because it numbs the intelligence and is a waste of time. Instead, a beginner should focus on the task of understanding his teacher through deep thinking and repetition. Significantly, the smaller the portion of one class with repetition the more progress in understanding. A famous saying states: Memorizing two letters is better

¹⁵ - Al-Furqan: 32.

¹⁶ - Al-Faqeeh wa al-Mutafaqih: 2/100.

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than hearing two loads, and understanding two letters is better than memorizing two loads."¹⁷

Al-Ghazali -rahimahullah- said, "A student of knowledge should not start learning a discipline all at one time. He should rather follow an organized strategy starting from the most important discipline because it is impossible for anyone to learn all disciplines in a lifetime. The right thing to do is to learn the most important portions of every discipline. It is strongly advisable for beginners to stick to a single discipline until they finish it and then move to another one. The reason is that some disciplines are organized on levels. A guided student would follow this gradual process."¹⁸

- That which harms knowledge and its people is when the student restricts himself to the gradual study of the subsidiary books that branched off the major books authored by major Sheikhs. Those subsidiary books have inflicted serious damage in the educational process and those involved in it. This damage led most of the students to waste their time in studying them while missing the core fundamentals of disciplines found in the major books.

¹⁷ - Ta'leem al-Muta'alim: 33.

¹⁸ - Ihyaa' Ulum al-Din: 1/53.

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Ibn Khaldoun¹⁹ complained about this saying, "Diversity of terminologies and the multitude of authored books have inflicted serious damage in education because a student is thereby demanded to memorize and recollect all of those terminologies or at least most of them. Certainly, the student's lifetime is not enough to study all of the books authored in a single discipline. This, of course, has caused a significant lack in the acquisition of a given discipline.

For instance, there are books that detail the Maliki School of jurisprudence. A seminal book in this school is named "al-Mudawanah". Multiple explanations on it were authored by ibn Yunus, al-Lakhmi, and ibn Bashir. Furthermore, a student is required to study and distinguish between the various approaches that teach this Maliki School. Those approaches are taught in Baghdad, Qayrawan, Egypt, or in Cordoba, not to mention the approaches that were developed after them. While in reality, a lifetime is only enough for studying one approach only.

If only teachers restricted themselves to teaching their students the basics of any discipline, learning would be much easier and beneficial. However, this above-

¹⁹ - **Translator's Note:** Ibn Khaldūn was an Arab Muslim historiographer and historian. He is regarded to be among the founding fathers of modern sociology, historiography and economics. He is best known for his book *The Muqaddimah*. He was born in 1332 and died 1406.

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mentioned method of education has become as rooted as an inborn nature resistant to any modification or change.

Another instance is found in the books that explain the Arabic language from the book of Sibawayh²⁰ "al-Kitab". Lots of commentaries were written in addition to the copious teaching approaches of different schools in Basra, Kufah, Baghdad, Andalusia; besides the approaches of scholars like ibn al-Hajib, ibn Malik, and others who taught this book. The student is demanded to cover these huge stacks of different books and approaches. It is extremely rare for someone to cover all of them.

²⁰ - **Translator's Note:** Abū Bishr 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān ibn Qanbar Al-Biṣrī, commonly known as Sibawayh, was an influential linguist and grammarian of the Arabic language. His seminal work Al-Kitab was the first written grammar of the language. Despite his significance to the development of the Arabic language and linguistic tradition, Sibawayh was an ethnic Persian and wasn't a native speaker of Arabic, having learned the language later in life. He has been referred to as the greatest of all Arabic linguists and one of the greatest linguists of all time in any language.

Source: Kees Versteegh, *The Arabic Linguistic Tradition*, pg. 4. Part of the *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought* series, vol. 3. London: Routledge, 1997.

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One exception is Ibn Hisham²¹, the Egyptian, who authored a book in grammar that reflected mastery in this discipline similar to that of Sibawayh, Ibn Jinny, and those in the same level as them. He mastered the fundamentals and everything related to grammar. Notably, such an extremely rare example proves that mastery is not exclusive to earlier scholars despite the aforementioned distractions. It all comes down to Allah Who gifts whomever He wills. However, generally speaking, a student who spends his lifetime seeking to learn linguistics, which is merely a tool for the more important disciplines, would not cover the entire subject."²²

- Ibn Khaldoun wrote a very critical and a must-read chapter in his book. Everybody who is in the teaching profession must read, understand, and consider it a measurement to which his teaching performance is measured.

How To Teach Students?

²¹ - His full name is Abu Muhammad Abdullah Jammal al-Deen ibn Yusuf ibn Hisham al-'Ansari. He is Egyptian. He was born in Cairo in 708 H. He died in 761 H. He authored "Sharh Qatr al-Nada wa Bal al-Sada", "Sharh Shudhur al-Dhahab", "Mughni al-Labeed 'Ann Kutub al-'Aareeb" and many others.

²² - Muqadimat ibn Khladoun: 500.

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Ibn Khaldoun remarked, "Education is effective if it follows a step-by-step process of teaching. Firstly, the fundamentals of any discipline are to be taught. The teacher should sum them up briefly to his students. He should be mindful of the student's level of intelligence and his readiness to receive these fundamentals throughout the learning process until the student has a good grip on this discipline.

- By this time, the student should have fostered a "faculty" in this given discipline, however, weak it may be. The outcome of this faculty is preparing the student for a higher stage in learning this discipline. Given this higher stage, the teacher should be able to iron out every single detail of this discipline and avoid generalization. Furthermore, associated differences of opinions in this discipline should be explained as well. This is to be observed all the way until the student masters this discipline at which time his faculty would have significantly improved as well.
- The next stage: the teacher should resolve all the ambiguities of this discipline and clear them all to the student. By the end of this stage, the student would have sharpened his faculty to the maximum.

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Following this method of triple repetition of teaching a given discipline will yield significant and efficient results. There could be some outstanding students who can achieve these results in a lesser time than suggested. Unfortunately, some contemporary teachers are unaware of these effective teaching methods. They not only present the ambiguous and advanced issues of a discipline at the outset of the learning process but also demand the student to resolve these issues. They believe that this will help in advancing the student's intake of this discipline. They burden the student with absorbing huge amount of information. The worst part of it, they mix the advanced parts of this discipline with its beginnings before the student is even ready to build up an idea of what this discipline is.

Notably, the “**readiness**” to receive the content of any discipline is a gradual process. In the beginning, the student is unable to understand anything except minor parts. Therefore, a method of generalization and examples work as a start. Then, development of this readiness through repetition, which pushes the student up to a higher stage of “absorption of this discipline”. Reaching this level will end the stage of readiness and mark the beginning of a higher stage named “**Acquisition**”. Ibn Khaldoun continues,

- Presenting the advanced issues of any discipline at the beginning of the learning process while bearing in mind the student's inability to

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understand besides the difficulty of the discipline itself will undoubtedly lead to some kind of laziness and distaste to continue learning this discipline. This unfortunate result is the product of following wrong educational methods.

- A teacher should not overburden the student with extra material other than the one he is already learning from. The teacher should operate in accordance with the student's ability and readiness to learn; be it a beginner or advanced student. The content of the material is not to be taught in mixture with other information. This should help the student to fully understand the material and sharpen his learning faculty in this particular discipline.

The significance of such faculty in any discipline lies in preparing the student for the advanced level of any discipline. Moreover, it energizes the student to hunger for more and advance to higher levels until he masters whatever discipline he studies. In contrast, failing to observe these methods will paralyze the student's ability to understand, waste his efforts, cast a sense of despair in ever learning a particular discipline, and eventually sever ties with learning.

- The teacher should not extend the intervals of time between sessions because such interruption is a

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major cause of forgetfulness and lack of harmony. This would affect negatively on acquiring the "faculty". On the other hand, continuous, uninterrupted sessions prevent forgetfulness, foster that faculty, and strengthen it. **Acquiring the faculty in any discipline requires constant and persistent repetition of studying whereas it grows weaker with negligence in studying.**

- A rule which must be observed in education is: never teach two disciplines at once. It is very unlikely to master any of them because the student's attention is divided; which would impair the student's ability to understand both of them, and this will probably cause disappointment. On the contrary, devoting the student's attention to one discipline is very likely to yield promising results."²³

The previous elaboration truly sets the fundamental ground rules for education. He deduced them from the book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (ﷺ).

Similarly, one interpretation of the word "Rabbaniyun in Allah's saying,

²³ - Muqadimat ibn Khaldoun: 502.

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﴿وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّانِيَْنَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تُعَلِّمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ

تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

“Be you Rabbaniyun (learned men of religion who practice what they know and also preach to others), because you are teaching the Book, and you are studying it.”²⁴

This word refers to those who teach their students the beginning levels of education before the advanced ones.

Al-Qurtubi commented, “The word ‘Rabbaniyun’ is derived from the origin ‘Rabb’ (i.e. Lord).” People who are described with this attribute raise students to learn the beginning levels of knowledge before the advanced ones. It is as if those people follow the example of their Lord in easing the difficulties. A similar interpretation is attributed to ibn Abbas.”²⁵

Al-Bukhari recorded in a Mu'allaq²⁶ hadith that Ibn 'Abbas interpreted the above-mentioned verse as, "It

²⁴- Al-Imran (3:79).

²⁵ - Tafseer al-Qurtubi: 1364.

²⁶ - **Translator's Note:** Mu'allaq hadith is the one where the author who records the hadith omits a narrator or more from the chain of narration and either connects himself directly to the following

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refers to the wise and prudent people. It is also said: it refers to those who raise students to learn the beginning levels of knowledge before the advanced ones."²⁷

Ibn Hajr commented, "Ibn 'Abbas's hadith recorded by al-Bukhari was reported in full (with its sound chain of narration) by ibn Abi 'Asim as well as al-Khattib with a different chain of narration. Ibn Masoud is reported to have said the same interpretation as narrated by Ibrahim al-Harbi with an authentic chain of narration.

Al-'Asma'I and al-Isma'illi maintained that the word "Rabbaniyun" is originally derived from the word "Rabb (i.e. Lord)". Based on this interpretation, it would refer to educators who target with their knowledge and actions that which Allah ordered. Other interpretation stated by Tha'lab states, "The scholars are described with this attribute because they embrace knowledge."

To sum it up, there has been a difference as to the origin of the word under question; is it derived from the Arabic word "Rabb" or derived from "Tarrbiyah (Education)".

Ibn Hajr continues, "The beginning levels of education refer to the clearest of it whereas the advanced levels refer to the subtle and obscure of knowledge. It is said

narrator of a higher class (of narration) than his or connects himself straight to the companion who narrated the hadith.

²⁷ - Recorded by al-Bukhari.

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also that a cultivating educator/scholar²⁸ is a person who teaches the students the preliminaries of knowledge at the outset of the learning process before teaching the complicated areas of knowledge. Ibn al Arabi said, "A person merits the title of a scholar if such person is knowledgeable, an educator, and a practitioner of such knowledge."²⁹

The scholars of this nation have committed themselves to the rules of proper education explained explicitly in the Quran and the Sunnah or deduced from them. This was the methodology of the righteous Salaf- may Allah have mercy on them all. They followed and taught it to the students of religious knowledge.

A Detailed Explanation Of Teaching Students

Abu Umar ibn Abd al-Barr said, "Learning knowledge follows a must-observable gradual system. To violate this system is considered a violation of the Salaf methodology. Undoubtedly, violating their

²⁸ - **Translator's Note:** if a scholar or educator is described with the word "Rabbaani", it means that he is a person embodies the way Allah educated His creation. Therefore, such person merited such attribute. Another translation that may be equivalent to the English language culture would be: a top-notch scholar/educator.

²⁹ - Fath al-Bari: 1/195.

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methodology intentionally is misguidance while unintentional violation results in errors along the way.

- The first stage of knowledge is: memorizing the book of Allah (Glory be to Him), understanding it, and everything that helps understanding it is a must. This doesn't necessarily mean the obligation of memorizing it wholly, however, preferable for students who seek to be scholars.

Al-Dahhak said, " It is a must for whoever memorized the Quran to be a learned person. A person who memorizes it before adulthood then devotes his time to study Arabic language in order to understand the Quran, this would help him greatly in understanding the meanings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

- The next stage: the student should study the discipline of abrogation in the Quran "Al-Nasikh wa al-Mansoukh" and everything related to it. This involves studying the difference of opinions among scholars as well as their points of agreement. Such a task is easy for whom Allah made it easy for.
- The next stage involves studying the authentic Sunnah, which is the key to the understanding of the Quran, and it opens this door of understanding wide open. Studying the Sunnah should be exclusively based on learning it from the trusted and well-versed scholars whom Allah made as a guard for the knowledge of His religion and

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trustees of the Sunnah of His Messenger
(ﷺ).”³⁰

So, a person who strives to save himself from hell-fire should be addicted to the Quran with sincerity. In addition, such person should follow the Sunnah of the messenger (ﷺ) to the best of his ability. If you need a guide, books of al-Bukhari and Muslim are authentic, well authored, and a Sunnah guide.

Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah said, “None of the authored books is more beneficial than that of Sahih al-Bukhari. However, it does not cover everything. It is not individually sufficient for a student who desires to study religious disciplines exhaustively; since there is an essential need to study other hadith, the statements of jurists and specialized scholars. Every religious discipline has been exhaustively under study. Eventually, covering those disciplines goes as far as Allah guides a person to whereas the blinded will get lost amidst these various disciplines and books.”³¹

Sheikh Ahmad Shakir pointed out the gradual process of studying the books of Sunnah starting numerically from the most important to the lesser important. He said,

³⁰ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi: 463.

³¹ - Majmoo' al-Fatawa: 10/665.

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- 1- The student should give precedence to the two books of Sahih.
- 2- Books of Sunan like Sunnan Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasa'I, ibn Majah, al-Sunnan al-Kubraa by al-Bayhaqi (which is the largest and one of a kind book in recording juristic hadiths), and the two books of Sahih by Ibn Khuzaymah.
- 3- Masaneed (compilations of hadith). Prominently, the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal.
- 4- Books authored to cover the juristic aspect; most prominently the Muta' of Malik then the books of ibn Jurayg, ibn Abi 'Aroubah, Sai'eed ibn Mansour, 'Abdur Razzaq, ibn Abi Shaybah.
- 5- Books that uncovers the anomalies of hadiths.
- 6- Books that cover the biographies of hadith narrators and their credibility.
- 7- Lastly, the student should read extensively history books besides others."³²

³² - al-Ba'ith al-Hatheeth: 134.

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Abu Umar ibn Abd al-Barr said, "You must know that Quran and Sunnah are the origin and the judge of every opinion. Opinions do not judge the Sunnah. It is rather the other way around. Significantly, failing to understand the Sunnah necessarily dooms any attempt to understand its branching disciplines to failure. Therefore, you should memorize the basics and devote your attention to them. And in order to be a true adherent to the rules set by the righteous Salaf, you are required to follow the following steps:

- 1- You should devote your time to memorizing the hadiths, the verdicts mentioned in the Quran, and study the positions of the jurists. The student should use these resources to be an aid throughout the way, a key to understand and analyze the different approaches of thought, and a manual guide through which the student would be able to break down the Prophetic statements with multiple interpretations.
- 2- You should not imitate blindly follow any of the scholars as one would follow the acts of the Sunnah which must be submitted to and where imitation is a must.
- 3- Do not recline to comfort and save yourself the toil the scholars had to go through in order to memorize and comprehend the compilations of hadith.

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- 4- Follow the scholars in their methods of research, comprehension, and study. Thank them for the efforts they exerted and praise them for their correct opinions, which significantly outnumber their incorrect ones.
- 5- Do not free them from mistakes, as they did not claim such thing to themselves.

On the other hand, a student who disregards these rules, goes head to head against the textual proofs with merely his opinion, and wishes to judge them on the grounds of his opinion, such person is a source of misguidance. Moreover, an ignorant person who knows nothing of the above and stepped up to issue Fatwas, such person is even more blinded and misguided."³³

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr detailed what he generally stated earlier about what is meant by 'the basics of knowledge'. He said, "The fundamentals of knowledge are: Quran and Sunnah. The Sunnah is further divided into two categories pertaining the manner that reached us:

- 1- Consensual reporting of hadiths narrated by a group of people to a successive group. Such reports are decisive proofs as long as there is no disagreement. Outright rejection of such proofs

³³ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 470.

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results seeking the perpetrator to repent from such inexcusable acts, otherwise the capital punishment is exacted because such rejection means taking a path other than that of Muslims and disagreeing with the entire nation.

- 2- Hadiths that are reported by trusted and well-versed individuals³⁴. Such reports must be connected throughout the chain of narration without interruption. This category of hadiths entails acting in accordance with them as maintained by the majority of the scholars of this nation. Other groups of scholars maintain that this category of hadith entails action in accordance with them, and they constitute a decisive knowledge."³⁵

I (the author) say: the opinion which considers "Hadith al-Ahad" to entail both action and decisive knowledge is the right position. For more information concerning

³⁴ - This category of hadith is technically called "Ahaad hadiths". This category lacks the condition that must be fulfilled in the first category. Those conditions are: a hadith must be narrated by myriads of narrators- at least ten. This number must exist throughout the chain of narration. This huge number makes it necessarily inconceivable that they agreed to tell a lie. Furthermore, there language of the narration should contain clear-cut words that signify receiving the hadith directly from each other.

³⁵ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 282.

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this particular subject, check the treatise of Sheikh al-Albani that addresses this issue.

The Necessity Of Learning Arabic Language

Another issue that requires much care and devotion is studying Arabic language; because it is the tool to comprehend the objectives Allah embedded in His book and those embedded in the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). Unfortunately, some people, who attribute themselves to the righteous Salaf, neglect this essential principle and sometimes do not even care about it. They may even turn their students away from learning or perfecting the above basics on the grounds that they harden the hearts. However, this indeed is an outright and serious deviation.

Sheikh Ahmad Shakir -rahimahullah- instructed students of Hadith to study Arabic language and literature. He said, "I believe that students of hadith should study Arabic language and literature as much as they can in order to comprehend the Sunnah since its language is spoken by the most eloquent person of all the Arabs."³⁶

The scholars of the Salaf have also endorsed studying the Arabic language. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr said, "In order to

³⁶ - Al-Ba'ith al-Hatheeth: 91.

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comprehend the language of the hadith and the Quran, the student should learn Arabic language, its figures of speech, the usage of its vocabulary, and how to differentiate between its general and specific structures. In short, learning it is indispensable. Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) used to send out letters to the subordinate states containing instructions to learn the Sunnah, the inheritance system, and grammar just as they learn Quran. Ibn Umar used to discipline his children when they make grammar mistakes.

Al-Sh'abi said, "Grammar is as essential to knowledge as salt is for food."

Shu'bah said, "A student of hadith who does not learn grammar is like a burnoose³⁷ with no hood."

Al-Shafi'i said, "Memorizing the Quran elevates one's status, learning Fiqh enhances one's personal prestige, studying Hadith sharpens one's argument to be more convincing, studying Grammar soften one's nature, and knowledge will not protect a person if such person does not protect himself."³⁸

The well-versed scholars of Islam are a shiny example. All of them without an exception not only commanded

³⁷ - **Translator's Note:** a (burnoose) is a one-piece hooded cloak worn by Arabs. "Merriam Webster online dictionary".

³⁸ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 464.

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the language with excellent proficiency but also became an authority whose opinions are highly recognized in this language discipline. The following are some examples to illustrate this point.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Dha'frani said, "I've never seen anyone more eloquent than al-Shafi'i. He was the most knowledgeable. He would recognize any poem once it is read before him."

Al-Rabi' ibn Sulayman said, "I heard ibn Hisham (the author of al-Maghazi) saying that al-Shafi'i was an authority on language."³⁹

Ibrahim al-Harbi said, "All I see when I look at Ahmad ibn Hanbal is a person for whom Allah gifted with the knowledge of the human beings."

Ishaq ibn Rahoiyah said, "I used to study Hadith in Iraq with Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Yahya ibn Ma'een, and many of our colleagues. We used to study the different versions of a single hadith. Once, Yahya pointed out one version. I replied, "Haven't we agreed that this version is authentic?" They all replied: "Yes." Then I said, "How do we interpret it? All of them fell short to come up with an answer except Ahmad ibn Hanbal."

Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah -rahimahullah- used to be a very diligent and studious student since he was a child. He memorized the entire Quran in childhood. Then he devoted his time to studying Hadith, Fiqh,

³⁹ - Al-Intiqaa fee Fada'il al-Thalathah al-'Ai'mah al-Fuqahaa: 92.

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and Arabic language until he literally mastered them despite being a regular attendee in knowledge classes. He delved into studying Arabic and Fiqh. He mastered the book of Sibawayh and excelled in Grammar. Abu Hayan, a masterful grammarian, complemented ibn Taymiyah when he met him. He said, "My eyes have not seen the like of him."⁴⁰

Ibn Hisham commented after discussing a grammatical problem and the standpoints of grammarians regarding it, "This standpoint is adopted by Imam Taqiul-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah -rahimahullah. This standpoint is also selected by the top skilled grammarians."⁴¹

The above-mentioned Ibn Hisham who highly praised Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah is the very same person who is praised in the previously quoted statement of ibn Khaldoun. Ibn Khaldoun said, "The news of the emergence of a prominent grammarian reached us here in Morocco. He was described to be more skilled than Sibawyah. He is loaded with knowledge and his status in Grammar is highly recognized. His approach in Grammar corresponded with that of al-Mousl [a city in Iraq] who followed the approach of ibn Jinny. He

⁴⁰ - Ghayt al-'Amaany: 2/155.

⁴¹ - Sharh Shudhoor al-Dhahab: 49.

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produced some amazing work, which proves how powerful and studious he is."

If we were to track all of the earlier scholars' prominence in the Arabic language, it would take so long; however, the previous examples are enough to prove the point. At any rate, a person is gifted if Allah blesses him with the keys to understanding the language of the Quran and Sunnah. On the contrary, a person whom Allah deprived of such gift would get lost. Allah is the only One, who protects us against such things.

- The student of knowledge should give precedence to the memorization and understanding of the Quran by the help of learning the Arabic language as much as is sufficient for understanding it. Next in precedence comes the memorization of hadiths to the best of the student's ability; the student should start from the two Sahihs and their respective explanations and passing by the books of Sunnan and lastly the Masaneed [compilations of Hadith] as pointed out above by Sheikh Ahmad Shakir. Furthermore, the student should consider the following statement of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) in which he states, "Don't lose track of people's hearts. Enjoy them with witty and humorous words of wisdom as hearts grow bored just as bodies."

Ibn Jum'ah said, "A beginner student of knowledge should not start with studying matters of

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intellectual debate among scholars or among people in general for that matter when it comes to studying the textual and logical texts; because studying such material in the beginning stage baffles the mind.

- Instead, the student should focus on one book that covers a single discipline or various books that cover various disciplines following a strategy chosen by his teacher. However, the student should avoid teachers whose strategy is bound to teaching scholarly debates without having a personal standpoint because the benefit is far less than the harm in this particular case as advised by al-Ghazali.
- The student should not read multiple books at the same time because it is a waste of time and a distraction for the mind. Instead, the student should finish one book or discipline at a time.
- The student should stay clear of shifting from a book to another without finishing the book in hand because it is a sign of boredom and failure.

However, a student who has built up a solid pace and met the qualifications should never leave any discipline without studying it. If it is meant for the student to live longer, he should delve deeper in those disciplines. Yet, if it is meant otherwise, he at least has learned enough to lift up ignorance. The student

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should prioritize the learning process depending on the importance of the discipline or the material. Most importantly, the student should never forget for a second to practice what he studies since it is the sole purpose of knowledge."⁴²

In brief, I believe that ibn Shihab's advice to Yunus ibn Yazid is the most inclusive advice in relation to stages of seeking knowledge. He said, "Yunus, do not go head to head with knowledge because it is full of many valleys. Whichever you choose, you'll never reach its end. At any rate, study it bit by bit and do not ever study it all at once because you'll never achieve a thing if you do so."⁴³

⁴² - Tadhkirat al-Sami' wa al-Mutakalim: 116.

⁴³ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 138.

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Refraining From Sins, Acts Of Disobedience, And Full Devotion To Allah Is The Only Way To Acquire Knowledge.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "Sins breed ill consequences that directly damage both the heart and the body in this life and in the hereafter. One of these consequences is a deprivation of knowledge. For knowledge is a light kindled by Allah in the heart whereas sins put out this light. Imam Malik was full of surprise and admiration when al-Shafi'i displayed his knowledge before him. He noticed his sharp wittiness and high order intelligence. He advised him, "I see that Allah lighted up your heart so do not put it out by the darkness of sins."

Al-Shafi'i -rahimahullah- said,

"I complained to Waki' about my bad memory,

*So he advised
me to refrain from sins*

And said: Know that indeed, knowledge is light

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*And the light of Allah is
not given to the sinner."*⁴⁴

Ibn al-Jazwzi said, "Abu Abdullah ibn al-Jallaa said: I once saw a Christian boy who was very good-looking. Whilst I was looking, Abu Abdullah al-Balkhi passed by and asked me what I was doing? I told him How come a boy with such a face would enter hell-fire?" He hit me on my shoulders and said: 'You'll face the bad consequences of this conduct.' Abdullah ibn al-Jallaa said, "I suffered its bad consequences for forty years when I forgot the entire Quran.

In another version, he says, "I was walking with my teacher Abi Bakr al-Daqqaq and a young boy passed by, and my teacher saw me looking at him. My teacher said, 'You'll face its bad consequences.' I kept waiting for this to happen for twenty years. One night, I slept whilst thinking of it. I woke up and found out that I forgot the entire Quran."⁴⁵

The earlier scholars occupied a very high-level of piety. Imam al-Bukhari, for example, used to be incredibly pious, fearful of Allah, and always repentant to Him.

For instance, al-Bukhari's stationer said about him, "He used to go out for archery a lot; to the best of my knowledge, he was an outstanding sharpshooter who never missed his target except twice. He used to top

⁴⁴ - Al-Jazwab al-Kafi: 54.

⁴⁵ - Talbis Iblis: 277.

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everybody all the time. One time, we went out for archery. We passed by Firabr⁴⁶ and reached a valley leading to a furrow in the river. After we had started, al-Bukhari's arrow broke right in the middle of the brace of an archway over the river. He then took the arrow out, stopped, and instructed us to go back. We did. He called me while sighing deeply and said, "Could you go to the owner of this archway and inform him that we broke the brace of the archway. So, either he lets us replace it or takes its worth of money and forgives us.

I went to the owner of the archway which was Hameed ibn al-'Akhdar and delivered the message. He said gladly, "Send my greetings to al-Bukhari and tell him that I forgive him." I then went to al-Bukhari and delivered the message. He received the news with a smile on his face, and he was so happy. At this particular day, he taught strangers five hundred hadith and spent 300 Dirham in charity.

In another incident, al-Bukhari said to Abu Ma'shar [he was blind], "Could you forgive me Abu Ma'shar? He responded, "Forgive you for what?" Al-Bukhari said, "I once was narrating a hadith, and I saw you moving your head and hands out of enjoyment of this hadith, so I smiled." Abu Ma'shar responded, "I forgive you.

⁴⁶ - Translator's note: A name of a place.

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May Allah shower you with His mercy Abu Abdullah!"⁴⁷

Al-Hakim Abu Abdullah said, "Muhammad ibn Khalid told me that Miqsam ibn Sa'ad said, "Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari used to lead the prayer on the first night of Ramadan when his companions came to pray. He used to recite twenty verses each Rak'ah all the way until the whole Quran is finished. At nighttime, he used to recite between one third and half of the Quran. He would finish the entire Quran every three nights as well as finishing it once every day in the morning during Ramadan. He used to finish it by breakfast. He said, "There is an accepted Duaa (supplication) at the end of each time one is finishing the recitation of the Quran."⁴⁸

This teaches us that divorcing sins and total devotion is an obligation for the student of knowledge since sins corrupt the mind, put out the light of knowledge, and erases all of its blessings.

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "Sins corrupt the mind and put out its light. The mind's ability would suffer a serious damage if its light were to be dimmed. Some of the Salaf said, "A person who disobeys Allah is actually absent-minded. If not so, this person's mind would stop him from falling into sins recognizing the fact that

⁴⁷ - Hady al-Sary: 504.

⁴⁸ - Hady al-Sary: 504.

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he is under the sovereignty of Allah, Who is watching not to mention the witnessing angels. In addition to other influencing factors like the Quran, faith, death, hell-fire, and the consequential loss of both this life and in the hereafter, which is awfully critical if compared to the pleasure felt in sinning. With all of this in mind, could it possible for a rational person to neglect all of this?"⁴⁹

Student Of Knowledge Should Seize The Opportunity Of Learning In Youth:

Allah has favored this Ummah such that the Quran became their central concern. They have been preoccupied with teaching, learning, and memorizing it. Teaching it to children has developed to become a ritual of this religion and an act of worship.

Ibn Khaldoun said, "Teaching Quran to children is an Islamic ritual practiced by Muslims all over the Islamic world because it builds up a solid base of faith and Islamic beliefs in such a young age. Quran has grown to be the center of education and the basic core that shapes faculties. Certainly, learning in youth stays rooted and constitutes a base for what follows. The

⁴⁹ - Al-Jawab al-Kafy: 61.

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outcome is solely dependent on how the base is built and shaped."⁵⁰

You can conclude now that learning in youth has grown as an Islamic ritual particularly when it starts with Quran. It is a golden opportunity to seize before passing away because the future is a total mystery to us except for Allah who knows the unseen. The child at this young age is easily manageable and the chances of him/her emerging successfully if taught at this age are very likely achievable no matter how the child grows old as long as there is a protection against deviation gained by learning in youth.

Ibn Khaldoun addressed learning Quran in youth by saying, "Giving precedence to learning Quran in youth brings blessings and reward; not to mention avoiding the odds of falling into traps of youth's distractions, that would potentially drive the child away from learning the Quran. A child in youth is subservient. However, the child gets loose when he reaches puberty, and the chances of learning plummet significantly. Therefore, parents should seize the opportunity of youth and teach their child the Quran otherwise the chance will slip away and the child will end up with absolutely nothing."⁵¹

⁵⁰ - Muqadiat ibn Khaldoun: 505.

⁵¹ - Muqadimat ibn Khaldoun: 505.

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Al-Hasan al-Basri is reported to have said, "Learning in youth is like carving stone."

Al-Hasan ibn Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Learn knowledge! Though you are young today, tomorrow you will be old. Whoever is unable to memorize, he should write instead."

Youth is a time of activity, free time, and unawareness of life's distractions and therefore Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Learn your religion before you become leaders."

Al-Bukhari commented, "Learn also after you become leaders. The companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) learn at an old age."⁵²

Ibn Hajar said, "The above mentioned report from Umar is recorded by ibn Abi Shaibah from the narration of Muhammad ibn Sirin from al-Ahnaf ibn Qays. Its Isnad (chain of narration) is authentic. Al-Bukhari's comment is meant to dispel any notion that leadership bars from learning. Umar meant that leadership could be an obstacle from learning because a leader's pride may prevent him from sitting in classes like students. For this particular reason, Malik pointed out that a judge should not attend his old class of learning if he was discharged. Al-Shafi'i also said, "If

⁵² - Fath al-Bari: 1/199.

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a young man were to step up for leadership, he would miss a lot of knowledge."

Abu Ubaydah interpreted Umar's statement in his book "Ghareeb al-Hadith" by saying, "It means learn your religion whilst you are in young age before you become leaders, and the pride of leadership hold you back from learning from those below your social status. In-compliance with these instructions will leave you ignorant."⁵³

Notably, knowledge elevates the young or the low status individual to the top while ignorance knocks the high status down to the bottom.

Abu Umar said, "Some scholars maintained that the great person is the scholar regardless of his age while the lowly is the ignorant regardless of the age. Their proof is the following lines of poetry:

Learn since nobody is born a scholar

*And certainly the knowledgeable
is unlike the ignorant*

A leader with no knowledge

Is lowly around his people

Another proof is the incident where Abdullah ibn 'Abbas was called to issue Fatwa while he was young

⁵³ - Fath al-Bari: 1/200.

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as well as Mu'adh ibn Jabal and Utab ibn Usayd who were appointed as state leaders by the Prophet (ﷺ) while they were still young. There are many exemplary scholars whose lives prove this point.

Al-Zuhry said: Umar's session was crowded with reciters; young and old. He asked for their counsel sometimes. He used to say, "Do not let youth stop you from offering your suggestion since knowledge is not underpinned by age; instead, it's gifted by Allah for whoever He wills."⁵⁴

Ibn Hajr mentioned in the biography of al-Bukhari, "Al-Firabry said: I heard Muhammad ibn Abi Hatim, al-Bukhari's stationer, saying: I hear al-Bukhari saying, "I was gifted with the faculty of hadith memorization when I was in al-Kuttab (i.e. Quran school). I asked him, "How old were you then?" He answered, "I was ten years old or a bit younger. After I had finished this school, I went to attend al-Dakhili's classes as well as others."

He was once reporting, "Sufyan narrated from Abi Az-Zubayr from Ibrahim." I said gently, "Az-Zubayr did not narrate from Ibrahim." He scolded me. I told him, "Could you go and check your book." He went to check it. When he came back, he said, "Who narrated from the young kid?" I said, "It is ibn Uday who narrated

⁵⁴ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 2012.

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from Ibrahim." He took the pencil, corrected the mistake in his book, and told me, "You are right."⁵⁵

Muhammad ibn Abi Hatim said, "How old were you when you corrected him?" Al-Bukhari replied, "I was eleven years old." He continued, "When I reached sixteen, I memorized all of Waki' and ibn al-Mubarak's books. In addition, I have become familiar with the opinions of the advocates of reason. Afterwards, I left with my brother and mother to perform Hajj."

He continued, "I started authoring a book about the companions and their successors when I was eighteen. Then I authored the book of at-Tarikh in Madinah by the grave of the Prophet (ﷺ). I used to write it in lunar nights. Mostly, anybody known in history has a story in my book however I chose not to include them all lest of producing a lengthy thick book."⁵⁶

Another instance, Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah used to be a very diligent and studious student since he was a child. He memorized the entire Quran at youth. Then he devoted his time to studying Hadith, Fiqh, and

⁵⁵ - **Translator's note:** Notice that al-Bukhari did not hold back. He corrected him gently. Had he not corrected him, the mistake would have been remained and nobody would have known the right chain of narration. His correction was necessary for the teacher as well as for the students. This incident attests to the aforementioned Umar's statement. It proves how valuable and crucial it is.

⁵⁶ - Hady as-Sary: 502.

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Arabic language until he literally mastered them despite being a regular attendee in knowledge classes. He received multiple Ijazahs⁵⁷ from many highly eminent scholars. Moreover, he studied the big compilations of hadith like Musnad Ahmad, Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Jami' al-Tirmidhi, Sunnan Abi Dawud, al-Nasa'I, ibn Majah, and ad-Dae Qutni multiple times.

The first book in hadith he memorized was "al-Jami' Bayna al-Sahihayn" authored by imam al-Humaydi as narrated by Sheikh Siraj al-Din Abu Hafs Umar. Sheikh al-Islam has attended classes for ibn 'Abd al-Da'im al-Maqdisi besides other contemporaries who share his level. He read the Islamic pivotal books, attended lots of classes, and devoted his time to studying religious disciplines.

Ibn Abd al-Hadi ibn Qudamah said, "Ibn Taymiyah attended classes of over two hundred Sheikhs, studied Musnad of Imam Ahmad multiple times as well as other voluminous and brief books. One of the books he studied was "Mu'jam al-Tabarani al-Kabir". Furthermore, he studied Hadith. He learned handwriting, reading, calligraphy, and math in the

⁵⁷ -Translator's note: It is an official permission, sometimes in writing, from a recognized sheikh expressing that the student has mastered or passed whatever discipline or book studied under this sheikh.

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Kuttab. He memorized the whole Quran, studied Fiqh, and Arabic. He studied the book of Sibawayh analytically until he fully understood it and excelled in Grammar. He preoccupied himself with studying Tafseer until he topped all of his contemporaries. He mastered Usul al-Fiqh⁵⁸ besides other disciplines. He did all of this before reaching twenty years old.”⁵⁹

Keep in mind that the previous quotes merely reminds the reader of the virtue of seeking knowledge. In today's reality, only optimism to achieve something in such a short lifespan is all that is left. I just wanted all of us to realize the self-inherent importance of seeking knowledge. However, if we are destined to miss this opportunity, we should strive to raise our children upon it hopefully they may achieve something; indeed Allah is capable of everything.

“Parents should choose the best for their children and expect success from Allah alone. They should teach their children to be clean and virtuous. They should enrich their character with good manners. When they reach five years old, parents should direct them to memorize knowledge; for memorization at this age is like carving in stone. Regretfully, missing this opportunity by teaching nothing to the child until

⁵⁸ - **Translator's note:** is the study of the origins, sources, and principles upon which Islamic jurisprudence (or Fiqh) is based.

⁵⁹ - Ghayt al-'Amany: 2/155.

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he/she reaches puberty with the lack of determination to seek knowledge causes loss on the child's part."⁶⁰

Al-Khatib narrated that Musa ibn Ali narrated from his father that Luqman said to his son, "Son, seek knowledge in youth because it is extremely difficult to seek it in older age. Son, admonition is as difficult to accept by a rash person as walking on the rugged ground by an old man."

'Abu Bakr said, "Learning knowledge in youth helps rooting knowledge in memory due to less worldly distractions, lots of free time, and an empty mind. The benefit is most likely guaranteed if this opportunity were to be seized. On the contrary, ignoring it until the child grows older not to mention unanticipated change of character and the diminishing of the youth advantages add up to rendering the whole process of learning in old age extremely far away from happening."⁶¹

Learning knowledge in youth potentially increases the chances of achieving the ultimate purpose of the student. For instance, al-Shafi'i -rahimahullah- traveled to Medina in order to learn from Malik -rahimahullah- when he was fourteen years old with no beard on his face yet.

⁶⁰ - Al-Hath 'Ala Hifdh al-'Ilm: 29.

⁶¹ - Al-Faqih wa al-Mutafaqih: 2/90.

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He narrates his own story in seeking knowledge as follows, "I was fourteen when I left Makkah with no beard. I was wearing two Yemeni garments. On the way, I passed by a caravan to whom I greeted with Salaams, and they responded. An old man approached me and requested, "Since you greeted us, you must come and eat with us." I did not know they brought food. Anyway, I accepted his invitation. I saw the people using their five fingers to pick the food and throw it in their mouths. I did exactly like them; so my manner of eating would not repulse them.

I even noticed the old man who invited me looking at me every now and then while I was eating. I finished eating and then I drank water until I was full. I thanked Allah and praised Him afterwards.

The old man then turned to me and asked, "Are you from Makkah?" I said, "Yes." He continued, "Are you from the tribe of Quraysh?" I said, "Yes." But I asked him, "How did you know that?"

He said, "There is lots of food in the city (i.e. Makkah), and a person who likes to accept people's invitations for food likes for them to eat his. This trait marks the tribe of Quraysh."⁶²

I asked him, "Where are you from? The old man responded, "I'm from Medinah of the Prophet

⁶² - The old man wanted to reflect the generosity of al-Shafi'i and that he ate with them for this reason not out of need.

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(ﷺ).” I asked him, “Who is the celebrated scholar and responsible for Fatwa over there?” He responded, “Malik ibn Anas.” I said, “I'm so eager to see him.” He offered, “Don't you see this camel over there? I said, “Yes.” He said, “You can ride along with us until you reach Medina and meet Malik. This is our best manageable camel, and there is room for more in our caravan.” I accepted his offer. Then I asked him, “When will you leave?” He said, “Now.”

They gave me the camel they promised me to ride, and we took off. During our travel, I finished the Quran 16 times; one at night and another in the morning.”⁶³ Al-Shafi'i then narrated his story with Malik including how he learned from him. This whole story took place when he was just fourteen years old. May Allah be pleased with him and have His mercy upon him.

The Student Should Seek Knowledge As Long As He Is Still Breathing:

The student should not feel despair if he gets older without scoring significant achievements. It is possible that a man is lagging at the far end but has resolute determination could reach the lead and become the leader. Allah might keep you until this age in order to

⁶³ - Rihlat al-Imam al-Shafi'i Bi Qalamih (The Journey of Imam as-Shafi'i with his own words): 6.

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make something out of you. So do not look under your feet but instead look ahead and supplicate; for the gates of heaven are wide open. Do not procrastinate if you noticed eagerness to knowledge in your heart and readiness to acquire it. Don't wait until it is too late. You have a purpose, go for it and do not sidestep it. Because if you missed it, you would be like those described in al-Mutanabi's⁶⁴ poetic verse:

Never have I seen more of a serious error in people

*Than the slackness to do what they
are capable of*

The student should acquire more and more knowledge no matter how you are aged. Knowledge, leadership, and prestige should not stop the student from learning more, as knowledge is a lifetime-protracted process from birth till death. You have read the aforementioned quote from al-Bukhari that highlights the companions' endeavor in learning despite their old age.

Ibn al-Mubarak was asked, "For how long do you intend to keep seeking knowledge? He said, "Until death if Allah wills." He responded to the same question in another time, "I will keep seeking

⁶⁴ - **Translator's Note:** Al-Mutanabi is one of the greatest and unique poets in the history of Arabic language.

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knowledge lest the word that would benefit me the most did not come yet."

Al-Mansour ibn al-Mahdi asked Ma'moun, 'Should an old man seek knowledge?' He answered him, "Since ignorance brings blame, knowledge brings praise."

Az-Zarnougi said, "Al-Hasan ibn Ziyad⁶⁵ started learning Fiqh when he was 80 years old, and he had not slept in his own bed for 40 years. Neither prestige nor age held Musa (ﷺ) back from traveling to meet the righteous servant when Allah told him that this servant has knowledge Musa does not have.

This incident is narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari under the chapter: Musa's journey to meet al-Khidr and Allah's saying,"

﴿ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَ مِنَّمَا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا ﴾

"(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)?"⁶⁶

⁶⁵ - He is from Kufa, Iraq. He is a companion of Imam Abu Hanifah. He was a lover of the Sunnah and its followers. He used to study Fiqh under Zuffar and Abu Yusuf. He died in 204H.

⁶⁶ -Al-Kahf (18:66).

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Ibn Abbas narrated that he differed with Al-Hurr bin Qais Al-Fazari regarding the companion of Moses. Ibn Abbas said that he was Al-Khidr. Meanwhile, Ubai bin Ka`b passed by them, and Ibn `Abbas called him saying, "My friend and I have differed regarding Moses' companion whom Moses asked the way to meet. Have you heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) mentioning something about him?" He said, "Yes, I heard Allah's Messenger saying,

بَيْنَمَا مُوسَى فِي مَلَأٍ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِذْ جَاءَهُ
رَجُلٌ فَقَالَ: هَلْ تَعْلَمُ أَحَدًا أَعْلَمَ مِنْكَ؟ قَالَ
مُوسَى: لَا، فَأَوْحَى اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ مُوسَى: بَلَى، عَبْدُنَا
خَضِرٌ، فَسَأَلَ مُوسَى السَّبِيلَ إِلَيْهِ، فَجَعَلَ اللَّهُ
لَهُ الْحُوتَ آيَةً، وَ قِيلَ لَهُ: إِذَا فَقَدْتَ الْحُوتَ
فَارْجِعْ فَإِنَّكَ سَتَلْقَاهُ، وَ كَانَ يَتَّبِعُ أَثَرَ الْحُوتِ
فِي الْبَحْرِ، فَقَالَ لِمُوسَى فَتَاهُ: أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوْينَا
إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ، وَ مَا أَنْسَانِيهِ
إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أذْكَرُهُ، قَالَ: ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغِي،
فَارْتَدَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا، فَوَجَدَا خَضِرًا،

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فَكَانَ مِنْ شَأْنِهِمَا الَّذِي قَصَّ اللَّهُ - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ -
فِي كِتَابِهِ .

'While Moses was sitting in the company of some Israelites, a man came and asked (him), 'Do you know anyone who is more learned than you?' Moses replied, 'No.' So, Allah sent the Divine Inspiration to Moses: 'Yes, Our slave, Khidr (is more learned than you).'

Moses asked how to meet him (i.e. Khidr). So, the fish was made as a sign for him, and he was told that when the fish was lost, he should return and there he would meet him. So, Moses followed the tracks of the fish in the sea. The servant boy of Moses said to him, 'Do you know that when we were sitting by the side of the rock, I forgot the fish, and it was only Satan who made me forget to tell (you) about it.' Moses said That was what we were seeking after,' and both of them returned, following their footmarks and found Khidr, and what happened further to them, is mentioned in Allah's Book."

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Ibn Hajar commented, "This chapter is meant to encourage the students to accommodate the hardships of seeking knowledge. Anything that causes envy begs for enduring its hardships. It is evident that Musa's highly prestigious status a man could ever reach (i.e. Prophethood) had not prevented him from seeking knowledge. Instead, he journeyed for the sole purpose of seeking knowledge. The phraseology of the chapter's title, though, suggests that Musa made a voyage in order to meet al-Khidr; this phraseology is subjected to question because al-Bukhari and others are of the opinion that Musa journeyed on the land. He only sailed the sea on the ship after he met with al-Khidr not before.

However, it can be interpreted to mean that Musa boarded the sea following al-Khidr or that he sailed the sea at the end of the meeting. This hadith proves the following points:

- 1- The legality of debate in knowledge issues as long as there is no stubbornness involved.
- 2- Consulting scholars at occasions of dispute.
- 3- Acting upon the report of a recognized truthful person.

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- 4- Traveling for purposes of not only seeking knowledge but also learning more of it.
- 5- The legality of having provision for the journey.
- 6- Adherence to humbleness at all times. Therefore, Musa was so eager to meet al-Khidr (peace be upon both of them). He acted as an example for his nation to follow him. It also instructs the overconfident to be humble."⁶⁷

The aforementioned statement of al-Bukhari about the companions sums everything I want to say about this particular point. It proves his ultimate understating and knowledge. No one should abandon learning just because of old age since nothing stopped the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) from reaching a high level in knowledge of which Muslims are aware. For instance, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and others from the elder scholars of the companions embraced Islam in an old age but they eagerly learned from the extensive knowledge of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) until they reached the farthest end a person could ever reach (may Allah be pleased with them all).

Abu Khaythamah narrated that Masrouq said, "I kept company with the companions of the Messenger of

⁶⁷ - Fath al-Bari: 1/202.

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Allaah (ﷺ). Their knowledge was like a well of water enough to quench the thirst of everybody on earth. Abdullah is one of those companions."

Al-Albani commented, "The chain of narration of this hadith is authentic, and he is referring to Abdullah ibn Masoud."

Abu Khaythamah also narrated that Abdullah ibn Masoud said, "If the knowledge of Umar were to be weighted on a scale on one side versus the knowledge of the rest of humankind on the other side, Umar's side would top it."

Al-Albani commented, "This hadith's chain of narration is authentic as well as the following one which states, "Abdullah ibn Masoud said: I believe that nine tenths of knowledge died with Umar's death."⁶⁸

If you let me, my reader, I would like to repeat al-Bukhari's statement one more time since it is the most expressive and decisive in this particular matter. He said, "The companion of the Prophet (ﷺ) learned when they were old."

Have Forbearance And Patience

⁶⁸ - Kitab al-'Ilm by Abi Khaythamah Zuhayr ibn Harb al-Nasa'i: 117.

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'Attaa ibn Yassar said, "The best combination ever is forbearance with knowledge."

Ibrahim ibn Adham said, "Nothing is more damaging to the Shaytan than a forbearing scholar. If he speaks, he speaks with knowledge, and if he is silent, his silence is with forbearance. The shaytaan says, "Look at him! His talk is more damaging to me than his silence."

Ibn 'Abd al-Birr narrated that Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I remained doubtful about two issues for two years. I wanted so much to ask Umar ibn al-Khattab about the two women.⁶⁹ However, I have not had the chance to ask him. Finally, he went out to perform Hajj, and I accompanied him. While we are on our way, he went somewhere for the call of nature and asked me to bring a jar of water. When he came back, I helped him with pouring the water and this is where I found the time to ask him about the question. I asked him, "O leader of the believers! Who are the two women who helped each other against the Prophet (ﷺ)? He answered

⁶⁹ - He is referring to the two women referred to in this verse, "If you two turn in repentance to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined; But if you helped each other against him, truly Allah is his Protector, and Gabriel, and (every) righteous one among those who believe,- and furthermore, the angels - are his helpers." At-Tahrim: 4.

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before I even finish my question, "They are Hafsa and Aishah."

Ibn 'Abd al-Birr commented, "Nothing stopped Ibn 'Abbas from asking Umar for two years except for Umar's prestigious status. This part is mentioned in the following hadith narrated by Ibn Shihab:

Ibn Abbas said, "I remained for two years refraining from asking Umar ibn al-Khattab about a hadith only because of his highly-prestigious status. However, I grabbed the chance when he was on his way to Hajj answering the call of nature somewhere. Afterwards, I spoke with him alone after he came back. I asked him, "O Leader of the believers! I wanted to ask you about a hadith for two years, but nothing stopped me from asking except your highly prestigious status. Umar responded, "Don't be stopped by this. If you want to ask something, then ask it. I'll answer you if I know otherwise I would say, "I don't know. Ask who knows better."

I said, "Who are the two women who helped each other against the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)? He answered, "Aishah and Hafsa. I had a Muslim brother from Ansar. We used to rotate sitting with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) day after another. Each one of us tells the other everything that happens in his turn including the Prophet's hadiths. One day, I wasn't available, so he went instead of me. He told me this

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hadith when he came back. Then he mentioned the rest of the hadith.

Ibn Abd al-Barr said, "The brother from Ansar referred to above is the one whom the Prophet (ﷺ) joined in brotherhood between him and Umar. He is Utban ibn, Malik."⁷⁰

So, study carefully the patience of ibn 'Abbas, his manners, and how he waited for the chance to learn. He had a bothering issue in his mind. He wanted to ask no one except Umar; yet, he had not stepped up out of deep respect to Umar's prestigious status. He waited for an opening, and he jumped at the chance the second it appeared without second-guessing. Eventually, it finally clicked, and the mystery was unlocked after Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) answered him. Ideally, ibn 'Abbas is your example in arming oneself with patience throughout the process of seeking knowledge.

Al-Nawwawi said, "A person who does not endure the subjective difficulties of learning knowledge will be stuck with ignorance forever. In contrast, having patience results in gaining honor in this life and in the hereafter. A famous report from ibn 'Abbas proves this point. He said, "I endured the difficulties of learning

⁷⁰ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 1448.

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knowledge, but I ended up with the honor of being needed for people's inquiries."⁷¹

Abdullah ibn Abbas was an insightful, penetrative thinker and full of patience when he sought knowledge from the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). As time passed, the companions passed away while ibn 'Abbas remained, and people needed him. He was the destination for students of knowledge (may Allah be pleased with him).

Ibn 'Abbas himself, the skilled scholar of this nation and the fluent interpreter of Quran, narrates how he reached this high status of knowledge affected by Allah's guidance and the blessings of the Duaa of the Prophet (ﷺ) when he supplicated to Allah for ibn 'Abbas to be learned in the Quran. Al-Bukhari and Muslim related that 'Ikrimah narrated from ibn 'Abbas who said, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) embraced him and said, "O Allah! **Make him learned about the Book.**"

Ibn Hajr commented, "Al-Bukhari explained the reason why the Messenger (ﷺ) made this supplication as found in the narration of Ubaydu-Allahi ibn Yazid under the chapter of purification. The hadith states, "The Prophet (ﷺ) went to answer the call of nature, and I prepared ablution water for him." Muslim's version has an addition, "He asked

⁷¹ - Al-Majmou': 1/37.

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after he finished, **"Who prepared this? He was told it was ibn 'Abbas."**

The **"Book"** refers to the Quran because this word has been traditionally used in the religious heritage to describe it. The word **"learned"** asserts both memorization and pure understanding of it."⁷²

Al-Bukhari related from the authority of Ikrimah from ibn 'Abbas who said, "The Prophet (peace be upon him) embraced me and said, **"O Allah! Teach him wisdom."** Al-Bukhari commented, "The wisdom referred to here is not similar to the wisdom endowed upon Prophets."⁷³

Ibn Hajr commented, "There is a difference in opinion regarding the actual meaning of **"wisdom"** in this hadith. One opinion suggests it means to be right in whatever one says. Another one suggests it means to understand the purpose Allah aims at. Another one suggests it means to say rational and reasonable things. Furthermore, it is suggested that it means

⁷² - Fath al-Bari: 1/204.

⁷³ - **Translator's Note:** The difference is that the Prophet's wisdom is infallible. They do not make mistakes. As for the wisdom the Prophet supplicated to be endowed on ibn 'Abbas is lesser and involves having sound judgment in most of what he says not entirely.

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having the sense to differentiate between inspiration and evil whispers.

It is also said it means saying witty and right fast answers once asked. However, ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) was the most learned person among the companions in regards to the Quran."⁷⁴

- Ibn 'Abbas narrated how he reached this high-status of his, "I suggested to a man from Ansar after the Prophet (ﷺ) died 'Let us learn from the companions of the Messenger (ﷺ) as there are many of them alive. He said to me, "How strange of you! Do you think that people will need you despite the presence of many of the Messenger's companions?"

Ibn Abbas ignored this comment and headed straight to learn from the companions. Once I hear there is a hadith a man knows, I would go to his house during his nap. I would stay out covering myself with my garment against the strong sandy wind. The man inside would go out and say, "O cousin of the Messenger of Allah! Why are you here? You should have sent someone to me, and I would come to you instead."

⁷⁴ - Fath al-Bari: 7/126.

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I would say, "No, it is me who should come." I would ask him about the hadith afterwards. The man from the Ansar mentioned earlier lived until he saw me with people around me asking for Fatwa. He said after he saw that, "This boy was wiser than me."

I (the author) say: whoever is diligently after something, he will find it. It is said: As long as you endure through the difficulties of what you are after, you will eventually find what you wish for.

As-Sha'bi was asked, "How did you learn all of this? He answered, "Through long journeys, patience like that of camels, and getting up early like crows."

Abu Huriarh is one of the Prophet's companions who is an ideal example of patience and diligence in seeking knowledge until reaching his goal despite his short time with the Prophet (ﷺ). Only three years were his companionship history with the Prophet (ﷺ) though he was the most prolific narrator of the Prophet's hadiths.

As-Siyouti said, "Abu Hurairah is the most prolific hadith narrator among the companions. He narrated 5374 hadith. Al-Bukhari and Muslim agreed on 325 hadith. Al-Bukhari recorded 93 hadith while Muslim recorded 189 hadith. Over 800 people narrated from Abu Hurairah. In addition, he topped all the

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companions in memorization. Then Abdullah ibn Umar narrated 2630 hadiths. Then Ibn Abbas narrated 1660 hadiths. Then Jabir ibn Abdullah narrated 1540 hadiths. In addition, Anas ibn Malik narrated 2286 hadiths. 'Aishah, the mother of the believer, narrated 2210. These are the only companions who narrated over a thousand hadiths except for Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, who narrated 1170 hadiths."⁷⁵

Abu Hurairah was so keen on seeking knowledge with a resolved determination. This spirit is found in the following hadith:

Al-Bukhari narrated that Abu Hurairah said, "I asked: 'O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Who will be the most fortunate person, who will gain your intercession on the Day of Judgment? Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

لَقَدْ ظَنَنْتُ يَا أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ أَلَا يَسْأَلُنِي عَنْ هَذَا
الْحَدِيثِ أَحَدٌ أَوْلَ مِنْكَ ، لِمَا رَأَيْتُ مِنْ حِرْصِكَ
عَلَى الْحَدِيثِ ، أَسْعَدُ النَّاسِ بِشَفَاعَتِي يَوْمَ

⁷⁵ - Tadreeb ar-Rawy: 2/216.

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الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ قَالَ : لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ خَالِصًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ
، أَوْ نَفْسِهِ .

'O Abu Huraira! I have always thought that none will ask me about it before you as I know your longing for the (learning of) Hadiths. The most fortunate person who will have my intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be the one who says sincerely from the very heart, "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah."

Abu Hurairah himself described his patience, forbearance, determination and diligence. He said, "I used to accompany Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) to fill my stomach, and that was when I did not eat baked bread, nor wear soft clothes. Neither a male nor a female slave used to serve me. I used to bind stones over my belly and ask somebody to recite a Qur'anic Verse for me though I knew it so that he might take me to his house and feed me."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ - Sahih al-Bukhari.

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إِنَّكُمْ تَقُولُونَ: إِنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ يُكْثِرُ الْحَدِيثَ عَنِ
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - ، وَتَقُولُونَ:
مَا بَالُ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ لَا يُحَدِّثُونَ عَنِ
رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - بِمِثْلِ حَدِيثِ
أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ؟ وَإِنَّ إِخْوَتِي مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ كَانَ
يَشْغَلُهُمُ الصَّفْقُ بِالْأَسْوَاقِ ، وَكُنْتُ أَلْزَمُ رَسُولَ
اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - عَلَى مِلاءِ بَطْنِي
، فَأَشْهَدُ إِذَا غَابُوا ، وَ أَحْفَظُ إِذَا نَسُوا ، وَ كَانَ
يَشْغَلُ إِخْوَتِي مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ عَمَلُ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ، وَ
كُنْتُ امْرَأً مُسْكِينًا مِنْ مَسَاكِينِ الصُّفَّةِ أَعْي
حِينَ يَنْسُونَ ، وَ قَدْ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - فِي حَدِيثٍ يُحَدِّثُهُ: إِنَّهُ لَنْ يَبْسُطَ
أَحَدٌ ثَوْبَهُ حَتَّى أَفْضِي مَقَالَتِي هَذِهِ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُ
إِلَيْهِ ثَوْبَهُ إِلَّا وَعَى مَا أَقُولُ . فَبَسَطْتُ نَمِرَةَ عَلَيَّ

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حَتَّى إِذَا قَضَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ -
- مَقَالَتهُ جَمَعْتُهَا إِلَى صَدْرِي ، فَمَا نَسِيتُ مِنْ
مَقَالَه رَسُولِ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - تِلْكَ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ .

"Abu Hurairah said also, "You people say that Abu Hurairah tells many narrations from Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and you also wonder why the emigrants and Ansar do not narrate from Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as much as Abu Huraira does. My emigrant brothers were busy in the market while I used to stick to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). I was content with what fills my stomach. So I used to be present when they were absent and I used to remember when they used to forget, and my Ansari brothers used to be busy with their properties and I was one of the poor men of Suffa⁷⁷. I used to remember the narrations when

⁷⁷ - Translator's note: People of Suffah are the poor among the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). They were homeless and suffered from abject poverty. There was a shadowed place in the back of the Prophet's Masjid and they used

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they used to forget. No doubt, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) once said, "Whoever spreads his garment till I have finished my present speech and then folds it back, will remember whatever I will say." So, I spread my stripped garment which I was wearing till Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had finished his saying, and then I folded it over my chest. Since then, I have not forgotten that narration." ⁷⁸

Ibn Hajar commented, "Shu'aib narrated the above narration. It suggests that Abu Hurairah has not forgotten that particular narration. However, the version of Yunus found in Sahih Muslim states, "Since then, I have never forgotten any hadith the Prophet (ﷺ) said." Another version in Sahih al-Bukhari narrated by Malik states, "Since then, I have never forgotten anything the Prophet (ﷺ) said." This covers everything the Prophet (ﷺ) said to him including hadith or otherwise. In short, the context is in favor of Yunus's version because Abu Hurairah used this hadith to underscore his memorization of

to stay under it. Abu Hurairah himself identified who are the people of As-Suffah as mentioned in Sahih al-Bukhari, "The people of As-Suffah were guests of Islam; they had no family, no property and no relations. When Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) used to receive something in charity, he would send it to them without taking anything from it."

⁷⁸ - Agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

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copious hadiths. This necessarily includes this hadith and others beside it."79

I (the author) say: the student should be armed with endurance in the face of the difficulties of learning. You have read how Abu Hurairah was the topmost hadith narrator in such a small period. Such effort did not come out of thin air. He sacrificed his own comfort, good food, and even sleep. He endured hunger, exhaustion, and literally devoted his entire time to listen, memorize, and understand from the Prophet (ﷺ). Nothing worldly interrupted him in his endeavor until he ranked the top narrator ever.

The Student Of Knowledge Should Be Highly Ambitious

The student should not satisfy himself with a small portion of knowledge as long as there is a chance to learn more. Procrastination must be off the list in either homework or studying. Learning must fully consume the student's time. The scholars of the Salaf were impressively ambitious. They relinquished comfort and entertainment and replaced them with resolved determination. Their reports express this fact beyond

79 - Fath al-Bari: 1/259.

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speculation. Here are some of their reports so read carefully:

Al-Qasimi said, "The biography of al-Fayrouz Abadi, the author of al-Qamous, mentions that he perused⁸⁰ Sahih Muslim in only three days in Damascus. Also, abu al-Fadl al-Iraqi perused Sahih Muslim before Muhammad Isma'il al-Khabbaz in Damascus in six straight sessions. He read over one third of the book in the last session. Zayn al-Din ibn Rajab was attending and comparing his copy of Sahih Muslim [for purposes of verification].

The biography of Isma'il ibn Ahmad al-Hayry al-Naysabouri, as mentioned in Tarikh al-Dhahabi, states, "Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi perused Sahih al-Bukhari before him in Makkah in three sessions; two of them were at night. He started the perusing after Maghrib and finished at Fajr time while the third session was from the morning till dawn. Al-Dhahabi commented, "I think nobody at our time is capable of doing this."

Al-Hafidh al-Sakhawi said, "Our Sheikh al-Hafidh ibn Hajar experienced a marvelous incident than his Sheikh al-Majd, the linguist. Ibn Hajar perused Sahih al-Bukhari in forty hourglasses time. He perused Sahih

⁸⁰ - **Translator's note:** this verb means: (formal) to examine or read (something) in a very careful way "Merriam Webster online dictionary". Islamically, such kind of reading is observed before a Sheikh (i.e. eminent teacher) in order to correct and direct the student.

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Muslim in only four sessions except for the ending session, which took two days. Furthermore, he perused Sunnan ibn Majah in four sessions, the big book of al-Nasa'i in ten sessions; each session was four hours, and Sahih al-Bukhari in ten sessions; each is four hours."

Al-Sakhaway continues, "The fastest perusing session he ever did was perusing Mu'jam al-Tabarani al-Saghir in one session between Dhuhr and 'Asr during his journey to Syria. This Mu'jam is a thick volume that contains around 1500 hadiths."⁸¹

Do not let it cross your mind that such incredible reports are for those early times only. Do not think that people nowadays have lost their determination or lack energy. Instead, there is still goodness in this present nation, and I ask Allah to make it remain forever. Here is a recent example for you to follow.

Sheikh al-Qasimi -rahimahullah- said, "The weak servant, the author of this book [i.e. referring to himself], has been bestowed by Allah. I perused and comprehended Sahih Muslim in continuing sessions for forty straight days. The last session was on the 28th of Saffar 1316 H. I also perused Sunan ibn Majah in 21 days; the last session was on the 22nd of Rabi' al-

⁸¹ - Qawa'id al-Tahdith: 262.

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'Awwal 1316 H. Furthermore, I perused al-Muwatta in 19 days; the last session was in Rabi' al-Akhir 1316 H.

I studied the book of ibn Hajr, "Taqreeb al-Tahdhib" in a very accurate way comparing my copy with a more precise and verified version in sessions that lasted for 10 days; the last of which was on the 18th of Dhul al-Hijjah 1315 H.

I studied those books one following the other. I exhausted myself and my sight until my eyes were sore, but Allah healed them afterwards. I realized my mistake and refrained from repeating it. I realized that the benefit came with moderation. Of course, it is undeniable that there are some people who would ace this process safely due to their powerful senses. However, every man is well-aware of himself and his abilities."⁸²

The scholars are impressively ambitious and determined. They always aim for higher standards and never satisfy themselves except with the best. They always endeavor to make up what they missed and hunt out every chance no matter how distant it is. Seriousness is their suit. Their appetite is diminished in the morning, and they are up all night studying. They diligently hunger for something always present before their conscious. However, despite this unbelievable effort, only those gifted with Allah's

⁸² - Qawa'id al-Tahdith: 263.

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success reach the desired destination, and indeed they are so few.

Ibn Juma'ah -rahimahullah- said, "Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi reported in "al-Jami'" a statement that says, "A person who gains the pure knowledge is he who abandons his business, deserts his siblings, and remains from absent a funeral of a close relative. Despite the obvious exaggeration, however, the point is to have the full devotion of the heart and consciousness for the sake of nothing but learning."⁸³

Ar-Rabi', the student of al-Shafi'i, said, "I have never seen al-Shafi'i eating in the morning nor sleeping at night due to his full-time authorship."

Abu Khaythamah narrated from Sufyan ibn Uyaynah from 'Ayoub at-Ta'I who heard al-Sha'bi saying, "I have never seen anyone more eager to seek knowledge like Masrouq."

Abu khaythamah narrated that Jarir ibn Hayan said, "There was a man who traveled from Egypt seeking to know a single hadith. This man had not unloaded his luggage except after he returned to his house. The hadith he sought was,

⁸³ - Tadhkirat al-Sami' wa al-Mutakalim: 70.

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مَنْ سَتَرَ عَلَىٰ أَحِيهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا ، سَتَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ .

“Allah will not publicly reveal the sins of whoever keeps the sins of their fellow Muslim brothers in secret.”⁸⁴

Al-Albani commented, “The man referred to is Uqbah ibn Amir, who was the Egyptian ruler. He traveled to meet Maslamah ibn Makhlad as cited in al-Musnad (1/104).”

At-Tahan said, “The man referred to is Abu 'Ayoub al-'Ansari. Al-Hakim narrated this hadith in “Ma'rifat Uloom al-Hadith” in a detailed way under the chapter “Identifying narrators with the high profile of authentic narrations”, pages (9-10).”⁸⁵

Al-Khatib recorded that Malik narrated from Sa'ieed ibn al-Musayb who said, “I would travel days for just a single hadith.”

⁸⁴ - Kitab al-'Ilm: 12.

⁸⁵ - At-Tahan's commentary on "al-Jami' Li-Akhlaq al-Rawy wa Adab al-Sami': 2/226.

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Abu Ayoub narrated that Abu Qilabah said, "I stayed three days in Medina for nothing but to hear one hadith from someone."⁸⁶

The great scholars of this nation are a lively example. "Extraordinary" is the word that describes their ambition and determination despite their decent financial situation. Al-Shafi'i was born an orphan with no money. He said, "I was born in a Yemeni tribe⁸⁷. My mother was afraid I would go to waste. So she said, "Go back to your father's family. I'm afraid you would lose ties with them." So she equipped me for the journey. I was around ten years old when I first arrived in Makkah. I stayed with a relative of mine. Then I started seeking knowledge but he discouraged me and advised me to focus on business instead. However, I found my passion in seeking knowledge and learning it until eventually, Allah bestowed His great favors upon me."

He continues, "I was an orphan with my mother. She had nothing to pay the teacher his fees, but the teacher was generous to just have me watching over the other children in the class in exchange. After I had finished the Quran, I went to attend the scholars' sessions in the Masjid. I used to memorize hadith and Fiqh. Our house

⁸⁶ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlāq al-Rawi wa al-Sami': 2/227.

⁸⁷ - **Translator's note:** Al-Shafi'i's father is from Makkah while his mother is from Yemen.

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was located in the valley of al-Khayf, in Makkah. I used to write what I learned on bones, which I would put in a jar we had.”⁸⁸

Abu Hatem al-Razi recorded that al-Humaydy narrated from Muslim ibn Khalid al-Zangy, who said to al-Shafi'i, “You should issue Fatwas, Abu Abdullah. By Allah, the time has come for you to assume this position. Al-Shafi'i was fifteen years old at this time.” In another version, his age was eighteen years old.⁸⁹

Do you see now how ambitious was al-Shafi'i? Since he was a child, he endeavored to reach the loftiest height of idealism despite his poor financial status or more properly straitened life circumstance. Extraordinarily, he was qualified to assume the position of Mufti when he was only eighteen years old; the very age which many of the youth today reach, unfortunately, without performing proper ablution. He followed the same path of the earlier generations. He maintained truthfulness and insightfulness throughout the way. He eventually gained Allah's bounties the same as those before him. He has become one of the foremost leaders despite the fact that he came after the earlier ones.

Another example is Sheikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah. He was descried as follows, “He had a voracious

⁸⁸ - Adab al-Shafi'i wa Manaqibih: 24.

⁸⁹ - Adab al-Shafi'i wa Manaqibih: 39.

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appetite for knowledge. He was a voracious reader. He has never felt boredom during research or studying. He used to not only excel in any discipline he studies but also [reach a level of] offering constructive criticism for the celebrated masters of this discipline. I heard him saying once, "When I'm faced with a complicated matter where I cannot find a solution for it, I always ask Allah for forgiveness almost a thousand times more or less until I find ease in my heart as well as a solution to what bothers me. It does not matter where I am; be it in the market, the Masjid, the road, or the school. I always stay persistent in seeking Allah's forgiveness until I land what I need."

Al-Bazzar complemented Sheikh al-Islam by saying,

"Knowledge has become an integrated part of his flesh and in the blood running through his veins. Knowledge has become his attire."⁹⁰

- High ambitions require full-consumption of time and putting it to good use in order to extract the maximum benefit. If this comes along with free time and good health, one should thank Allah permanently. However, failure to fulfill the right of these two gifts, namely health and free time, is an offense to oneself and a shameful act.

⁹⁰ - Ghayt al-'Amaani: 2/162.

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Al-Bukhari recorded that ibn 'Abbas narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُونٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ :
الصِّحَّةُ، وَالْفَرَاغُ .

**“Two blessings which many people squander:
good health and free time.”⁹¹**

Ibn Hajar commented, “The word ‘blessing’ reflects an intended favor extended to others to benefit from. The way people squander these two blessings takes the form of misusing them. The word 'squander' reflects the waste resulted from misusing them. A person who does so is rebuked for his wrong decision.”

Ibn Battal said, “Free time necessarily means good health and stable financial conditions. Therefore, a person who is blessed with such must not abandon thanking Allah for it. Expressing gratitude, in this case, is exemplified through complying with Allah's commands and refraining from His prohibitions. In contrast, failing to do so is actually a squander of those blessings. Significantly, the phrase 'many people'

⁹¹ - It is also recorded by al-Hakim, ad-Darmy, Ahmad, al-Tirmidhi, ibn Majah, and Abu Nu'aym.

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connotes that only a few people are guided to seize the maximum benefit of those blessings."⁹²

Ibn al-Jawzi said, "A person might be in good health but does not have free time due to providing life sustenance. Or a person might be rich but not in a good health. However, a person might be healthy and has free time but, unfortunately, wastes both of them. The bottom line is: this life is a farm for the hereafter and a trade where its earnings or losses unravel in the hereafter. Hence, the winner is he who exploits free time and health to their best use, namely obedience to Allah, whereas the loser is he who squanders them to their worst use, namely disobedience to Allah. It is a universal fact that free time must end, and good health must be followed by illness at some point. Interestingly, getting old is enough sign of this."

Al-Taybi said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) compared people to a trader who has capital. This trader's sole purpose is to earn winnings without any damage to the capital. So he chooses people known for truthfulness and excellence in order to avoid any loss. Good health and free time are the capital. The person should deal with Allah by faith and defying oneself in order to collect the winnings of this life and the hereafter. The following verse is a close example to this;

⁹² - Fath al-Bari: 11/234.

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Allah says,

﴿ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيكُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠﴾ ﴾

“Shall I guide you to a trade that would save you from a painful torment?”⁹³

The individual should not obey oneself and listen to the Shaytaan. Otherwise one's capital, as well as the profit, will go with the wind. The word “many” in the phrase “many people squander” opposes the “Few” in Allah's saying,

﴿ وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ ﴾

“And few of My servants are thankful.”⁹⁴

Abu Bakr ibn al 'Arabi, the judge, said, “There was an argument regarding which of Allah's blessings on the human being is more valuable; faith, life, or health. However, faith is the one because it is an absolute blessing whereas health and life are worldly blessings. Both of them are not the object of praise unless accompanied by faith and, therefore, many people squander them. Some people waste all of their profit while others waste some of it depending on how far the person falls prey to oneself, which dictates evil and

⁹³ - As-Saff: 10.

⁹⁴ - Saba': 13.

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excessive comfort. For violating Allah's prohibitions and failure to maintain regular obedience, is an act of squandering one's health. Moreover, squandering free time leaves no excuse and establishes conclusive proof against any person who does so."⁹⁵

So, seize your time as it flies. A shrewd person is the one who uses times of health effectively before illness strikes and who seizes time efficiently before being occupied. Such seizure reflects this person's gratitude for the blessings Allah bestowed upon him/her and gains the designated profit by escaping from squandering these blessings. This attitude has been the habit of the Salaf. They reached a level of awareness of such critical matters to a point that made al-Hasan - rahimahullah- say, "I have met people who were extremely tight with their time more than their money." The origin of all of this is located in the heart, which rectifies everything if it is good or ruins everything if it is bad and evil.

To wrap it up, read carefully the finest speech of your Prophet (ﷺ) so that it would guide you.

⁹⁵ - Sharh al-Sunnah: 14/224.

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اَعْتَنِمْ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ خَمْسٍ : شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ
، وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سَقَمِكَ ، وَغِنَاكَ قَبْلَ فَقْرِكَ ، وَ
فَرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ شُغْلِكَ ، وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ .

'Amr ibn Maymoun narrated that the Prophet
(ﷺ) said, "Take the advantage of five
before five: your youth before senility, your
health before illness, your wealth before
poverty, your free time before occupation, and
your life before death." ⁹⁶

**The Student Should Revise Regularly And
Accurately The Material Under Study**

The student can ask the help of the Sheikh (teacher) or
another whom he trusts. This critical point is
interrelated with learning and excelling at Arabic
language. In addition, it is akin to the term

⁹⁶ - It is recorded by al-Boughawi in "Sharh al-Sunnah" (14/224)
and he graded it as Hadith Mursal. It is also recorded by Abu
Nu'aym in "al-Hilyah" (4/148), al-Khatib in "al-'Ilm wa al-'Amal"
(101). Al-Hakim recorded it with a connected chain of narration
on the authority of ibn 'Abbas who elevates it to the Prophet
(peace be upon him) (4/306). The hadith's chain of narration is
authentic as graded by al-Hakim and al-Dhahabi. Al-Albani
commented, "It is an authentic hadith."

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“Misreading” which is coined by hadith scholars. Some literary scholars have authored some valuable books that address this issue exclusively.

Ibn Kathir said, “The student of Hadith must be learned in Arabic language,” he quotes Al-'Asma'i saying, “I'm afraid that the student who is not learned in Arabic language may be included in the general statement of the Prophet (ﷺ),

مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَلْيَتَّبِعُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ
النَّارِ

“Whoever forges a lie against me intentionally shall be sure of his spot in the hell-fire.” ⁹⁷

Simply, violating the accuracy of hadith narration by making linguistic mistakes is considered a lie because the Prophet has never made a linguistic mistake.

The problem of “misreading” can be solved by learning directly from fluent-speaking Sheikhs.” ⁹⁸

At-Tahan explored the reason for misreading. He said, “Most often, the mistake originates from studying the hadith directly from the books without learning it from

⁹⁷ - Agreed upon. It is found in multiple sources and reached a level of Tawatur (i.e. Recurrent hadith).

⁹⁸ - Al-Ba'ith al-Hathith: 122.

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the teachers. For this particular reason, the imams of Hadith have warned against narrating from such people.”

Ibn Qutaybah⁹⁹ -rahimahullah- criticized the people of his time for slackness, excessive seek of comfort and abandoning hard intellectual work. Ironically, such criticism happened to take place at the flux of literature where the language was celebrated throughout the Islamic world. May Allah have mercy upon him; what would he say if he were to witness our time?!

He said, “I have seen many contemporary writers (at his era) who preferred excessive comfort just like the general public. They have settled for beyond the least and spared themselves the hard work of searching and thinking [in regards to knowledge]. Sadly, they have sunk to the deep bottom voluntarily. How unfortunate to witness such lack of determination and loss of pride to the point of tumbling to the level of animals!

What could be more disgraceful for a person chosen by a Caliph than being ignorant of a simple meaning he was tested at? That person was reading, “The rain was so heavy that it flooded the Kalaa (i.e. grass).” The Caliph tested him: what is the meaning of al-Kalaa?

⁹⁹ -Translator’s note: Ibn Qutaybah is a renowned linguistic scholar. He is best known for his contributions in Arabic literature. His Book "Adab al-Katib" is one of the four fundamental books in Arabic literature; the best four ever written in literature. He died on 276 H.

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But he stumbled and did not have a clue of what it means. Another disgraceful situation where somebody shamefully misread something before the Caliph and made everybody laugh."¹⁰⁰

Salim ibn Qutaybah narrated, "I was discussing some matters with Ibn Hubayrah, the senior, and the topic of Arabic language came up. He said, "By Allah, if there are two persons whose religion, honor of lineage, and dignity are equal but one of them makes linguistic mistakes while the other does not, the one who does not make linguistic mistakes is better in both this life and in the hereafter." I wondered and said, "I understand he would supersede him in this life because he is more eloquent and accurate; but how about the hereafter? That I don't understand." He responded, "Does he not recite Quran as Allah revealed it with no mistakes while the other mistakes in recitation which is considered a change, no matter how slight it is? I responded, "You're absolutely right."

Moreover, 'Ayash ibn al-Mughirah narrated from his father who said, "Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad came to my father desiring to learn Hadith from him. He started reading but made many linguistic mistakes. My father stopped him and yelled at him saying, "You

¹⁰⁰ - Adab a;-Katib: 6.

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should have fixed your language first before you study Hadith."

Hajib ibn Sulayman said: I heard Waki' saying, "I went to attend al-'Amash Hadith session. I rarely made linguistic mistakes in reading before him. He advised me, "You skipped, what is more, important to you before studying Hadith." I asked him, "What is it?" he answered me, "Grammar." He then taught me Grammar first then Hadith."

Abu Zayd, the grammarian, said, "The reason that pushed me to study Grammar and Literature was when I made a grammatical mistake before Ja'far ibn Sulayman."¹⁰¹

This informs us how critical reading, before a teacher is because it is a, means to avoid misreading or linguistic mistakes especially during this time where the faculty of speaking classical Arabic is extremely rare to find. This suggested method [studying Arabic language first] was the same method followed by the early righteous Salaf. They used to read the major fundamental books before their teachers until they perfected them. Here is a very famous example that was so popular when Islam was at its peak.

The biography of Ibn Hisham, the famous Arabic grammarian, highlights his regular attendance to the

¹⁰¹ - Al-Jami' Li-Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adab al-Sami': 2/25.

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sessions of As-Shihab Abdul Latif and ibn As-Siraj. He read the collection of poems of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma¹⁰² before Abu Hayan. However, he read nothing more as he had not stayed long in his company. Moreover, he attended the classes of al-Taj at-Tibrizi. He also read the whole book of "Sharh al-Isharah" before al-Tag al-Fakahani except the last page.

Do you notice the unerring accuracy in learning and narrating this report? He read the whole book and left out the last page. Incredible, isn't it?

Notably, this Islamic nation is blessed with a distinguishing feature unfounded in the rest of nations throughout history. This feature is Isnad (chain of narration).

As-Syouti quoted ibn Hazm saying, "The chain of trusted narrators is a unique feature Allah privileged this Islamic nation with. There is a chain of narrators in the Jewish nation as well; however, their chain is disconnected with a gap that reaches 30 generations short of Musa unlike our chain of narrators to Muhammad (ﷺ). Christians' chain of narrators, by contrast, is nearly inexistent (nonexistent) except in the "divorce" matter. Both Christians and Jews' chain of narrators is riddled with liars and unknown people.

¹⁰² - **Translator's note:** A very famous poet. He lived and died in the pre-Islamic era. His poetry reflected wisdom. He was one of the leading poets ever in the Arabic legacy.

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Abu Ali al-Jiyani said, "Allah privileged this Islamic nation with three features: Isnad, keeping track with lineage, and a unique system of Grammar."¹⁰³

"The student of knowledge should read and revise before memorization. This should be before an accurate teacher. Then, the student should start memorization and repeating what he memorized. The student should designate some time occasionally or regularly to revise the material he covered. Never should the student memorize anything before passing it to the teacher first nor should he memorize straight from the books since it is extremely risky."¹⁰⁴

Maintain Punctuality, Perseverance, And Upright Character

"The student of knowledge should be keen to learn and maintain a constant, unceasing pace of study day and night, at home or anywhere else. Remarkably, seeking knowledge requires every single ounce of you so you would hopefully get something in return." This statement is said by Abu Yusuf, the student of Abu Haneefah (may Allah have His mercy upon both of

¹⁰³ - Tadreeb ar-Rawi: 2/159.

¹⁰⁴ - Tadhkirat al-Sami' wa al-Mutkalim: 121.

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them). It is a remarkable statement. It serves as a strict and decisive axiom in seeking knowledge. It will stay intact and universal unless Allah wills otherwise.

Al-Humaydi said, "I accompanied al-Shafi'i in his journey to Egypt. When we were there, he was living on an upper floor than mine. I went out some nights and found the lantern lighted at his place. I would call the boy serving him seeking permission to go up. I went up after I was permitted. I saw a paper and an inkwell. So I wondered and said: what is this? Al-Shafi'i responded, "I was just deliberating a hadith in my mind, and I was afraid I might forget. So I asked the boy to get me the lantern, and I wrote what I thought of."¹⁰⁵

Al-Shafi'i was impressively keen to learn knowledge. He eventually earned what he aimed for and became one of the most brilliant scholars that ever existed. Of course, the other Imams before and after him were as diligent as he was since the inception of their learning.

Al-Khatib recorded that Abdullah ibn Ahmad said, "I heard my father saying: Sometimes, I liked to go out early to attend Hadith class but my father used to take my cloth away from me and say 'Wait until Fajr Adhan is called for or until the morning. Other times I used to go early to the class of Abi Bakr ibn Ayash and others."

¹⁰⁵ - Adaab as-Shafi'i Wa Manaqibih: 44.

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'Ahmad ibn Yahia ibn al-Jaroud narrated that 'Ali ibn al-Madini narrated from Shareek said, "I prayed a thousand Fajr prayers with Abi Ishaq."

Ahmad ibn Ibrahim ad-Dawraqi narrated that he heard from Salamah ibn Aqqar saying, "If a student of Hadith does not attend the class regularly, he is a lost cause; forget all about him."¹⁰⁶

At-Tahan commented on the previous statement, "Regular attendance at Hadith classes is a must otherwise the student will not achieve anything."

- Upright character is one of the fruits of beneficial knowledge because it has imposed its power over the heart and moderates it accordingly. Sufyan al-Thawry said, "If you're able to apply the Sunnah in every act in your life, do it."

Al-Hasan said, "In early times, the influence of knowledge would be noticed in man's behavior, speech, and humility when he seeks knowledge."

'Asim ibn 'Asim al-Bayhaqi said, "I stayed a night at Ahmad ibn Hanbal's residence. He brought water and left it. At Fajr time, he came and saw the water untouched. He said, "How strange! A student of knowledge does not observe the night prayer regularly."

¹⁰⁶ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 1/150.

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Sufyan ibn 'Uayynah said, "The family of Hadith student would await Allah's reward." Al-Khatib commented, "It means that this student would strive diligently so that he won't be available for his family and at this point they would await Allah's reward to make up for his long absence."¹⁰⁷

Muhammad ibn Abi J'afar ibn Himdan said, "My father used to pray Maghrib along with Abi Uthman Sa'id ibn Isma'il. Sometimes, he used to stay until Isha, and it gets late. So, I went out to that Masjid one night. On this night, Abi Uthman went out dressed with Ihram cloth. He led us in prayer and headed back to his house. I left with my father and asked him, "Did he start the Ihram period? He said, "No, he didn't. But he heard a hadith from me, which states that the Prophet (ﷺ) prayed once with the Ihram cloth, so he did not want to wait to comply with this Sunnah till the morning as his habit."

- Devotion to knowledge is represented by full-scale studying, which helps engraving the material in the memory and increases the knowledge intake:

"One hour study by a proficient student is more productive than hours or even days of reading and memorization. Studying should fulfill fairness and

¹⁰⁷ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami'.

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benefit for oneself and others. One should not desire to disdain others by heart, speech, or attitude. Instead, gentleness must replace disdain. A person who embraces such conduct shall increase in knowledge and retain a committing memory."¹⁰⁸

Remarkably, the Imams were so competitive in learning that one could think they harbored envy and malice against each other in their competition. However, the fact is that they were competing in an honorary and legitimate manner.

Al-Khatib recorded that Shu'bah said, "Nothing is more delicious than stirring up a scholar to extract out his knowledge when you are alone with him."

Qays ibn ar-Rabi said, "We used to assign Sufyan at-Thawry with writing hadiths from the scholars whom we attend their classes because he was the fastest one of us in writing. However, Sufyan would memorize the small hadith and disregard it in writing. Once we were aware of this, we discharged him from this task."

Al-Khatib commented on these reports, "It is advised to pass on the hadith to people who did not hear it, to direct the people to the Sheikhs, and to point out their narrations. The least benefit of

¹⁰⁸ - Qawaid al-Tahdeeth: 76.

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applying this advice is providing help to the student so he would memorize the hadith not to mention the abundant consequential reward."

At-Tahan commented on al-Khatib's comment, "May Allah have mercy on al-Khatib. Had he sufficed himself with a brief reference to what some of hadith narrators did without mentioning a long list of references to over twenty Hadith narrators most of which point to famous Hadith scholars, it would have been much better than making Hadith scholars look like they conceal knowledge.

Even if we suppose such reports are authentic, we still are not aware of its context nor its surrounding circumstances. What we know for sure is that they have spent their entire life in spreading out Hadith and teaching it for the sole aim of Allah's reward."¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, al-Khatib recorded reports of scholars who promote spreading knowledge for purposes of benefit right after the above-mentioned ones. He recorded that Sufyan at-Thawry said, "O young students! Rush to gain the blessings of knowledge since you may not reach what you aim for. Benefit each other."

¹⁰⁹ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/145.

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Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak said, "Gaining benefit of hadith is by benefiting each other." There are multiple reports from the early generations that generally reflect how they were a role model for Hadith students in studying and learning Hadith diligently.

Al-Khatib recorded that ibn Shihab used to study Hadith under Urwah and others. After he had finished the class, he would go and wake up his maid and tell her: I heard this hadith from so and so, and I heard this hadith from so and so. She would tell him, 'What do I have to do with any of these hadiths?' He responded I know it is of no benefit to you, but I wanted to revise it in order to commit it to memory."

Ibrahim al-Nakha'i said, "If you want to memorize a hadith, narrate it to others even if it were to somebody who has no interest in it. This would engrave the hadith in the memory."¹¹⁰

In brief, diligence in seeking knowledge requires regular attendance in the classes with the Sheikh and, if possible, all the sessions should be attended to get as much benefit as one can. 'Ali (رضى الله عنه) said, "Do not ever feel needless of accompanying your Sheikh

¹¹⁰ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlāq ar-Rawī Wa Adaab as-Samī': 2/268.

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because he is like the palm tree that drops benefit every now and then."

The student should also attend every class there is as long as he is able to; because restricting oneself to one's class only is a sign of weak determination and unpromising future. The student should attend the other classes by the Sheikh, write down the benefits, and pass them on. He should be a part of all the classes as if it is his own class. Attending to all of those classes is a sign of diligence but if he is not able to keep up, he should give precedence to the most important then the less important.

The students in the same class should exchange the benefits and rules they learned from the Sheikh because the benefit is maximized through group studying sessions. Such sessions are to be held immediately after the class is finished because the information is still fresh, and their minds are focused. It is also to be repeated some other times.

Al-Khatib said, "The best time for studying is at night. A group of the Salaf used to start studying after Isha. Sometimes, they would continue until hearing the Adhan of Fajr. If there is no chance of group study, the student has nothing left but to study on his own. He should keep studying until whatever he learned from the class is committed to his memory. As for studying with a Sheikh, it is very unlikely for a student to

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achieve individual success by his own intelligence without the assistance of the Sheikh especially if he is available. Let alone ceasing to attend the Sheikh's classes for merely succeeding to do something on his own."¹¹¹

The student should keep seeking knowledge till the last breath no matter how much he covered while maintaining a spirit of endurance along the way

Allah says,

﴿ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَاءُ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴾ (٧٦)

"We raise to degrees whom We please, but over all those endowed with knowledge is the All-Knowing (Allah)."¹¹²

Ibn Kathir commented, "(but over all those endowed with knowledge is the All-Knowing.) Al-Hasan commented, "There is no knowledgeable person, but there is another person with more knowledge until it ends at Allah the Exalted and Most Honored. In addition, `Abdur-Razzaq recorded that Sa'id bin Jubayr said, "We were with Ibn `Abbas when he

¹¹¹ -Tadhkirat as-Sami' wa al-Mutkalim: 142.

¹¹² - Yusuf (12: 76).

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narrated a Hadith we did not know. A man in the audience said, "All praise is to Allah! There is an all-knowing above every person endowed with knowledge." Ibn `Abbas responded, "Worse it is that which you said! Allah is the All-Knowing and His knowledge is above the knowledge of every knowledgeable person, this person is more knowledgeable than that person so forth; while Allah has knowledge above all." 'Ikrimah is reported to said the same thing."¹¹³

Ubai bin Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

((قَامَ مُوسَى - صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - خَطِيبًا
فِي بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ، فَسُئِلَ: أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَعْلَمُ؟ فَقَالَ
: أَنَا أَعْلَمُ، فَعَتَبَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ إِذْ لَمْ يَرُدَّ الْعِلْمَ إِلَيْهِ
، فَأَوْحَى اللهُ إِلَيْهِ: إِنَّ عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِي بِمَجْمَعِ
الْبَحْرَيْنِ) هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مِنْكَ. قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ كَيْفَ بِهِ

¹¹³ -Tafsir ibn Kathir: 2/486. **Translator's note:** quoted from Tafsir ibn Kathir's English translation with a slight change to fit the context.

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؟ فَقِيلَ لَهُ : اِحْمِلْ حُوتًا فِي مِكَتَلٍ ، فَإِذَا فَقَدْتَهُ
فَهُوَ تَمَّ)) . فَذَكَرَ الْحَدِيثَ فِي اجْتِمَاعِهِ
بِالْخَضِرِ إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ : ((فَانْطَلَقَا يَمْشِيَانِ عَلَى
سَاحِلِ الْبَحْرِ ، لَيْسَ لَهُمَا سَفِينَةٌ ، فَجَاءَ
عُضْفُورٌ فَوَقَعَ عَلَى حَرْفِ السَّفِينَةِ ، فَنَقَرَ نَقْرَةً
أَوْ نَقَرَتَيْنِ فِي الْبَحْرِ ، فَقَالَ الْخَضِرُ : يَا مُوسَى
، مَا نَقَصَ عِلْمِي وَ عِلْمُكَ مِنْ عِلْمِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا
كَنَقْرَةَ هَذَا الْعُضْفُورِ فِي هَذَا الْبَحْرِ))

“Once, the Prophet (ﷺ) Moses stood up and addressed Bani Israel. He was asked, "Who is the most learned man amongst the people?" He said, "I am the most learned." Allah admonished Moses as he did not attribute absolute knowledge to Him (Allah). So Allah inspired to him "At the junction of the two seas there is a slave amongst my slaves who is more learned than you." Moses said, "O my Lord! How can I meet him?" Allah said: Take a fish in a large basket (and proceed) and you will find

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him at the place where you will lose the fish..." The hadith goes on and cites Moses meeting with al-Khidr until they reach the sea. "So both of them set out walking along the seashore, as they did not have a boat. In the meantime, a boat passed by them and they requested the crew of the boat to take them on board. The crew recognized Al-Khadir and took them on board without fare. Then a sparrow came and stood on the edge of the boat and dipped its beak once or twice in the sea. Al-Khadir said: "O Moses! My knowledge and your knowledge have not decreased Allah's knowledge except as much as this sparrow has decreased the water of the sea with its beak."¹¹⁴

Ibn Hajr commented, "So both of them set out walking." This phrase cites no mention of Joshua, Musa's servant because he is not the focus of attention. It is also possible that he had not come on board with them because of his absence throughout the rest of the story."¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ - The hadith is recorded in full in al-Bukhari and Muslim.

¹¹⁵-Fath al-Bari: 1/266.

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Ibn 'Abd al-Barr recorded that Malik ibn 'Anas said, "It is inappropriate to abandon seeking knowledge even if you're learned."

Ibn 'Abi Ghassan said, "You will be learned as long as you are seeking knowledge otherwise you will be ignorant if you leave it."

Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "[After searching], I found most of the knowledge of the companions is hosted by this neighborhood of Ansar. I [would go to one of the houses] and nap outside waiting for the man to go out. It was easy for me to take permission and meet him inside, but I preferred to wait outside in order not to bother him."

Ibn Munazir said, "I asked 'Amr ibn al-'Alaa: For how long should a person seek knowledge?" He said, "As long as one is alive."

Sufyan ibn Uyyaynah was asked, "Who is the most needy to seek knowledge?" he said, "The most knowledgeable one is the most needy one because a mistake from him is unlike anybody else."¹¹⁶

Abu Hurairah narrated, "People say that I have narrated many Hadiths. Had it not been for two verses

¹¹⁶ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 127.

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in the Qur'an, I would not have narrated a single Hadith, and the verses are:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَيْنِكُمْ
لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّعِينُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ إِلَّا
الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَبَيَّنُّوا فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنَا التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٠﴾ ﴾

“Verily those who conceal the clear sign and the guidance which We have sent down . . . (up to) Most Merciful.” (2:159-160).

And no doubt our Muhajir (emigrant) brothers used to be busy in the market with their business (bargains) and our Ansari brothers used to be busy with their property (agriculture). But I (Abu Huraira) used to stick to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) contented with what will fill my stomach and I used to attend that which they used not to attend and I used to memorize that which they used not to memorize."¹¹⁷

117 - Recorded by al-Bukhari.

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Ibn Abd al-Barr commented, "This hadith contain several benefits:

- 1- The Prophet's hadith (ﷺ) is as sacred as the Book of Allah.
- 2- Spreading and teaching the knowledge.
- 3- Sticking to scholars and contentment with the lowest of sustenance for purposes of seeking knowledge.
- 4- Giving precedence to knowledge over worldly gains."¹¹⁸

Learners should hunger for knowledge expecting no fullness. They should constantly be greedy for more and more.

'Anas narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

مَنْهُومَانِ لَا يَشْبَعَانِ : مَنْهُومٌ فِي الْعِلْمِ لَا
يَشْبَعُ مِنْهُ، وَمَنْهُومٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا لَا يَشْبَعُ مِنْهَا

¹¹⁸ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 128.

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"Two people never get full: a knowledge learner and a person who seeks worldly gains."¹¹⁹

Al-Albani said, "This hadith is recorded by al-Hakim, who is al-Bayhaqi's Sheikh and outclasses him. He recorded it in "al-Mustadrak: (1/92) from the authority of Qatadah from Anas who elevates it to the Prophet (ﷺ). Al-Hakim graded it as Sahih and meet al-Bukhari and Muslim's condition. I found no anomalies in this hadith, and ad-Dhahabi graded it as Sahih as well."

I (the author) say: Actually, Qatadah's version is anomalous because Qatadah himself is inaccurate. However, I hold the hadith to be Sahih because it has other versions supporting it from the authority of Humayd from Anas recorded by ibn 'Ady and ibn 'Assakir. It also has a similar version narrated by ibn 'Abbas and recorded by Abi Khaythamah in "al-'Ilm" (No.193/1). Its Isnad is acceptable.¹²⁰

Abu Khaythamah recorded that Layth narrated from Mujahid from ibn 'Abbas narrated (whom I think elevated it to the Prophet (ﷺ)),

¹¹⁹ - Recorded by al-Bayhaqi in "Shu'ab al-Eman".

¹²⁰ -Mishkat al-Masabeeh: 1/86.

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مَنْهُومَانِ لَا يَقْضِي وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمَا نَهْمَتَهُ :
مَنْهُومٌ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ لَا يَقْضِي نَهْمَتَهُ ، وَ
مَنْهُومٌ فِي طَلَبِ الدُّنْيَا لَا يَقْضِي نَهْمَتَهُ .

“Two kinds of people never get full: a person who is greedy for more knowledge and a person who is greedy for more worldly gains.”

Al-Albani commented, “Layth, who is mentioned here, is Layth ibn Abi Sulaym, and he is considered weak in hadith narration; however, he is not the only one narrating this hadith. The hadith has other versions authenticated by al-Hakim and ad-Dhahabi. I have commented on those versions in al-Mishkah. Notably, there is another version recorded by al-Darmy (1/96) but the chain stops at Layth.”¹²¹

Memorably, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan expressed the ultimate reaction towards the aforementioned narrations. He said, “The craft of knowledge is an endlessly non-stop craft that starts from birth till death. So, whoever toys with the idea of leaving it along the way, it's better for him to leave it now.”¹²²

¹²¹ - Kitab al-'Ilm: 33.

¹²² _ T'aleem al-Muta'lim: 44.

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It is widely known that the Salaf used to travel a lot for seeking knowledge. They left their homeland and their families for no reason but seeking more and more of knowledge even if it came down to a single hadith putting all hardships they endured behind their back. Do not think that those journeys were for self-satisfaction. Instead, they had a particular noble purpose despite their sufferings.

Al-Khatib¹²³ illustrated this purpose, "There are two purposes for Hadith-seeking journeys: the first is to seek authentic Isnad and the second is to meet the highest order scholars (Hufadh), study and benefit from them. Yet, if those two factors happen to be only available in the person's country, there would be no need for traveling. Nevertheless, if they're available in not only the person's country but also other places, it is advised for him to take up a journey in order to collect as many benefits as he can. For instance, if the student is Iraqi and there are scholars with highly authentic Isnad of Iraqi narrators. In addition, there are other scholars in al-Sham who are knowledgeable of this country's highly authentic narrators and this particular knowledge is not available elsewhere, the student is advised to attend to both of them but certainly after

¹²³ - **Translator's note:** note that al-Khatib al-Baghdadi died on 463H.

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studying the hadith in his country and excelling in it."¹²⁴

For this particular reason, al-Bukhari narrated some hadiths from narrators who are considered his students. He narrated Hadith from them only for the benefit; Hammad al-'Aqli, Abdullah ibn Abi al-'As al-Khawarizmi, and Hussein ibn Muhammad al-Qabani and others. He narrated a few sum of hadiths from them. The reason that motivated him to do so is what he himself recorded from the authority of Uthman from Abi Shaybah from Waki' who said, "A man is not qualified as a true scholar unless he narrates Hadith from his seniors, his peers, and his juniors."

Al-Bukhari himself said, "A Hadith scholar truly earns this honor only when he narrates hadith from his seniors, his peers, and his juniors."

Al-Khatib recorded that Abd al-Aziz ibn Abi Hazim narrated from his father who said, "Long ago, when a man meets someone more knowledgeable than him, he would say, "This is my luckiest day." He would learn from him as much as he can. And when he meets one of his peers, it would be his study day, and when he meets who is beneath his knowledge, he would not show off.

¹²⁴ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/223.

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Unfortunately, it has turned upside down today. A man would level wrongful accusations against those above his rank for merely driving people away from him. Not just this but also refusing to sit and study with his peers; such attitude mounts to leave people in an unwanted miserable state."

Ali ibn Al-Hassan ibn Shaqiq said: I was sitting with Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak in the Masjid on a cold night. We set out to leave. When we reached the Masjid's door, he discussed a hadith, or I did. We kept discussing back and forth until the Mu'adhin came and announced the 'Adhan of Fajr prayer."¹²⁵

- There are only two factors that potentially hinders a person from benefiting from knowledge:
 - 1- **Insanity**: it is a moment where a [strange] imaginative picture pops in one's mind leading him to believe he has learned absolutely everything there is.
 - 2- **Arrogance**: which would also lead him to believe the same thing as the previous one.
- The scholars have strongly warned against such attitude. Ibn Jum'ah said, "The student of

¹²⁵ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/276.

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knowledge must dismantle all thoughts that relish one's perfection and independence from scholars. Such thoughts are nothing but pure ignorance and lack of insight. A person who entertains such thoughts misses awfully a lot of the benefit. The statement of Sa'id ibn Jubayr emphasizes this point. He said, "A learned scholar earns this title as long as he sticks to seeking knowledge but if he drops out and eventually leaves it thinking he has become independent, he is awfully ignorant."¹²⁶

Ibn Jum'ah said also, "A scholar should never be arrogant to listen to a benefit he does not know from someone beneath him in either age or prestige. Instead, he should be eager to grab the benefit wherever it is. For indeed, the benefit is the object of the believer who picks it up as soon as he finds it.

A significant number of the Salaf used to occasionally seek the benefit of what they do not know from their students [if they have knowledge of it]. Al-Humaydi, a student of al-Shafi'i, said, "I accompanied al-Shafi'i on his journey from Makkah to Egypt. Both of us were benefiting from each other."¹²⁷ Ahmad ibn Hanbal said, "Al-Shafi'i

¹²⁶ - Tadhkirat al-Sami' wa al-Mutakalim: 134.

¹²⁷ - **Translator's note:** A benefit we can learn as readers of these shining role models and literally unmatched ideal scholars is: their way of killing time during journeys was discussing

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told us [i.e. Hadith-specialized scholars], 'You are more knowledgeable when it comes to Hadith discipline; so, if your verification of a hadith proved it to be authentic, let me know so I can put it into practice.'¹²⁸

- The scholars of Hadith have highlighted a unique form of Isnad in their books. This form is called: the narration of seniors from juniors.

Ibn Kathir said, "A senior in terms of age or prestige may narrate a hadith from juniors in terms of either age or prestige or possibly both of them. The most ideal example that pinpoints this form of Isnad is what the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) mentioned in his Khuttbah about Tamim al-Dari, who informed him of his sight of al-Dajjal (Antichrist) in a particular island in the sea."¹²⁹

The aforementioned reference to Tamim's hadith is recorded in Sahih Muslim. Fatimah, daughter of Qayis, who spent her 'Iddah¹³⁰ in the house of her cousin

knowledge and benefitting from each other. A way that defined them and those who followed them. A way that truly gave rise to standout figures that enriched the Islamic heritage with indisputably marvelous works.

¹²⁸ - Tadhkirat al-Sami' wa al-Mutakalim: 28.

¹²⁹ - Al-Ba'ith al-Hathith: 195.

¹³⁰ - **Translator's note:** A specific variable period of time a woman spends after her husband's death or divorce.

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'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktoum. She said, "After my Iddah was over, I heard the voice of the Mu'adhin making an announcement that the prayer would be observed in the Masjid (where) congregational prayer (is observed). So I set out towards that Masjid and observed prayer along with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and I was in the row of the women which was near the row of men.

When Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) had finished his prayer, he sat on the pulpit smiling and said:

لِيَلْزَمَ كُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ مُصَلَّاهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: ((أ تَذُرُونَ لَمْ
جَمَعْتُكُمْ؟ قَالُوا: اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ، قَالَ: إِنِّي
وَاللَّهِ مَا جَمَعْتُكُمْ لِرَغْبَةٍ وَلَا لِرَهْبَةٍ، وَ لَكِنْ
جَمَعْتُكُمْ لِأَنَّ تَمِيمًا الدَّارِيَّ كَانَ رَجُلًا نَضْرَانِيًّا
فَجَاءَ فَبَايَعَ وَأَسْلَمَ، وَ حَدَّثَنِي حَدِيثًا وَافِقَ الَّذِي
كُنْتُ أُحَدِّثُكُمْ عَنْ مَسِيحِ الدَّجَالِ، حَدَّثَنِي أَنَّهُ
رَكِبَ فِي سَفِينَةٍ بَحْرِيَّةٍ ...)).

"Every one of you should remain seated." He then said: "Do you know why I had asked you to assemble?" They said: "Allah and His Messenger know best." He said: "By Allah. I have not made you assemble for exhortation or

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for a warning, but I have detained you here for Tamim Dari, a Christian, who came and accepted Islam, told me something which agrees with what I was telling you about the Dajjal. He narrated to me that he had sailed in a ship along with thirty men of Bani Lakhm and Bani Judham and had been tossed by waves in the ocean for a month."¹³¹

Al-Nawwawi commented, "This hadith is counted in the honorary virtues of Tamim because the Prophet himself (ﷺ) narrated this hadith from him. Of course, it is a narration of the one followed, namely the Prophet, from the follower, namely Tamim. This Hadith also proves the acceptance of the narration from a trusted single person."¹³²

In addition, the companions narrated hadith from their successors. Ibn as-Salah said, "The three companions¹³³ who share the same first name (Abdullah) narrated Hadith from Ka'ab Al-Ahbar, who was Jewish."

Al-Syouti said, "The narration of the successor (Tabi'i) from his successor is also included under this category. For instance, the narration of al-Zuhri and al-'Ansari

¹³¹ - The hadith is mentioned in full in Sahih Muslim.

¹³² - Sharh al-Nawwawi 'Ala Sahih Muslim: 18/81.

¹³³ - Sheikh Ahmad Shakir said: he is referring to Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Abdullah ibn Umar, and Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As.

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from Malik. Also, over twenty Tabi'is narrated hadith from a non-Tabi'i narrator whose name is 'Amr ibn Shu'aib ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'As."¹³⁴

Likewise, al-Bukhari and Muslim recorded this hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik where the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَنِي أَنْ أَقْرَأَ عَلَيْكَ ((لَمْ يَكُنِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
، قَالَ وَ سَمَّانِي قَالَ [نَعَمْ] فَبَكَى .

"I was ordered by Allah to recite this verse before Ubay ibn Ka'ab, "Those who disbelieved among the People of the Scripture..."¹³⁵ Ubay asked, "Did Allah name me personally?" The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Yes." Then Ubay cried instantly."

Ibn Hajar commented, "This hadith proves the legitimacy of humbleness in seeking knowledge from its qualified people even if they are less prestigious. Abu Ubayd said, "The underlying reason before the Prophet's recitation before Ubay is not that the Prophet (ﷺ) would benefit from it but in order that Ubay

¹³⁴ - Tadreeb ar-Rawi: 2/245.

¹³⁵ - Al-Bayyinah: 1.

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would learn the proper way of recitation from the Prophet (ﷺ) and attain certainty.”¹³⁶

Al-Nawwawi said Al-Mazinin and al-Qadi pointed out the purpose behind the order from Allah to the Prophet (ﷺ) to recite before Ubay. The purpose is that Ubay would learn the proper and accurate way of recitation, the proper timing and place where to stop during the recitation, and the way of setting the proper tone of recitation as determined by the Islamic Law to differentiate it from any other tone. In brief, the purpose was that Ubay would learn from the Prophet (ﷺ).

It is said that the purpose was to permit recitation of the Quran in front of its skillful memorizers and to express humbleness in seeking Quran and generally religious knowledge from its qualified people even if they were below the person in class, virtue, religious commitment, lineage, and fame. It also highlights the virtue of Ubay when it comes to Quran and urges the other companions to learn from him; he became the most prominent scholar in this field to whom people from all over the Islamic world come and learn.”¹³⁷

Lastly, all the previous hadiths prove beyond doubt that the student of knowledge should stick to learning

¹³⁶ - Fath al-Bari: 7/159.

¹³⁷ -Sharh al-Nawwawi 'Ala Sahih Muslim: 16/21.

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as long as he still breathes. Because no one knows at what point one's life will change.

**The Student Of Knowledge Should Heavily Invest
His Efforts In Memorization And Consistent
Revision**

Allah sent Muhammad (ﷺ) for all humanity. He is a warner, a holder of glad tidings, and mercy for the world. Allah has sent down the Book to him.

He says,

﴿ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِن تَصَدِّقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

“It (the Quran) is not a forged statement but a confirmation of Allah's existing Books [the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel) and other Scriptures of Allah] and a detailed explanation of everything and a guide and a Mercy for the people who believe.”¹³⁸

¹³⁸ - Yusuf (12:111).

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Purposely, the Prophet (ﷺ) was an illiterate who neither reads nor writes in order to counter potential doubt that may be cast by chiefs of falsehood.

Allah says,

﴿ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا
لَأَرْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلِينَ ﴾ (٤٨)

“Neither did you (O Muhammad ﷺ) read any book before it (this Quran) nor did you write any book (whatsoever) with your right hand. In that case, indeed, the followers of falsehood might have doubted.”¹³⁹

Likewise, the first targeted nation with the message was also illiterate.

Allah says,

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾ (٢)

¹³⁹ - Al-'Ankabut (29:48).

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“He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger (Muhammad ﷺ) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them (from the filth of disbelief and polytheism), and teaching them the Book (this Quran, Islamic laws and Islamic jurisprudence) and Al-Hikmah (As-Sunnah: legal ways, orders, acts of worship, etc.). And verily, they had been before in manifest error.”¹⁴⁰

Due to the nation's illiteracy, it has been privileged with the gift of memorization. The Prophet (ﷺ) urged the nation to memorize in his speech during his farewell Hajj. He said, **“May the present among you pass on these admonitions to the absent.”¹⁴¹** Moreover, he wished blessings and happiness for whoever hears something from him, memorize it, and passes it on.

Jubayr ibn Mut'am said: I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) in Khaif in Mina saying,

نَصَرَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا سَمِعَ مَقَالَتِي فَحَفِظَهَا وَوَعَاَهَا
، وَبَلَّغَهَا مَنْ لَمْ يَسْمَعْهَا، فَرُبَّ حَامِلٍ فِقْهٍ لَا

¹⁴⁰ - Al-Jum'ah (62:2).

¹⁴¹ - Agreed upon. It is narrated by Abu Bakrah.

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فَقَّهَ لَهُ، وَ رَبَّ حَامِلٍ فَقَّهَ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ مِنْهُ،
ثَلَاثٌ لَا يُغْلُّ عَلَيْهِنَّ قَلْبُ مُؤْمِنٍ : إِخْلَاصُ
الْعَمَلِ لِلَّهِ ، وَ النَّصِيحَةُ لِأَيِّمَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ، وَ
لِزُومِ جَمَاعَتِهِمْ ، فَإِنَّ دَعْوَتَهُمْ تَحُوطُ مَنْ وَرَاءَهُمْ

'May Allah make his face radiant, the man who hears my words and conveys them. It may be that the bearer of knowledge does not understand it but passes it on to one who will understand it more than he does. There are three things that purify the heart of the believer: sincerity of action for the sake of Allah, offering sincere advice to the rulers of the Muslims, and adhering to the Jama'ah (main body of the Muslims). Their supplication is answered (i.e. encompassing every good and all of the people).'¹⁴²

¹⁴² - Recorded by Ahmad, ibn Majah, and al-Tabarani in "al-Kaber" in both the short and the long version. There is a version recorded by Ahmad on the authority of Salih ibn Kisan from al-Zuhry, and its Isnad is sound as graded by al-Munzri. It is also

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Ibn al-'theer commented on the phrase, "May Allah make his face radiant" by saying, "The intended meaning is polishing up his character and prestige."¹⁴³

Ibn al-Qayyim said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) supplicated for the favor of whoever hears something from him to have a radiant face. This radiance is affected by one's good faith that impresses its signs on the person's heart. This faith fills one's heart with happiness and deliciousness, which appears on the face, and, therefore, makes it radiant.

This meaning is conveyed in Allah's saying,

﴿فَوْقَهُمْ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا﴾

"So Allah will protect them from the evil of that Day and give them radiance and happiness."¹⁴⁴

The radiance appears on the face while happiness fills the heart. Certainly, a good heart surfaces on the face.

Allah says,

graded as sound by al-Albani in "Sahih al-Targheeb wa at-Tarheeb".

¹⁴³ - Al-Nihaya: 5/71.

¹⁴⁴ - Al-Insan (76: 11).

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﴿ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ﴾ (٢٤)

“You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure.”¹⁴⁵

The point is that the radiance which appears on the face of one who hears the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ), understands, memorizes, and passes it on is the reflection of the happiness and delight in his heart.”¹⁴⁶

The scholars of the Salaf were top-tier memorizers unmatched even by scholars of previous nations. They preserved the Hadith of this nation's Prophet (ﷺ). They have left a rich invaluable heritage. They encouraged the succeeding generations to invest in memorization. In brief, they perfectly fulfilled the trust of knowledge, which is the inheritance of the Prophet (ﷺ) who neither left Dinar or Dirham but just knowledge.

For a better look at how memorization is extremely significant, read this story of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. Abu Hamid traveled to Jurjan and learned from many of its scholars when he was young. He used to write his Sheikh's comments on Fiqh in separate notebooks

¹⁴⁵ - Al-Muttafiffin (83:24).

¹⁴⁶ - Muftah Dar al-Sa'adah: 1/71.

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he called "al-Ta'leeqah." He thought that writing could replace memorization of his notes. However, he later learned the hard way that it was wrong. He encountered an unpleasant situation on his way back to Tous (a city in Iran and his hometown) where some bandits attacked him and stole his notebooks.¹⁴⁷

Al-Ghazali continued, "I followed the bandits, but their chief noticed me and yelled at me to go back otherwise I would suffer serious trouble. I told him, "I beg you to give me back my notebooks only; there is nothing in it you would need. "He said: "What notebooks?" I said, "They are in that bag. They have the notes I learned in my journey of seeking knowledge." The man laughed and said, "How come you claim to have learned them while you still keep them in writing and now we stole it from you and left you empty with nothing?" Then he ordered one of his people to give it back to me.

I said, "That man's words were a guidance from Allah to me. The minute I arrived at Tous, I heavily invested my efforts throughout three years for memorizing every single comment in my notebooks. From that moment on, I have everything I learned stored in my

¹⁴⁷ - Adab al-Muta'alim wa Al-'Alim: 14.

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memory, and it is no longer harmful even if bandits attacked and took those notebooks from me.”¹⁴⁸

Therefore, the student of knowledge should memorize what he studies and should seize every moment in youth for it sticks in memory just like the mark left by carving in rocks.

Al-Khatib recorded Abdul-Razzaq as saying, “Knowledge is not qualified as a true knowledge unless it is stored with its learner everywhere he goes even to the restroom.”

At-Tahan commented, “The point Abdur-Razzaq is trying to make is that knowledge cannot be qualified as beneficial if its learner does not care enough to study enough and repeat it to himself all the time even when he showers. As long as such knowledge is stored in the books and not in the memory, it will not be beneficial.”¹⁴⁹

I (the author) say: the phrase (even when he showers) is quite strange. The way Abdur-Razzaq put it is more appealing because he means that the actual knowledge is the one stored in the memory and replaced the need for books. Every single piece of it is carved deep down

¹⁴⁸ - Tabaqat al-Shafi'iah al-Kibra: 6/195.

¹⁴⁹ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlak ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/250.

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in the vivid memory. Al-Shafi'i said something similar to this:

My knowledge is stuck with me wherever I go

It lies in my memory not in a box (i.e. books are stored within)

Knowledge is with me when I'm home

And it is with me when I'm in the market.

Al-Khatib recorded that HibatuAllah ibn Abdul Wahid attributed these two poetic verses to Bashar. At any rate, they are closely related to the aforementioned statement of Abdur-Razzaq.

Al-Khatib recorded that Abdullah ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with both of them) said, "Memorization skill is dependent on the degree of one's sincerity."

Al-Khatib said, "The student of knowledge should devote his memorization for the sake of Allah alone, to help Muslims in explaining what they need, and to refrain from prohibitions. Yahia ibn Yahia said: A man asked Malik ibn Anas: Is there anything that could develop memorization? Malik

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answered, "If there is anything helpful for that matter, it would be abandoning sins."

Al-Qasim ibn 'Abdur Rahman said: Abdullah said, "I incline to believe that a man forgets knowledge due to sins."¹⁵⁰

Az-Zarnooji said, "The most efficient way to memorize is through diligence, consistency, reduction of eating, night prayer, and recitation of the Quran." In contrast, sins, worries, preoccupation, and distractions are strong reasons for forgetfulness."¹⁵¹

- Full dedication, neediness, trust in Allah are efficient ways that foster the skill of memorization and developed understanding. Imam Ahmad serves a good example for this point.

His son, Abdullah, said, "Abu Zur'ah told me that my father memorized a million hadith¹⁵². I asked

¹⁵⁰ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/257.

¹⁵¹ - Ta'lim al-Mut'alim: 54.

¹⁵² - **Translator's note:** Do not think that there is a million hadith attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Ibn as-Salah said, "The word "Hadith" in their terminology covers not only sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) but also the companions and the successors. In addition, one hadith may have several versions with different chains of narration and they would call each

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him, "How do you know?" He said, "We were discussing Hadith, and he would spell out all the hadiths pertaining to each topic we discussed."

Abdur Rahman ibn Abi Hatim narrated that Sa'id ibn Amr al-Bardha'i asked abu Zur'ah: "Who is the stronger memorizer; you or Ahmad ibn Hanbal?" He answered, "Ahmad." I said, "How do you know? He said: "I found in his books hadiths without their chains of narrations at the beginning of each chapter. He is used to memorizing everything he hears from their narrators directly, but I cannot do this."

In addition, abu Zur'ah said, "The books of Ahmad weighted over twelve loads by the time he died. There was no mention of hadith narrators either inside the book or in its cover because he committed all the names of the narrators to his memory."

Al-Hasan ibn Munabih said: I heard abu Zur'ah saying, "Ahmad brought out chapters containing hadiths narrated by Sufyan with no mention of the narrators. So I thought all of them share the same narrator. I picked one, and he poured out its Isnad from his memory: Waki' and Yahia narrated, and so

version a hadith." Quoted loosely from Muqadimah of ibn as-Salah: 20.

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and so narrated. I was astonished. I tried very hard to do the same, but I could not."

Abdullah, Ahmad's son, said: "My father told me: pick whichever chapter you want from Waki's hadiths and, if you wish, to read the body of the hadith and I would tell you its respective Isnad or you read the Isnad and I would tell you its respective body of the hadith."¹⁵³

- Revision of the knowledge is a strong factor of memorization; however, failing to revise after finishing the class will potentially lead to loss of the information.

Al-Khalil ibn Ahmad said, "Be consistent in revising what you memorized more than what you wrote down."

Al-Rayashi said: Al-'Asma'i was asked, "How did you preserve what you memorized, unlike your peers who forgot?" He answered, "Unlike them, I was consistent in revising."

'Awn ibn Abdullah ibn Utbah said, "We went to Umm ad-Dardaa. We engaged in an open discussion. After we had finished, I told her, "Sorry, we bored you." She said, "No, you did not."

¹⁵³ - Tarjamat al-Imam Ahmad by al-Dhahabi: 9.

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I have targeted to make every movement I do as a worship. There was nothing more satisfying to me than studying and discussing knowledge." In another version, "discussing Fiqh."

Ibn 'Abi Layla said, "Reviving Hadith is by memorizing it. Abdullah ibn Shaddad responded, "May Allah have mercy on you! There are lots of hadiths I revived in my heart after being dead."¹⁵⁴

- Consistency in studying is an effective factor of memorization and, therefore, the Sheikhs have been encouraging it. Ahmad ibn al-Furat said, "Our Sheikhs kept reiterating the significance of memorization and they are agreed that there is nothing more efficient than consistent studying and memorization at night, which is better than in the morning."
- Abdur Razzaq said, "Sufyan al-Thawry stayed with me one night. I heard the recitation of the Quran late at night. He then got up and prayed. After he had finished, he kept repeating, 'Al-'Amash (three times), Mansour (three times), and Mughirah (three times). I asked him, "What is

¹⁵⁴ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 135.

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this?" he said, "I finished my usual part of prayer, and now it is the usual time for Hadith."

Ja'far al-Maraghi said, "I entered a graveyard in Tustar (i.e. Name of a place). I heard someone saying loudly: Al'Amash from Abi Saluh from Abu Hurairah (repeatedly for quite some time). I tracked the voice, and I saw ibn Zuhayr studying and memorizing the hadith of al'Amash."¹⁵⁵

[You can notice now that] it is a very serious matter with no joke. It involves toil, exhaustion and staying up late at night. One of those highly eminent scholars was asked: How did you learn? He answered, "By burning the midnight oil bulb and staying up until the morning." Another one answered, "By traveling here and there, staying up late at night and waking up early."

- There are specific times fit for memorization. Anyone who desires to memorize should attend to them. The best times are nights, the mornings not the evenings, midday, and, generally speaking, memorization at night is better than in the morning."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ - Al-Jami' Li-'Akhlaq ar-Rawi Wa Adaab as-Sami': 2/265.

¹⁵⁶ - Al-Faqih wa al-Mutafaqih: 2/103.

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- The scholars paid an undivided attention to memorization, the reasons leading up to it, and the factors that strengthen and weaken it. They have considered all factors that help memorization like times, places, types of food, mental state and what influences it.

Al-Khatib noted, "The best times for memorization are at nights, then midday, the mornings not the evenings, and memorization at night is more solid than in the morning.

- The best places for memorization are inside rooms, separate places far from distractions, and places that disengage the heart in activities other than the one in hand. It is inappropriate to memorize in a place surrounded by plants and green areas or places like beaches or in the middle of the roads. Such places distract the heart from concentration.

Moreover, being hungry helps in memorization than being full. One should seek such times of hunger to memorize although it is a relative matter because some people do not memorize at all in times of hunger, so it is better for such person to eat a little enough to hold him. Al-'Asma'i said, 'One of the Arabs advised his fellow Arabian, 'My brother! In this life, you need people, and people need you. So seize your life before death and beware to miss your chances. Take from this life what is just

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enough for you and leave out the excessive. Stay away from eating too much because it deprives the individual of sharp thinking and wisdom."¹⁵⁷

Memorization is one of Allah's blessings conferred on whomever He wills, and He is capable of everything. Thus, the student of knowledge should always return to Him and ask Him to bless him with such blessing. Allah blessed the great and unique Imam, the memorizer, Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari. Allah blessed him with a photographic memory.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani narrated that Abu Ahmad bin 'Udayy said:

"I heard a number of the scholars of Baghdad say that when Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari arrived in Baghdad, the scholars of Hadith heard of this and gathered to test his memorization. So, they gathered a hundred hadiths and scrambled their texts and Isnad, putting the text of this hadith with the chain of a different one, and the text of that hadith with the chain of a different one, etc. They then divided these hundred hadiths among ten individuals, so that each man had ten hadiths. These men were then told to narrate these

¹⁵⁷ - Al-Faqih wa al-Mutafaqih: 2/104.

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scrambled hadiths to al-Bukhari when they arrived at the scheduled gathering.

So, they attended the gathering, as did a group of strangers from Khurasan and Baghdad. When the guests were comfortable, one of the ten men turned to al-Bukhari and asked him about one of the hadiths that were with him. So, al-Bukhari said: "I do not recognize it." The man continued narrating each hadith, one after the other until he had narrated all ten, with al-Bukhari saying to each one: "I do not recognize it." The scholars who were present at the gathering began turning to each other in surprise realizing that he understood what was going on, and whoever were not aware of this situation would judge al-Bukhari to be deficient, incompetent, and of bad memory.

The second of the ten men then turned to al-Bukhari to ask him about another of these scrambled hadiths, to which al-Bukhari said: "I don't recognize it." He was asked about another, to which he said: "I don't recognize it." The man continued narrating each hadith, one after the other until he had narrated all ten, with al-Bukhari saying to each one: "I do not recognize it." The third of the men then turned to al-Bukhari, followed by the fourth man, until all ten men had asked about these hundred scrambled hadiths, with al-Bukhari

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responding to each of them with nothing more than: "I don't recognize it."

When he saw that they had narrated all that they had, al-Bukhari turned to the first man, saying: "As for your first hadith, you narrated such-and-such while what is correct is actually such-and-such. As for your second hadith, you said this, while the correct narration is actually that," doing the same for the third, fourth, and all the way until he finished with the last man, returning each text to its proper chain, and each chain to its proper text, with all hundred hadiths. At this moment, all admitted his incredible talent and his high eminence."

Ibn Hajr commented on this incident, "This moment captures the supremacy of al-Bukhari. It is not a wonder he returned the right text to its respective chain of narration; as he was an acclaimed memorizer. What is more wondering is that he memorized each man's mistakes in order for all the ten on the spot and from just one time."¹⁵⁸

Abu al-'Azhar said, "There were around 400 scholars of Hadith in Samarqand, and they all gathered together to try to cause Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari to make a mistake. So, in order

¹⁵⁸ - Hady al-Sary: 210.

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to test him, they mixed the chains of Sham with the chains of Iraq, and the chains of Iraq with the chains of Sham, and the chains of the Haram with the chains of Yemen. With all of this, they were unable to cause him to make a single mistake."¹⁵⁹

His peers narrated exceptional incidents that prove his sharp intelligence. Hashid ibn Isma'il said, "Al-Bukhari used to accompany us to attend the classes of Sheikhs of al-Basrah while he was still a kid, and he wrote nothing in these classes. Sixteen days passed, we scolded him for not writing. He said, "This is too much. Show me what you wrote; the total was over 15 thousand hadiths. He recited them all from his memory, and we started to correct what we wrote down based on his memorization."¹⁶⁰

- Peoples' ability of memorization is relative; some memorize instantly from the first time while others need repetition. Therefore, the standard rule states that memorization is fostered by repetition, which pins it down in the memory.

Ibn al-Nawzy said, "The most efficient way to pin down what is memorized in the memory is consistent repetition. Some people, however, do it

¹⁵⁹ - Hady al-Sary: 210.

¹⁶⁰ - Hady al-Sary: 502.

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with less repetition than others do. Others must keep repeating until it sticks. Also, the student must revise constantly after he memorizes. For instance, Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi used to repeat the lesson a hundred times and Ilkiyah al-Harrasy used to repeat seventy times. Al-Hasan ibn Abi Bakr an-Naysabouri, the Fiqh scholar, said, "Memorization does not stick unless it is repeated fifty times."

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He also said, "One Fiqh scholar repeated the lesson lots of times. An old woman in his house said to him, "I swear by Allah that I have memorized it." He asked her to repeat it, and she did. Few days later, he asked the old woman to repeat it but she said, 'I forgot it.' He said, "I keep repeating to avoid what you fell into."¹⁶¹

The student of knowledge is obligated to pay complete attention to the lessons, prepare, and revise them. Then spare no efforts in understanding them either by himself or with the help of his Sheikh. The student should read whatever he studies to his Sheikh in order to correct possible mistakes and then memorize it to the best of his ability.

The next step should be constant and consistent revision of the memorized lesson in order to stick it in the memory. Most importantly, the student should not pick up a random book and memorize it independently; instead, he should always read it before his Sheikh for correction; since independence in such things is more harmful than beneficial. This point is confirmed by al-Shafi'i, who said, 'A person who studies independently from the books will reap no benefit.'

The most important thing about memorization is complete understanding of what is memorized. The

¹⁶¹ - Al-Hath 'Alaa Hifdh al-'Ilm: 35.

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student should think deeper in the lessons, write down the benefits he learned from the Sheikh and had some colleagues to study together.

The student of knowledge should give precedence in studying to the most important topics then the less important. Significantly, Quran is the highest priority, and the student should start with it. Our scholars took a habit of teaching Hadith and Fiqh for only those who memorized the Quran. Even after memorizing it, the student should be very conscious of not being fully distracted by studying Hadith, Fiqh, or other disciplines that could possibly lead to forgetting something of it." ¹⁶²

The Prophet (ﷺ) has guided us to consistently be reading and revising the Quran. He likened forgetting the Quran fully to the escape of camels from its ties.

He said,

تَعَاهَدُوا الْقُرْآنَ ، فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ لَهُوَ أَشَدُّ
تَفْصِيًّا مِنَ الْإِبِلِ فِي عُقْلِهَا .

¹⁶² - 'Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'alim: 54.

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“Read the Qur'an regularly. By the One in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, it escapes from memory faster than a camel does from its tying ropes.”¹⁶³

Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ صَاحِبِ الْقُرْآنِ كَمَثَلِ الْإِبِلِ الْمُعَقَّلَةِ
إِنْ عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَمْسَكَهَا وَإِنْ أَطْلَقَهَا ذَهَبَتْ

“The parable of one who knows the Qur'an by heart is like the parable of an owner of hobbled camel. If he remains vigilant, he will retain it, but if he neglects it, it will escape.”¹⁶⁴

Abdullah ibn Mas'oud narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said,

اسْتَذْكِرُوا الْقُرْآنَ ، فَلَهُوَ أَشَدُّ تَفْصِيًّا مِنْ صُدُورِ
الرِّجَالِ مِنَ النَّعَمِ بِعُقْلِهَا .

¹⁶³ - Agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim from the authority of Abu Musa.

¹⁶⁴ - Agreed upon by al-Bukhari and Muslim.

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"Keep on reciting the Qur'an, for, by Him in Whose Hand my life is, Qur'an runs away (is forgotten) faster than camels that are released from their tying ropes."¹⁶⁵

Al-Bukhari's version of this hadith is narrated by abu Musa, who narrated the Prophet (ﷺ) to be saying,

"Try to remember consistently the Qur'an for it is more apt to escape from men's minds than a hobbled camel."

Al-Nawwawi commented, "This hadith encourages consistent recitation and revision of the Quran in order to avoid forgetting it. The phrase, **"one who knows the Qur'an by heart"** reflects some kind of intimate familiarity between such person and the Quran as al-Qadi maintained. The reason for likening such a person to the camel is that camels are known to be tied [in order not to escape]."¹⁶⁶

Ibn Hajr quoted 'Iyad's commentary where he said, "The phrase 'knows the Quran by heart' reflects an intimate familiarity with the Quran and the person

¹⁶⁵ - Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. This version is Muslim's wording.

¹⁶⁶ - Sharh al-Nawwawi 'All Sahih Muslim: 6/77.

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referred to as being such. The familiarity is exhibited in the consistent recitation of the Quran; this covers both reciting it from the Mushaf or from memory. This consistency creates fluency in reciting the Quran and makes it easier; however, abandoning it kills this fluency and makes it harder to recite.

As for "**as the parable of an owner of hobbled camel**", the hobbled camel represents tying one's fluency in reciting the Quran through consistent recitation and revision of it. It acts as the tying rope used to prevent the camel from running away. So, as long as consistency in recitation is observed, fluency remains. Just like the camel that cannot run away due to the tying ropes. Specifically, the example of the camel is used because it is the one animal who is most desirous to run away, whose capture after escaping is very hard to get hold of.

The sentence, '**Quran is more apt to escape from men's minds than a hobbled camel**' stresses on the consistency of reciting the Quran because it makes it stuck in the memory just like the camel which is stuck because of the rope tying it to the ground."¹⁶⁷

The next step after memorizing the Quran should be studying the fundamentals of the Arabic language and then try to pick a briefing text of each discipline in

¹⁶⁷ - Fath al-Bary: 8/697.

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order to memorize it. Al-Nawwawi said, "Priority in studying is dependent on the element of importance. Significantly, Fiqh, Grammar, Usul al-Fiqh (Fundamentals of Fiqh), and Hadith are the most important then follows the rest of disciplines. Next, the student should anatomize¹⁶⁸ what he memorized and seek the help of the best scholars of the discipline."¹⁶⁹

You should know –may Allah guide you- that sincerity is the number one rule in seeking knowledge. The aforementioned statement of Abdullah ibn 'Abbas where he states, "A person's memorization is dependent on one's intention" is clear on this point. Our scholars not only have pinned forgetting knowledge on sins but also deemed there is Zakah stipulated on knowledge just as the one obligated on one's wealth. They are used to treat textual evidence very seriously with no joking nor delaying acting upon the evidence. Isma'il ibn Majma' said, "We used to practice Hadith in order to memorize it."

Just be determined, do not be concerned with time, and depend on Allah because He is the One, who grants success.

¹⁶⁸ - Anatomize: to separate minutely or thoroughly the parts, aspects, or components of in order to permit detailed scrutiny or meticulous examination. [Merriam Webster Dictionary].

¹⁶⁹ - Adaab al-'Alim Wa al-Muta'alim: 55.

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**The student should stick to the learning code of
conduct**

The Prophet (ﷺ) had been missioned with Prophethood after a relative break in the chain of Messengers. His nation was illiterate, short-tempered, and naturally followed its desires. It resisted to be managed by others and despised compliance. Words like organization and system were not in their vocabulary.

The Prophet (ﷺ) brought them out from their darkness to the light and replaced their chaotic life in all of its aspects with an organized one. Allah had accepted the supplication of Ibrahim when he said,

﴿ رَبَّنَا وَأَبْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ

الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

“Our Lord! Send amongst them a Messenger of their own, who shall recite unto them Your Verses and instruct them in the Book (this Quran) and Al-Hikmah (full knowledge of the Islamic laws and jurisprudence or wisdom or

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Prophethood, etc.), and purify them. Verily!
You are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise."¹⁷⁰

Allah blessed them with the mission of Muhammad
(ﷺ). He says,

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيَّةِ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

"It is He who has sent among the illiterate a
Messenger from themselves reciting to them
His verses and purifying them and teaching
them the Book and wisdom - although they
were before in clear error."¹⁷¹

Al-Qurtubi commented, "Ibn 'Abbas said, 'The word
"Illiterate" covers all the Arabs including those who
know writing as well as those who do not because
there was no scripture sent among them." It is also said
that it refers to those who do not know writing only,
which applies to the tribe of Quraysh. The Messenger
is Muhammad (ﷺ). His lineage lies in the heart
of the Arabs with whom he had ties of kinship except
for the tribe of Taghlib. Allah purified His Prophet

¹⁷⁰ - al-Baqarah (2:129).

¹⁷¹ - Al-Jum'ah (62:2).

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(ﷺ) from belonging to them because they were Christians as maintained by ibn Ishaq.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was illiterate. Al-Mawardi remarked, 'There are three underlying reasons behind the bounty of the Prophet's illiteracy:

- 1- To be consistent with the description prophesized by the previous Prophets.
- 2- To fit in the surrounding society so that all have a common ground.
- 3- To root out any misconception that involves accusing him of creating the content of his message."

I (al-Qurtubi) say, "This proves beyond doubt the truthfulness of his Prophethood and his miracles. The word "verses" refer to the Quran. "Purify" their hearts with faith (Eman) as maintained by ibn 'Abbas. Others like ibn Jurayj and Muqatil maintained that he would cleanse them from the blemishes of disbelief and sins. The word 'Book' refers to the Quran while "wisdom" refers to the Sunnah as maintained by al-Hasan. Ibn 'Abbas, however, maintained that the word 'Book' refers to literacy because it spread all over Arabia coping with the obligation of registering the Islamic Law. Malik ibn 'Anas maintained that the word 'wisdom' means understanding of the religion. "They were before him in a clear error" means that Arabs

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before the mission of the Prophet (ﷺ) were extremely deviant from the truth.”¹⁷²

The point is that Allah sent Muhammad (ﷺ) with knowledge and wisdom. He was sent to teach humanity how the proper life looks. He promoted all forms of goodness and warned against all forms of evil. His successors whom Allah blessed to follow his guidance followed his path until Allah advanced his religion and crowned it with victory. The Prophet's nation thereby earned its right of being the best nation that ever existed; their life pattern is the most moderate and their understanding is the most refined while those standing in opposition to them are the worst there is.

The wheel of this nation progressed straight-ahead [led by] a unique generation (i.e. the Salaf) succeeded by righteous trustees who undertook the trust of knowledge and fulfilled it perfectly. They established the regulatory fundamentals of knowledge and left behind a blessed and unique heritage. Unfortunately, their successors abused this trust and preferred to choose a heritage other than that of their predecessors. They detached themselves from the glorious history of their nation and put on an appearance people do not recognize because it is strange to them. Moreover, this

¹⁷² - Tafseer al-Qurtubi: 6571.

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group of people claimed falsely to have knowledge, deviated, and confused people.

As a result, generations emerged who believe the [Islamic] heritage to be worthless and rather harmful. They believed that goodness is what others have even if it violates the very cores of this religion. In addition, they believed that evil lies in following the Salaf, who are guiding stars amidst the darkness.

At any rate, one of the significant matters the scholars of this nation devoted their attention to is rules of education. They followed the example of the Salaf and never invented rules of their own. Their students were wise and outstanding and became well-versed scholars. The rules of education they set are the most helpful for the revival of this nation; regretfully, those who were detached from this nation's unique heritage lost the ability of sound understanding.

Up to this point of this elaboration, do you think I took you in a different course of discussion than the one we were at? Do you even think we changed the course? I do not believe we diverted away from our discussion, and I believe you believe so. What I am trying to say is that the current state of this nation displays a spirit of a humiliating defeat towards stern and hollow cultures, which were created by people driven by hate

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and malice.¹⁷³ Do not misunderstand me, thinking that my apparent resistance to the "Other" cultures is for no reason. Instead, everything was plotted accurately against this nation and, unfortunately, it yielded its hurtful results.

The scheme was to strip Muslims from their loyalty to the Islamic nation and to make them feel shameful for such belonging, not to mention the inseparable depiction of weakness and stagnancy to whoever promoted it. Do you think you have been led to believe so? This is something you would know. **In any case, let's get back to what we were discussing: stick to the learning conducts.**

- The student must realize the major difference between him and his Sheikh. He is just a student and nothing more. Critically, failing to realize this difference incurs nothing but unpleasant consequences. Likewise, dropping the formality between the student and the teacher diminishes any possibility of profitable learning. Allah ordered the believers to observe this conduct with their mentors and leaders.

¹⁷³ - **Translator's Note:** Basically the sheikh is addressing the issue of the history, heritage, and culture of the Islamic nation versus the Western secular culture.

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Allah says,

﴿ لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا ﴾

“Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves like the call of one of you to another.”¹⁷⁴

Ibn Kathir commented, “Al-Dahak narrated that ibn 'Abbas said, “People used to call the Prophet (ﷺ) by his first name or by his surname (abu al-Qasim). Allah ordered them against it and ordered them to call him by Messenger or Prophet of Allah (ﷺ) Mujahid and Sa'id ibn Jubayr also made this statement. Qatadah said, 'Allah ordered that His Prophet (ﷺ) must be highly honored and respected.'"

Muqatil said, 'Don't call him by his first name or by his father's name; instead, honor him by calling him Prophet or Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).' In addition, Malik narrated that Zayd ibn 'Aslam said, "Allah ordered the believers to honor him, as inferred from the text of the Quran."¹⁷⁵ The student should not miscalculate the humbleness of the teacher. The student must not cross the lines of respect for his

¹⁷⁴ - Al-Nur (24:63).

¹⁷⁵ - Tafsir ibn Kathir: 3/306.

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teacher. For instance, al-Shafi'i admired his student al-Rabi' ibn Sulayman. Ar-Rabi' said, "I visited al-Shafi'i once when he was sick. I said to him, 'May Allah strengthen your weakness.' Al-Shafi'i responded, 'If Allah were to do so, I would be dead.'" Al-Rabi' hurriedly apologized, 'By Allah, I meant nothing but asking recovery for you.' Al-Shafi'i responded, 'I know. Even if you were to insult me, I would know that you desire nothing but good for me.'¹⁷⁶

Abu Ya'laa narrate that Al-Shafi'i taught al-Rabi' to say, "May Allah strengthen your strength and weaken your weakness." You can notice how humble al-Shafi'i is with his student. Despite this humbleness, al-Rabi' said, "By Allah, I have never drunk water before al-Shafi'i out of deep respect for him."¹⁷⁷

It is not easy to find a new caring teacher if the student refused to learn from his old teacher. Fortunately for Abu Yusuf, who found a caring teacher such as Abu Haneefah. He used to check on him every now and then. One time, Abu Yusuf recovered from a sickness he had, and he displayed a determined spirit in studying. Abu Haneefah remarked, "I place a very high trust in you for the benefit of the Muslims. If you were to die, a big

¹⁷⁶ - *Adaab al-Shafi'i wa Manaqibih*: 274.

¹⁷⁷ - *Tadhkirat al-Sami' Wa al-Mutakalim*: 88.

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portion of knowledge would die along with you." When he heard this, he thought so high of himself and became overconfident. He went to teach on his own, left Abu Haneefah's class, and students came to study under him. On the other side, Abu Haneefah noticed his absence from his class and he realized what happened to him.

He still was caring and did not give up on him. So he sent someone with a message to him. He told the messenger to ask him: What do you say about a man who went to a dressmaker and requested him to shorten his Thobe. The customer came back after a few days to claim his thobe, but the dressmaker denied receiving any cloth. A few days passed, the person came back to claim his thobe but this time the dressmaker gave it back to him. The question is: should the dressmaker claim his fee or not?

Abu Haneefah told the messenger to say: if he answers with "yes" say: you're wrong, and if he answers with "no" say: you're wrong."

Ironically, abu Yusuf used to work for a dressmaker when he was young - probably his father was a dressmaker himself and thus the question was about such a thing-. And if the "new teacher" failed to answer something in his very craft, him being a teacher is pointless.

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The messenger went to him. He answered, "Yes, the dressmaker should take his fee." The messenger responded, "You are wrong, " he stopped to think for a while and answered, "No, he does not deserve a fee." He responded, "No, You are wrong."

At this point, he was flatly confused and harbored regret once he knew he was wrong. He immediately hustled back to attend his previous class. Abu Haneefah told him, "Definitely, you came back for that question about the dressmaker." He answered, 'Yes.' Abu Haneefah said, "How strange! A man stepped up to issue Fatwa and teach people the religion of Allah, but could not answer such a simple question! The student asked abu Haneefah, 'Please teach me!'

Abu Haneefah said, "If the dressmaker shortened it after stealing it, he is not entitled to any fees because he meant to shorten it for himself. On the contrary, if he shortened it before stealing it, he is entitled to his due fees because he meant to shorten it for the Thobe's owner.' He continued, "Whoever toyed with the idea of dispensing with knowledge should never expect any success on his part."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ - Abu Haneefah: *Bat'l al-Huriyah wa al-Tasamuh fee al-Islam*:
114.

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- The student should always write down the notes that come across during the class. He should always have a pen and pad in order to register instantly every benefit from the class or from his own deduction and studies. It is said: knowledge is a catch and registering it is its curb. Notably, al-Bukhari titled one of the chapters in his Sahih: chapter of writing knowledge.

Ibn Hajar said, "Al-Bukhari's approach in handling debatable religious verdicts is using indefinite language to describe them. This applies to the above-mentioned chapter (writing knowledge). The reason is that the Salaf disagreed on this matter whether to observe it or leave it. This matter was unanimously settled on not only the permissibility of writing knowledge but also recommending it. Actually, in certain situations, it is indispensable for one who tends to forget but at the same time charged with conveying knowledge."¹⁷⁹

The chapter of "writing knowledge" cites hadiths as follows. Abu Juhayfah said, "I asked Ali: Do you have a book? He answered, 'No, only Allah's book, the power of understanding which has been bestowed (by Allah) upon a Muslim or what is (written) in this sheet of paper (with me).' Abu Juhaifa said, "I asked, 'What is (written) in this

¹⁷⁹ - Fath al-Bari: 1/246.

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sheet of paper?' `Ali replied, it deals with The Diyya (blood money) paid by the killer to the relatives of the victim), the ransom for the releasing of the captives from the hands of the enemies, and the law that no Muslim should be killed in Qisas (equality in punishment) for the killing of (a disbeliever)."¹⁸⁰

Another hadith in the same chapter states: In the year of the Conquest of Mecca, the tribe of Khuza'a killed a man from the tribe of Bani Laith in revenge for a killed person, belonging to them. They informed the Prophet (ﷺ) about it. He rode over on his camel and delivered a speech. Then, a man from Yemen came and said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Get that written for me." The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered his companions to **write that for him.**"¹⁸¹

Ibn Hajr noted, "The man referred to in this hadith is Abu Shah. His name was mentioned elsewhere in the chapter of "Lost items" in Sahih al-Bukhari."

Moreover, Abu Hurairah said, "There is none among the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) who has narrated more Hadiths than I except

¹⁸⁰ - Sahih al-Bukhari.

¹⁸¹ - Sahih al-Bukhari.

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‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr (bin Al-‘As) who used to write them and I never did the same.”¹⁸²

Ibn Hajr commented, “The previous three hadiths proves that the Prophet (ﷺ) permitted writing what he says. However, these texts contrast the hadith narrated by Abu Sa’id al-Khudri where the Prophet (ﷺ) says, “Do not write anything I say except the Quran.”

Reconciliation between these two directives

The refraining order against writing was limited to the time of Quran revelation lest inadvertent mixture between it, and other statements would occur. Beyond this point is from the refraining order. A different perspective suggests that the refraining order addresses writing the Quran with something else on one sheet while the permission to write addresses setting them apart from each other. Or the refraining order is abrogated by the permissibility of writing. This last suggestion is preferable and does not oppose the other suggestions.

Another suggestion states that the refraining order is exclusive to people who would solely depend on

¹⁸² - Sahih al-Bukhari.

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writing without memorization while the permission is given to those will not follow this path. Another position believes the hadith that addresses refraining to be anomalous. However, the right position is that its chain stops at Abu Sa'id al-Khudri as maintained by al-Bukhari and others.

The scholars maintained: some companions and successors disliked recording Hadith and preferred that their students depend solely on memorization exactly like them. Nevertheless, they ended up recording it due to the wane of determination [compared to earlier generations] and the fear of losing knowledge. The first who recorded Hadith was ibn Shihab al-Zuhri by the beginning of the second century after he was ordered by Umar ibn Abd al-'Aziz. Later, recording Hadith spread then authored books classifying hadith emerged afterwards. All thanks to Allah for the plenty of goodness resulted from such movement."¹⁸³

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr recorded regarding the permissibility of writing knowledge: Ma'n said, 'Abdur-Rahman son of Abdullah ibn Mas'oud brought out a sheet and swore that it was written in his father's handwriting."

¹⁸³ - Fath al-Bari: 1/251.

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Khalid ibn Khadash al-Baghdadi narrated, "When I bid farewell to Malik ibn 'Anas, I asked him for advice. He said, "Stick to piety in both your public and secret affairs, offer advice to all Muslims, and write down knowledge from scholars."

Sawadah ibn Hayan said, "I heard Mu'awiyah ibn Qurrah saying, "Do not count anyone who does not write knowledge as a scholar."¹⁸⁴

Ibn 'Abd al-Barr wrote a chapter in his book "Jami Bayan al-'Ilm" named: Dislike of writing knowledge in sheet". He recorded the Salaf's statements regarding this issue. Afterwards he said, "The earlier statements that sides with the dislike of writing knowledge follow the methodology of Arabs who were born innately with the ability of memorization. Advocates of this position like ibn 'Abbas, al-Sha'bi, ibn Shihab, al-Nakh'ai, Qatadah, and the likes of them follow their innate nature of memorization which enabled them to capture whatever is said just by hearing it. It is widely known that the Arabs were privileged with the skill of memorization. However, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) permitted writing knowledge and some scholars permitted it as well¹⁸⁵ even recommended it."

¹⁸⁴ - Jami' Bayan al-'Ilm: 92.

¹⁸⁵ - I do not know why ibn 'Abd al-Barr mentioned the permission of the scholars independently after citing the Prophet's approval of writing. It is a fact that those who agree with writing

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To conclude, the student of knowledge should note down benefits that cross by as much as he can because it fosters his skill of memorization and preserves his knowledge.

- The student should have a studious study partner who aids him in his studies and reminds him whenever he slacks off. In contrast, he should avoid careless study partners.

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I had an Ansari neighbor from Bani Umaiya bin Zaid who used to live at `Awali Al-Medina and used to visit the Prophet (ﷺ) by turns. He used to go one day and I another day. When I went, I used to bring the news of that day regarding the Divine Inspiration and other things, and when he went, he used to do the same for me."¹⁸⁶

Ibn Hajar said, "This neighbor's name is Itban ibn Malik as maintained by ibn al-Qastlani, but he did not provide proof."¹⁸⁷

knowledge borrows their knowledge from the Prophet (peace be upon him) while the position of those who disagree is disregarded.

¹⁸⁶ - Al-Bukhari.

¹⁸⁷ - Fath al-Bari: 1/223.

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It was mentioned earlier that it is preferable to avoid socializing with people as much as possible and to have a sincere study partner and a committed companion in the book "The etiquettes of the student of knowledge". Therefore, it is needless to cite it here.

- Full dedication to knowledge and avoidance of [unnecessary] concerns because worries are the plague of one's intelligence.

Al-Shafi'i said, "Do not consult the one who does not have food in his house because his mind is somewhere else."

- Activeness in revision. For instance, Abu Yusuf had debated Fiqh scholars while he was hungry for five straight days.¹⁸⁸ Also, Imam 'Ilkyia al-Harasi used to revise his lessons ninety times.

¹⁸⁸ -Translator's note: This indicates that he did not have time to eat because he was extremely busy in debating and preparing for it like doing researchetc.

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We have presented before you the method of our scholars in seeking knowledge in terms of both learning and studying it. Still, there are some people, whose sincere intentions are out of question and whose efforts in supporting the religion are undoubted, who accuse such methods as outdated and unfit for the [modern] current learners and thinkers. I still do not understand how some people who exert efforts, time, and life for the sake of this religion but do not strive to revive this Islamic nation from within not by outsourcing. I still do not understand this mentality.

This nation is blessed. It is as beneficial as rain. It is unique in its formal cloth, appearance, understanding, movement, and everything about it. So whoever desires to progress this nation, nothing but this path must be taken.

Al-Albani said, "It is taken for granted in this religion that it is impermissible for Muslims -males and females- to imitate disbelievers in terms of their acts of worship, festivals, and formal cloth. This standard rule is extremely celebrated in Islamic Law but, disappointingly, a significant number of Muslims ignored it even some of those involved in promoting this religion. This stemmed from their ignorance, following evil desires, or drifting along the modern

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customs of the disbelieving Europe. Eventually, humiliation befell upon Muslims and the domination of the West over them plus the colonization.

Allah says,

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ﴾

"Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."¹⁸⁹

It should be known that the proofs of this standard rule are plentiful in both the Quran and the Sunnah although the proofs of the Quran are phrased in general terms, the Sunnah explain them in detail as always."¹⁹⁰

Sheikh al-Albani mentioned the authentic proofs from the Quran and Sunnah that perfectly match the point he discussed. Anyone who desires to check them, he should revise the earlier reference "Jilbab al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah" authored by him because citing them here is off the point and beyond this book's scope.

Oddly, some people just purposely want to not only drive us away from the history of our nation, our rich

¹⁸⁹ - Al-Ra'd (13: 11).

¹⁹⁰ - Jilbab al-Mar'ah al-Muslimah fee al-Kitab wa al-Sunnah: 1613.

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heritage and genuine culture but also belittle it when they present, as a substitute, hollow arguments. The right countermeasure is to heighten the awareness of loyalty and connection to history in this nation's citizens.

Read the following example. Each nation in Europe takes pride in its language. For instance, the French were too proud of their language and considered it their number one remarkable achievement. This pride is best represented in their Institute De France's refusal to retain an English phrase in the French language that spread as a result of the World War. This phrase was "*naval blockade*". This phrase found its way to the French language after the French's disastrous loss in World War. After everything settled, the Institute De France perceived this phrase to be independently a disaster if it remains in the French language just like a foreign soldier standing in the land of an independent country carrying his ammo and country's flag declaring his dominance and sovereignty."¹⁹¹

Indeed, the Islamic nation has exclusive, unique treasures others do not have while what they have, we can have. Our religion is not only unmatched but also impossible to compare to others' religions by any measure. This life will submit to us if we stick firmly to

¹⁹¹ - Tahta Rayat al-Quran by Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i: 25.

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our religion. Ironically, the Western civilization that exports to us its corruption is originally civilized by virtue of our own fundamentals. So, how come there are people among us who ridicule these fundamentals and fall into the trap of falsehood the Western civilization uses to intrigue them. I have presented to you what ibn Khaldoun said. It is your duty to know the men who built the Islamic civilization. Learn how Westerners have been raised on the very fundamentals ibn Khaldoun laid. Simultaneously, consider how the late Muslim generations have gone extremely far from the fundamentals he laid.

We should raise ourselves to respect our Islamic origins. We should look high to our Salaf and learn how they learned and studied. The following example presents the method they followed in learning Hadith and implementing the gradual learning strategy ibn Khaldoun referred to in his book "al-Muqadimah".

Al-Qasimi said, "Learning Hadith follows the following three step program:

- 1- **Presentation:** the Sheikh himself reads a book of any Hadith-related sub-disciplines¹⁹² in front of his students without delving into any linguistic, juristic, or narration-wise details.

¹⁹² - Hadith is a general discipline that includes

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- 2- **Exploration of the text:** the Sheikh should pause at the end of each hadith, for example, to discuss the meaning of a vague word, complex structure, answer a possible question, or address direct issues related to this hadith. Afterwards, he should provide simple answers to solve these issues.
- 3- **Meticulous discussion:** the Sheikh should exhaust every single detail related to each word in the hadith. If any vague word or complex structure crosses by, he should provide an explanation for it supporting his explanation with proofs from Arabic poetry. He should discuss similar words and structures and the way they are used. Moreover, he should address in detail names of narrators, their respective tribes and any strange stories regarding them if there is any connection. This program followed by the early and current scholars of the two sanctuaries has been transmitted to us."¹⁹³

If you were to compare the strategies and methodologies of education promoted by our early scholars with those invented by the modern day advocates of [modern] education, you would

¹⁹³ - Qawa'id al-Tahdith: 235.

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definitely find a huge gap in the favor of our early scholars. Thus, stick close to the heritage of our early scholars and their history. And indeed Allah is the Helper.

I ask Allah to unite this nation and to guide its citizens to what is best for this nation; for indeed He is capable of everything. May Allah's peace and blessings be upon our Messenger (ﷺ), his family, and his companions. Our last words are: all praise is due to Allah.

Written by:

Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Sa'id ibn Raslan
(May Allah forgive him and his parents.)



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Ya Allah, I ask that you accept this effort from me &
included it in the book of good deeds of My Parents.
Ameen !

Abu Zakia Salih Abdul Hakim Died 1977.

Umm Zakia Sakinah Zawjah Malik Abdul Kareem

Abu Jalane Malik Abdul Kareem

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