

Fast 30: Proper knowledge can save man from wrongdoing and exalts him

- It is not faith by itself, but knowledge along with it, which saves a person from going on the wrong path and, more than that, elevates him morally. When Bukhari compiled his collection of Hadith reports, which is regarded as the most authentic collection of Hadith, and he arranged the reports from the Holy Prophet Muhammad under subject headings called ‘books’, his book number 1 is a brief one on how revelation began to the Holy Prophet, book number 2 is the Book of Faith and book number 3 is the Book of Knowledge. How very perceptive of him to indicate that the basis of Islam is revelation which came to the Holy Prophet, and the next most important topic is faith, or what beliefs a Muslim is required to hold. The next topic of importance is knowledge. The Quran itself says:

“Allah will exalt those of you who believe, **and those who are given knowledge**, to high ranks.” (58:11)

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ
أَوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ط

So knowledge goes together with belief. Belief must be supported by knowledge, and **there is no such concept in Islam as believing something blindly** without understanding and without testing it by reason and logic.

- Some have considered the mention of “knowledge” to mean knowledge of the teachings of Islam. But it is clear that the Quran means broader knowledge:

“And those who have been given knowledge see that what is revealed to you (O Prophet) from your Lord, is the Truth and it guides into the path of the Mighty, the Praised.” (34:6)

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ
مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطِ
الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٦﴾

This shows that people who **already** possessed knowledge, when they then looked at the revelation which came to the Holy Prophet, they saw by means of the knowledge which they possessed that this revelation was the truth. The Quran also describes itself in these words: “it is clear messages in the hearts of those who are granted knowledge” (29:49). The meaning is that the truths revealed in the Quran appeal to the minds of knowledgeable and learned persons, as being consistent with knowledge. It also means that some of the truths and principles taught by the Quran occur independently in the minds of knowledgeable people who have never read the Quran.

- There is no comparison between those who have knowledge and those who do not:

“Say: Are **those who know** and **those who do not know** alike? Only those who have understanding are mindful.” (39:9)

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا
يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٩﴾

The first sentence can also be translated as: “Can those who know **be equal to** those who do not know?” In the next sentence, the term “those who have understanding” (*ul-ul-albāb*) really indicates the possession of deep and powerful intellect. The more knowledge and intellect a person possesses, the better position he or she is in to be mindful of the teachings of Islam.

- Knowledge can save man from destruction. Those in hell will say:

“And they say: If only we had listened or **pondered**, we should not have been among the inmates of the burning Fire.” (67:10)

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي
أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٠﴾

The word for “pondered” here comes from *'aql* (عقل), and thus it means: “had used our understanding or reason”. It doesn’t just say here: “if only we had listened”. If man was required simply to listen and obey, that is all it would have said. By adding “or pondered” it is obviously meant that listening means pondering.

- About the misleading of man by the devil, the Quran says:

“And certainly he (the devil) led astray numerous people from among you. Could you not then understand?” (36:62)

وَلَقَدْ أَضَلَّ مِنْكُمْ جِبِلًّا كَثِيرًا أَفَلَمْ
تَكُونُوا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

The words “could you not then understand” again use the word *'aql* and are also translated by many as: “Did you not use your reason?” Use of reason could have prevented them from being led astray by the devil.

- Social evils, barbaric practices and following superstition are due to ignorance and lack of knowledge:

“They are losers indeed who kill their children **foolishly without knowledge**, and forbid what Allah has provided for them, forging a lie against Allah. They indeed go astray, and are not guided.” (6:140)

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ
عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى
اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

This refers to practices in Arab society at the time when the Holy Prophet arose: infanticide and prohibiting certain foods by making baseless claims that Allah had forbidden them.

- Without establishing the authenticity of the knowledge which we receive, spreading and acting on such unconfirmed information is condemned in the Quran:

“But if any news of security or fear comes to them, they spread it about. And if they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, **those of them who can search out knowledge of it** would have known it.” (4:83)

وَ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ
أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ط وَ لَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي
الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ
مِنْهُمْ

Today this is done by forwarding to your circle of friends any unsubstantiated news received in an e-mail, **whose origin is not at all known**, neither known to you, nor to the person who sent it to you, nor again to the person who sent it to him, and so on.

If we accept and act upon information as true, without knowing that it is actually true, we shall be held responsible before God:

“And do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these will be asked about it.” (17:36)

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَ
الْبَصَرَ وَ الْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عِنْدَهُ
مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٧﴾

Did you hear and see it yourself, did you know with your mental faculties that it was true?

- We end with the very short but important prayer from the Quran:

“My Lord, increase me in knowledge.” (20:114)

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

And lastly, Eid Mubarak to all readers of these Quran Studies,

Wishing all of you a very happy and blessed Eid!