

155206 - Useful guidelines on the names and attributes of Allah; is “an-Naasikh (the Abrogator)” one of His names?

the question

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?} [al-Baqarah 2:106].

Can we take from this verse the name an-Naasikh (the Abrogator) and attribute it to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted? Is abrogating one of the attributes of Allah, may He be exalted, because Allah ascribes the action of abrogation to Himself? If a verse is abrogated, can we say that the word of Allah has been abrogated? Is that permissible? Does Allah abrogate whatever He wills of His words?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

Abrogation of the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah is something that is proven in the religious texts, and the scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah are agreed on that in general. Yes, it may be said of the words of Allah, may He be exalted, that there is that which abrogates and that which is abrogated. Likewise it may be said of the words of the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that there is that which abrogates and that which is abrogated. You will find the evidence of that and a detailed discussion in the answer to question no. [105746](#).

Secondly:

The belief of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah regarding the names of Allah, may He be exalted, is that they are a tawqeefi matter [i.e., they can only be known through divine Revelation and

sound texts of hadeeth, with no room for ijtihad]. Therefore it is not permissible for anyone to ascribe to Allah, may He be exalted, by any name by which He did not call Himself, or by which His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not ascribe to Him. There is no room for working out divine names on the basis of reason, or what one feels is appropriate, or personal opinion, or ijtihad. Rather His names are as proven by the saheeh texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Based on that, we must limit the divine names to those which are mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and not add anything or take anything away, because reason cannot work out the names that Allah deserves. So we must adhere to the texts regarding this matter, because Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned} [al-Isra' 17:36]

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know"} [al-A'raaf 7:33].

Moreover, ascribing to Allah, may He be exalted, names by which He did not call Himself, or denying any of the names by which He called Himself is an offence against Him, may He be exalted. Hence it is obligatory to observe proper etiquette in this matter, and limit it to what is mentioned in the religious texts.

Al-Qawaa'id al-Muthla fi Sifaat Allah wa Asmaa'ih al-Husna (p. 13).

Thirdly:

One of the basic principles of Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah regarding the divine names and attributes is that the names of Allah, may He be exalted, are more specific than His attributes, and His attributes are more specific than His actions. Thus the broadest in scope are His actions,

and the narrowest in scope are His names. Another guideline is that it is not permissible to ascribe any name to Allah, may He be exalted, on the basis of an attribute that is proven, or on the basis of an action that He ascribed to Himself, whereas attributes may be worked out from His names, and His actions may be worked out on the basis of many of His attributes.

Every name of Allah is indicative of His Essence and of an attribute and an action– and in many cases that depends on whether the action indicated by the name is intransitive (does not require an object to express a complete thought) or transitive (requires an object to express a complete thought). In the case of His attributes, they are indicative of a concept and an action, depending on the attribute. Thus His name ar-Rahmaan (the Most Gracious) is indicative of His Essence, and of the attribute of rahmah (grace, mercy), and of an action. Thus it may be said that He bestows mercy (yarhamu) upon whomever He wills of His slaves.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The divine names all have in common the fact that they refer to His holy Essence, then each name is indicative of one aspect of His attributes, and is not indicative of the aspect that is indicated by another name. Hence the name al-‘Azeez (the Almighty) is indicative of His Essence in addition to His might; the name al-Khaaliq (the Creator) is indicative of His Essence in addition to His action of creation; ar-Raheem (the Most Merciful) is indicative of His Essence in addition to His mercy. His Essence includes all of His attributes, thus each divine name is indicative of His Essence and of the attribute that is specific to that name, as is clear." (*Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa* 7/185).

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

If a name is ascribed to Allah, it is permissible to derive from it a *fi‘l* (action) and a *masdar* (verbal noun or infinitive). For example, from the divine names as-Samee‘ (the All-Hearing) and al-Baseer (the All-Seeing), we may attribute to Him the attributes of hearing and seeing, and He may be described as doing the actions to which these words refer, as in the verses (interpretation of the meaning):

{ *Certainly has Allah heard ...* } [*al-Mujaadilah* 58:1].

This applies if the action is transitive; if it is intransitive, then no action can be ascribed to Him on that basis, as in the case of the divine name al-Hayy (the Ever-Living); rather in this case, the name and the masdar (verbal noun) may be ascribed to Him, but not the action, so we cannot say that He “became alive”!

Badaa’i’ al-Fawaa’id (1/170).

Fourthly:

It is not permissible for anyone to ascribe to Allah, may He be exalted, a name based on a divine attribute or action. So it cannot be said that he is al-Baasit (the Extender), based on his action *yabsut* (He extends – cf al-Isra’ 17:30), or to say that He, may He be glorified and exalted, has the attribute of *bast* (extending). And it cannot be said that He is the Giver or the Taker, based on the verse (interpretation of the meaning):

{You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will} [Aal ‘Imraan 3:26].

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The topic of the divine attributes is broader in scope than the topic of the divine names. That is because every name implies an attribute – as noted above in the third principle on the divine names – and because some of His attributes are connected to His actions, and His actions are unlimited just as His words are unlimited. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise} [Luqmaan 31:27].

For example, some of the attributes of Allah, may He be exalted, are: coming, seizing, restraining, vengeance, and many other attributes that are too many to count, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{And your Lord has come} [al-Fajr 89:22]

{Do they await but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds} [al-Baqarah 2:120]

{so Allah seized them for their sins}

[Aal 'Imraan 3:11, al-Anfaal 8:52, Ghaafir 40:21]

{And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission} [al-Hajj 22:65]

{Indeed, the vengeance of your Lord is severe} [al-Burooj 85:12]

{Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship} [al-Baqarah 2:185].

And the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Our Lord comes down to the lowest heaven...” Agreed upon.

Thus we ascribe to Allah, may He be exalted, these attributes in the manner mentioned in the text, but we do not derive any divine names from them. So we do not say that the names of Allah include the Comer, the Giver, the Seizer, the Restrainer, the Vengeful, the Intender, the Descender, and so on, even though we speak of Him and describe Him in these terms.

Based on the above, the words of Allah, may He be exalted, {We abrogate ...} refer to one of His actions, but it is not permissible to call Allah, may He be exalted, by the name “an-Naasikh (the Abrogator)” because His names are a tawqeefi matter [i.e., they can only be known through divine Revelation and sound texts of hadeeth, with no room for ijtihaad], and this name is not mentioned in the Qur’aan or Sunnah. Moreover, it is not permissible to derive names from His attributes, let alone from His actions.

And Allah knows best.