

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 16 – August 27

Topic: (K) Knowledge - Part 2. (This subject is very frequent in the Holy Quran.)

Knowledge given to man by God:

- “And He taught Adam¹ all the names,² then presented them to the angels;³ He said: Tell Me the names of those if you are right. They said: Glory be to You! we have no knowledge but what You have taught us. Surely You are the Knowing, the Wise.” — 2:31-32

1. Nowhere in the Holy Quran is it affirmed that Adam was the first man. Great Muslim theologians have held that there were many Adams — thousands of Adams — before the great ancestor of mankind known by this name. Adam, therefore, though it may also be the name of a particular man, stands for mankind generally.

2. Teaching Adam the names signifies the vast capability of man and *the superiority of his knowledge* to that of the angels. Or, the reference may be to the faculty of speech, which is the real source of the excellence of man above the whole of creation.

3. Angels are the agents that control the forces of nature and enforce the laws of God over it, without any will of their own. The meaning here is that the controlling forces of nature have no capability of learning or acquiring further knowledge other than what they do, but man does have this capability.

Knowledge acquired by man comes from God because the only means he can use to acquire it (his brain and senses of observation) are themselves subject to laws of God in their working and capacity. As knowledge comes from God, it means that to acquire knowledge is a religious duty of Muslims, and also that knowledge must be used for good purposes.

- “He grants wisdom to whom He pleases. And whoever is granted wisdom, he indeed is given a great good. And none are mindful but those who have understanding.” — 2:269

Prophets given knowledge and wisdom, with which to reform people:

- “And when he (prophet Joseph) attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.” — 12:22
- “Then they (Moses and his servant) found one of Our servants whom We had granted mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves. Moses said to him: May I follow you that you may teach me some of the good you have been taught?” — 18:65

Moses and his servant travelled from Egypt to Khartoum in search of the man to teach them knowledge.

- “and to Lot We gave wisdom and knowledge” — 21:74
- “And certainly We gave knowledge to David and Solomon” — 27:15
- “Even as We have sent among you a Messenger (Muhammad) from among you, who recites to you Our messages and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom and teaches you what you did not know.” — 2:151

The Holy Prophet Muhammad’s mission was to *teach* his followers the Quran, wisdom, and matters that they previously had no knowledge of.

Acquiring knowledge of nature combined with understanding of spiritual matters:

- “In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for those who have understanding, those who remember Allah, standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.” — 3:190-191

These verses describe true believers on the one hand as remembering God in the midst of all worldly pursuits, *standing and sitting and lying on their sides*, being thus fully conscious of the Divine presence in all conditions; and, on the other, they set out for the conquest of nature with the full consciousness that *nothing has been created in vain* and that a purpose underlies the whole of creation. This is the grand object which Islam sets before its followers, *to conquer self* by remembrance of God and *to conquer nature by pursuit of knowledge*.

- “He it is Who sends down water from the clouds for you; it gives drink, and by it (grow) the trees on which you feed. He causes to grow for you by it vegetation, and the olives, and the date-palms, and the grapes, and all the fruits. Surely there is a sign in this *for a people who reflect*. And He has made subservient to you the night and the day and the sun and the moon. And the stars are made subservient by His command. Surely there are signs in this *for a people who understand*. And what He has created for you in the earth is of varied colours. Surely there is a sign in this *for a people who are mindful*.” — 16:10-13

Those who reflect on nature, applying their understanding, and are mindful, can find signs about spiritual truths in the physical world around them. But it can only happen by study and acquiring knowledge.
