

160890 - The verse “no defect will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious” and the existence of people with defects and disabilities

the question

When Allah, may He be exalted, challenges us to look for defects in His creation, He is urging us to look and look again, so that we may fully appreciate how He created creation in this astounding way. My question is: how can we understand this verse correctly: “Who has created seven heavens, one above the other; no defect will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious. Look again; do you see any flaw?” [al-Mulk 67:3]? I would like to learn how to answer when a non-Muslim asks: Aren’t the physical defects and deformities that some people have shortcomings in creation? I know that there is divine wisdom in the creation of people with some defects, but in the light of the verse which urges the individual to look for defects in creation, how can we regard these physical defects as not being flaws?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

One of the things that the Muslim believes about his Lord, may He be exalted, is that He created creation, made it well and perfected it. Allah, may He be exalted, praises Himself for that in several verses, including the following (interpretation of the meaning):

“Who perfected everything which He created”

[as-Sajdah 32:7]

“and formed you and perfected your forms”

[Ghaafir 40:64]

“[It is] the work of Allah, who perfected all things”

[an-Naml 27:88]

“Have they not looked at the heaven above them - how We structured it and adorned it and [how] it has no rifts?”

[Qaaf 50:6].

Secondly:

The verses in Soorat al-Mulk, which the questioner regards as problematic because of what one may see in Allah’s creation of humans with defects and disabilities, is the passage (interpretation of the meaning):

“Who has created seven heavens, one above the other; no defect will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious. Look again; do you see any flaw?

Keep looking, again and again; your gaze will come back to you humbled and weary [having found no flaws in Allah’s creation]”

[al-Mulk 67:3-4].

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What the verse means is that if you look repeatedly, no matter how many times you look, your vision or gaze will return to you humbled, without having been able to see any defect or flaw, and weary – that is, fatigued and no longer able to continue due to that fatigue, after having looked repeatedly without having seen any shortcoming or flaw.

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (8/177).

Does what Allah, may He be exalted, says in this verse, that there are no defects or flaws in His creation, contradict what we see of humans whom Allah, may He be exalted, has created with disabilities or deformities or some shortcoming in their physical makeup?

This question may be answered in one of two ways:

-1-

It may be said that the verse is speaking about the creation of the heavens and nothing else. Based on that, there is no problem in understanding the verse.

Ibn al-Muzaffar ar-Raazi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The commentator ath-Tha'labi said concerning the verse, "Who has created seven heavens, one above the other; no defect will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious": That is, no crookedness or defects.

I say: If we go along with that view, someone may say: Aren't there in the creation of the mountains, trees and land crookedness, defects and flaws, and isn't that also the case with regard to the creation of people, and the creation of ugliness and beauty, disbelief and faith?

The answer to that is that even though the phrase is general in meaning, it refers to something specific, namely the creation of the seven heavens only.

End quote from Mabaahith at-Tafseer by Ibn al-Muzaffar ar-Raazi, which is a book of comments on Tafseer al-Kashf wa'l-Bayaan by ath-Tha'labi (p. 305).

Al-Qurtubi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: What is referred to here is the heavens in particular. In other words: You do not see any fault in the creation of the heavens. End quote from Tafseer al-Qurtubi (18/208).

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It may be said that the verse is general in meaning and includes all the creation of Allah, may He be exalted, such as plants, animals and humans. All the creation of Allah, may He be exalted, is perfectly made and there are no flaws or defects in it in principle. As for what there may be of flaws or defects in some of it, it is something that Allah, may He be exalted, has not willed should be physically perfect.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It should be understood that the things that grow little by little, such as plants and animate beings –may be subject to flaws, which is something bad, either at the beginning of its development or after it has developed. The former occurs as a result of something that happened to the substance of which it is made, which led to it being imperfect, and in turn led to bad consequences, and the shortcoming in its creation is

due to that reason. It is not because the Maker deprived it and took away from it something that was necessary for its perfection; rather the initial substance did not have the potential to reach perfection, and the fact that it did not have the potential to reach perfection was due to the lack of something, not the action of the Maker. With regard to the action of the Maker, it is instilling the good that would lead to perfection, and the lack of perfection and the evil that befell it is the result of its not being provided with the means that would lead to perfection. Thus we may understand the meaning of the verse “no defect will you see in the creation of the Most Gracious” [al-Mulk 67:3] as indicating that what He has created is a universal decree that would lead to the perfection of creation; as for shortcomings and flaws, they result from not being receptive to the decree, and being unreceptive is not something created, such that one might suggest that it has something to do with the Maker. In principle, there are no flaws in the universal creation; rather flaws occur because of the nature of that creation, for the Creator did not create potential in it, and as a result of that these flaws occurred because of the lack of creation, not because of creation. So think about that. What can be attributed to the Lord, may He be glorified, is creation. As for the thing that is not created, it cannot be attributed to the Maker. So if there is something lacking in the substance of the foetus in the womb [such as lack of nutrients, etc], that is necessary for it to be perfect and its physical faculties to be sound, then that leads to flaws and shortcomings. The same may be said regarding plants.

End quote from Shifa’ al-‘Aleel (p. 182, 183).

Thirdly:

Allah, may He be exalted, is wise in all that He does, and there is great divine wisdom in what He creates of shortcomings, defects and sicknesses.

Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ‘Abd al-Khaaliq (may Allah preserve him) said: The divine wisdom in the creation of defects and shortcomings:

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, has created all things. He created troubles and evils, and He created shortcomings in some of His creation, for great and wise reasons. Those reasons include the following:

-1-

Punishment for sin, as He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]”

[ar-Room 30:41].

Corruption here refers to troubles and evils by means of which Allah punishes His slaves, such as the destructive, devastating wind, volcanic eruptions, diseases and illnesses, droughts, floods and so on.

-2-

So that people will know that Allah has power over them, and it is He Who has the power to benefit them or harm them, as He, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds - none can release it thereafter. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise”

[Faatir 35:2].

-3-

So that people will know that Allah has the power to create good and evil, and that He, may He be glorified, will reward them for good deeds and punish them for bad deeds. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“[O Muhammad], inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful.

And that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment”

[al-Hijr 15:49-50].

It is Allah Who created Paradise and placed in it all that people could desire and that could delight the eyes; in fact, He has stored up in it that which no eye has seen of bliss, that which no ear has heard, and has never even crossed the mind of man. And He, may He be glorified and exalted, created Hell and placed in it all kinds of evils, pains, sorrows, torments and punishments, far worse than anyone could imagine.

“So on that Day, none will punish [as severely] as His punishment,

And none will bind [as severely] as His binding [of the evildoers]”

[al-Fajr 89:25-26].

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So that the one to whom Allah has granted well-being will acknowledge this blessing and kindness of his Lord and will give thanks to Him for that, and he will acknowledge the bounty of Allah and His kindness towards him, that what befell others did not befall him.

-5-

So that Allah will grant the one who is stricken with some calamity the opportunity to attain His pleasure, reach His Paradise, reduce his burden of sin, and raise his status.

The divine wisdom behind the creation of evil, troubles and shortcomings is indeed immense, and Allah is to be praised for all His attributes, actions and blessings.

End quote from al-Mushawwaq fi Ahkaam al-Mu‘awwaq (p. 4).

And Allah knows best.