



Knowledge and Salvation in Islam  
by Marc Manley

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه و نستغفروه و فيه نتوكل، و نعوذ به من شرور أنفسنا و سيئات أعمالنا،  
فمن يهده الله فلا مضل له، و من يضله فلا هادي له،  
و نشهد أن لا إله إلا الله، وحده لا شريك له، رب الأرباب و مسبب الأسباب، فاطر السموات  
السبع، خالق كل شيء،  
و نشهد أن محمدا، النبي الأمي، عبده و رسوله، ختم الأنبياء و أشرف المرسلين، صلى الله  
عليه و على آله و أزواجه و أصحابه و أنصاره و ذرياته و سلم. إن الله و ملائكته يصلون على  
النبي، يا أيها الذين ءامنوا صلوا عليه و سلموا تسليما، و بعد

Verily all praise belongs to God - thus we praise Him, seek His aid, repent our sins to Him and in Him do we place our trust. We seek protection in Him from the evil whisperings of our own souls as well as from blameworthy actions and deeds.

For the one God has chosen to guide, there is no misguider for him. And as for one whom God has misguided, there is no guidance. And we bear testimony that there is no god but God, Allah, One is He, with no partner, Lord of lords, Causer of all causes, the Fashioner of the Seven Heavens, Creator of all that is. We also bear witness that Muhammad, the Unlettered Prophet, is His slave and messenger, Seal of the Prophets and most noble of the Messengers. May God send peace and blessings upon him, his family, his wives, his companions, his helpers, and his progeny. Surely God and His Angels send blessings upon the Prophet therefore O' you who believe!, send prayers and blessings upon him abundantly.

Dear respected brothers and sisters in Islam, I greet you today with the greeting of Paradise, “as-Salaamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakaatuhu”.

## First Khutbah – Main Points

In today’s world, where the Sacred is hardly ever mentioned in the public space, people have lost any connection or notion of knowledge either being sacred, or in the case of Muslims, leading to the Sacred, as one of Allah Beautiful Ninety-nine names is *al-Quddus*. This detachment from knowledge being sacred has caused the modern world to suffer from a number of maladies, from schizophrenia to megalomania. With the first, we see its symptoms everywhere: **emotionally stunted; social isolation** [we have to resort to online “social networking” web sites to know one another]; **disorganized speech**, in which much is connoted [دلالة – “care”, “standard of living”, “welfare”] yet very little is denoted [إشارة – welfare for who? What does a ‘standard of living’ look like? What type of care and for who?], and **disorganized behavior** [one can even say in the absence of man’s recognition of *tawhid*, he becomes both more fractured socially, where all attempts to repair such fractures aim to make *tawhid* by his own hands]. In summary, this state can be described as the simultaneity of contradictory and/or incompatible elements.

Let us look at a few differences between knowledge and information. In the exchange between Musa and Khidr in the Qur’an, Khidr rebukes Musa in the following verse:

و كيف تصبر على ما لم تحط به خبرا

“And how could you be patient with a thing of which you have no **experience** with?” [Q: 18:68]

The use of the inverted *khubr*, with *dummaḥ*, is a slight inflection, though an important one. For *khubr*, in this case refers to a type of knowing that is centered on experience. In a way, one cannot know it without experiencing it – though a word of caution. This in no way equates to the Kantian/Enlightenment model of experience. Khidr has received his knowledge from Allah and therefore has experience with it. Musa, entering into this new context, has no experience, and thus he is unable to be patient and understand what and why Khidr is doing.

This verse is followed up again in the same *suwrah*, where Allah, describing the situation unfolding between Musa and Khidr, says:

كذلك و قد أحطنا بما لديه خبرا

“Assuredly, We encompassed him with Our knowledge.” [Q: 18:91]

In many ways, *khubr*, knowledge or experience, is very close to *‘ilm*, also known as knowledge. Yet we will see a distinct difference between the two, namely salvation of the human soul.

Let us turn now to Allah, as for forgiveness, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, the Loving.

الحمد لله, و الصلوات و السلام رسول الله و بعد

## Second Khutbah – Main Points

We left off with a brief introduction looking at the nature of information, known as either *khabr*, or its inflection, *khubr*, in the Qur'an. But one of the important differences between the two is that *khabr/khubr* is never connected to the salvation of the human soul. *'Ilm*, however, is. First a brief look at *'ilm* in the Arabic language and in the Qur'an:

*'Ilm* can have many different translations in both English as well as many shades of meaning in the Arabic language. Amongst those are knowledge, familiarity, as well as the capacity to distinguish, in the verbal form. *'Ilm* also has the meaning to show or denote something. For instance, *'alam* [علم], is a signpost or a flag – something that points to or demonstrates the existence of something else. One very delicate example is that between *'ālim* and *'ālam*, where the first is often called a knowledgeable man. In other words, one who can point to the source of knowledge by distinguishing truth from falsehood. Whereas *'ālam* is the world, or the universe. It is like the signpost, sitting there, pointing to the True Source of Knowledge – Allah.

Let us look to the Qur'an for some examples to shed some light. In *suwrah al-An'ām*, Allah says:

و جعلوا لله شركاء الجن و خلقهم – و خرخوا له بنين و بنات بغير علم – سبحانه و  
تعلى عما يصفون

*“And they made the Jinn associates with Allah despite having created them! And still they exceed all bounds by attaching to Him sons and daughters, having no knowledge of that. Allah is free from any ascribing, high above what they attribute.” [Q: 6:100]*

Man, at his own detriment, and having no sacred knowledge, will exceed all proper bounds [خرق] by attaching partners to Allah. This is one of the primary functions of knowledge for the Muslims – correct knowledge so we do not commit grave errs, the most heinous of them: *shirk*. In fact, we can see that proper knowledge of Allah is vital to how we will stand on the Day of Judgment.

Modern man often thinks of religion as being storied and backwards. The rebuttal is equivalent to what Allah describes in *surah an-Nahl*:

و إذا قيل لهم ماذا أنزل ربكم قالوا أسطير الأولين

ليحملوا أوزارهم كاملة يوم القيامة – و من أوزار الذين يضلونهم بغير علم – ألا  
ساء ما يزررون

*“And when it is said to them, ‘What is it your lord sent down?’, they replied, ‘Stories of the Ancients’”.*

*“They shall bear that burden entirely on the Day of Calamity as well as the burden of those they misguided, having not had any knowledge. How evil indeed is what they accomplished.” [Q: 16:24-25]*

Not having proper knowledge can be a detriment to your own soul as well as to those around you. This has never been more the case today, when Muslims are often confronted with knowledge traditions that at their core have become divorced from any recognition of the sacred and are in fact, hostile towards it. This dilemma possess as serious challenge for Muslims today – whether it be in the West or in traditional Muslim lands, for these discourses are global now. Many Muslims are pressured to conform to expressing the transcendent values of Islam through the sieve of knowledge traditions that have rendered themselves incompatible. This discourse can be seen as described by Allah in *suwrah al-Hajj*:

و من الناس من يجادل في الله بغير علم و لا هدى و لا كتاب منير

*“And there are some from amongst mankind who quarrel about Allah despite having no knowledge therein no Divine Guidance or an illuminating book.” [Q: 22:8]*

To conclude – we have to see ourselves again as having something to contribute. When we look around at the world today, and see a mass of confusion, both in the Muslims and the non-Muslims, we must ask ourselves, where is our role in this? Why are we not stepping forward to provide some illumination, to reestablish the sacred in human life and dignity, which can only be had through Allah and the Sunnah of His beloved Prophet. I will close with a du’ah from the Prophet Muhammad regarding our condition and that of acquiring sacred knowledge for the sake of salvation on the Day of Judgment:

اللهم إني أعوذ بك من قلب لا يخشع

و دعاء لا يسمع

و من نفس لا يشبع

و من علم لا ينفع

أعوذ بك من هؤلاء الأربعة

*“O’ Allah! I seek protection in you from a heart that has no humility,  
And from a supplication that is not heard,  
And from a soul that cannot be satiated,  
And from knowledge that has no benefit.  
I seek refuge in you from all four of these!  
Amin.*