

"The Dignity of Adam", a Quran-based inspirational

In the Name of God, the Most Beneficent, Most Merciful



One of the most memorable stories of my high school days is from T.H. White's "The Once and Future King". In it, a badger explains to the future King Arthur why Man has supremacy over all creation:

As God was completing His creation, He gave the entire Animal Kingdom a chance to choose tools for themselves. The Eagle chose wings and talons to fly and snatch its prey. The Lion chose sharp teeth and claws to rule the land. The Fish chose fins to swim about freely. The Badger chose garden forks as its hands to explore the earth. Finally, only Adam was left to make a choice. After deep reflection, he requested, "Please God, leave me with my feeble hands so that I can make whatever I need for myself." His request was granted, and soon enough Adam became master over all creation.

A similar allegory is in the Holy Quran in 2:30-2:31:

When God announced his plan to place Man as viceroy on Earth, the angels, anxiously proclaimed, "Will you place on it a creation that will cause disorder and shed blood (with his Free Will)?! Whereas we strive to establish Your glory in the Universe (in total submission)."

Then God overruled the angels' concerns and showed them that Adam had the capacity to learn. The Quran refers to this potential (17:70) as the Dignity of Adam.

Unfortunately, the world is wired such that we adults forget that learning is not restricted to schooling. At what time in our busy working lives do we relegate this capacity to learn, this Dignity, to our children, retaining precious little for ourselves? It's as if we diverge from the path of Adam onto that of eagles, lions, and badgers. Perhaps every few years you youngsters should celebrate the endeavors of learning that we adults undertake, on this very stage. What an honorable event that would be. But, most certainly I digress...

With that I congratulate you, Dear Graduate on your well-deserved and hard-earned graduation party. Please keep learning, teaching, and sharing with us for years to come. And let this celebration serve as a reminder that learning is not a phase in life but rather the meaning of life itself. It is the

Dignity of Adam.

Congratulations and God bless you,

Fawad Ahmed