

Surah 96. Al-Alaq

Asad: taught man what he did not know!³

Malik: taught man what he knew not.

Pickthall: Teacheth man that which he knew not.

Yusuf Ali: Taught man that which he knew not. ⁶²⁰⁷

Transliteration: AAallama alinsana ma lam yaAAalam

Khatab:

taught humanity what they knew not.1

Author Comments

3 - "The pen" is used here as a symbol for the art of writing or, more specifically, for all knowledge recorded by means of writing: and this explains the symbolic summons "Read!" at the beginning of verses {1} and {3}. Man's unique ability to transmit, by means of written records, his thoughts, experiences and insights from individual to individual, from generation to generation, and from one cultural environment to another endows all human knowledge with a cumulative character; and since, thanks to this God-given ability, every human being partakes, in one way or another, in mankind's continuous accumulation of knowledge, man is spoken of as being "taught by God" things which the single individual does not - and, indeed, cannot - know by himself. (This double stress on man's utter dependence on God, who creates him as a biological entity and implants in him the will and the ability to acquire knowledge, receives its final accent, as it were, in the next three verses.) Furthermore, God's "teaching" man signifies also the act of His revealing, through the prophets, spiritual truths and moral standards which cannot be unequivocally established through human experience and reasoning alone: and, thus, it circumscribes the phenomenon of divine revelation as such.

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Verses 1-5 are known to be the first ever revealed of the Quran. The Prophet (?) was retreating at a cave in the outskirts of Mecca when the angel Gabriel appeared to him, squeezing him tightly and ordering him to read. Since the Prophet (?) was unlettered, he responded, "I cannot read." Ultimately, Gabriel taught

him: "Read in the Name of your Lord ...". Some scholars believe that this encounter is the fulfilment of Isaiah 29:12, which states, "Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, 'Read this.' And he will say, 'I cannot read.'"

6207 - Allah teaches us new knowledge at every given moment. Individuals learn more and more day by day; nations and humanity at large learn fresh knowledge at every stage. This is even more noticeable and important in the spiritual world.

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Source : *Alim.org-Compare Translation-Surah 96-Ayah 5*