

12 Lessons from Surah al-Kahf

From Imam al-Razi's *al-Tafsir al-Kabir*

Translated by the 4th Year Students of Darul Uloom New Jersey

Within the four incidents documented in Surah al-Kahf, the 3rd one discusses a journey that was taken by Musa عليه السلام in search of Khadr عليه السلام for knowledge. Upon finding Khadr عليه السلام, Musa عليه السلام exhibits a number of mannerisms and etiquettes that every student of the sacred sciences should learn to adopt. In ayah #64 of Surah al-Kahf, Allah عز وجل tells us that Musa عليه السلام said to Khadr عليه السلام,

“May I have your company so that you teach me some of the rightful knowledge you have been given.”

From this ayah alone, Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi رحمه الله derives twelve lessons in his *al-Tafsir al-Kabir* which have been summarized hereunder,

1. Musa عليه السلام made himself subservient (*tabi*) to the teacher, as he asked, “May I have your company?”
2. He sought permission to follow Khadr عليه السلام, a sign of elevated humility.
3. He requested Khadr عليه السلام to teach him, acknowledging a lack of knowledge on a particular subject before his teacher.
4. Musa عليه السلام's humility in saying “**some** of the rightful knowledge you have been given.” By saying “some” he has expressed humility as if he is saying, “I do not want to become your equal, but that I want that you give me a portion of your knowledge,” just as a poor person would seek from a wealthy person.
5. By saying, “some of the rightful knowledge you have been given,” he acknowledges that this is special knowledge from Allah عز وجل (i.e. he attributes the knowledge as a favor of Allah).
6. His requesting guidance (*rashad*) from his teacher, which is such a thing if not acquired, will result in a person falling into misguidance.
7. By saying, “You teach me some of the rightful knowledge you have been given,” Musa عليه السلام desires that Khadr عليه السلام would treat him just as Allah treated Khadr عليه السلام (i.e. by

bestowing knowledge) as if saying, “Your favor upon me by teaching me will resemble Allah’s favor upon you by His instilling you with a portion of knowledge.”

8. By saying, “May I have your company,” indicates that Musa ﷺ was willing to do exactly as his teacher, Khadr ﷺ, would do. This demonstrates that it is necessary for the student to follow the teacher without any objection whatsoever in the initial stages of learning.
9. By saying, “May I have your company,” without any restrictions demonstrates that Musa ﷺ was willing to follow his teacher under any circumstance.
10. Musa ﷺ was a prophet, was given the Taurah, and Allah ﷻ spoke to him directly, yet despite this lofty rank he expressed humility and refined character before Khadr ﷺ. The more knowledge one possesses, the more he will value knowledge and those who possess it.
11. By saying, “May I have your company so that you may teach me,” shows that Musa ﷺ was ready to serve his teacher first, and then learn from him second.
12. By saying, “May I have your company so that you may teach me,” Musa ﷺ demonstrates his willingness to follow the teacher and learn from him without expecting any worldly compensation in return; neither monetary compensation nor any hope for fame. There were no ulterior motives for his learning.

Reference: *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir* also known as *Mafatih al-Ghaib* 21/152