

Hud [11:7]

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَلَئِن قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَرْجُوعُونَ مِمَّا بَعَدَ الْمَوْتِ
لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days - and His Throne was over the waters - that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct. But if you were to say to them, "You shall indeed be raised up after death", the Unbelievers would be sure to say, "This is nothing but obvious sorcery!"

MUHAMMAD HUSAIN TABA TABAI (AR)

And He it is who has created the earth and the heavens in six days and His throne was on the water, That he might try you, which one of you is the best in deeds. But if you were to say to them: You shall indeed be raised up after death those who disbelieve would be sure to say, This is nothing but obvious magic.

In Surah Ha-Mim Sajda, we will discuss the traditions from the Ahlulbait and the Qur'anic verses regarding the creation of the heavens and the earth.

We intend to discuss only the words “ in six days” and “His throne was on the water.”

The learned Sahaba says that the word “ Samawat’ here is the plural of that which is used in comparison with earth (which is singular). God says that he has created the heavens and the earth in six days and has created layers of the heavens above the earth. The linguists say that the heavens include all those creations that are above our heads and so we learn the importance of the words “above” and “below”.

Therefore “Samawat” or heavens means the layers of physical beings existing in the layers above us and surrounding the earth. This surrounding is in the sense that the earth resembles a ball and the Qur’an says that the night surrounds the day. In Surah A’raf God says, “ He brings the night as a cover over the day” verse

The first heaven is the heaven in which we observe the twinkling stars and this is the heaven that surrounds the earth and adorns it with lighted candle like stars in the night but the heaven does not tell us about what is above. It is the verse of Qur'an that explains that there are seven layers of heavens one on top of another.

In verse 3 Surah Mulk God says, "Who has created the heavens one over another" and in Surah Nuh verse 16 God says, "And He has made the moon a light therein, and made the sun a lamp?" and then the verse 30 of Surah Ambiya that says, "Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" while in Ha Mim Sajda verse 11 the Qura'n says, "Then He (rose over) towards the heaven when it was smoke and said to it and to the earth, "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly" They both said, "we come willingly". "Then He completed and finished the creations as seven heavens in two days and He made in each heaven its affair."

We learn that the heavens were created in two days but not in the sense of earth days; because the days for the earth is fixed for it is regulated in time. And, the day for the earth means its single complete revolution while but this does not mean that this is time mentioned in the verse. This particular day is an era of time and the orbit of the moon is 29 1/2 days. What it means here is that God created the heavens in two periods of time.

For the earth He says in verse 10 of Ha Mim Sajda "And then He measured sustenance in it in four days" so He created it in two days but created the sustenance in it in four days.

The creation of the heavens and the earth was not accidental but was made out of something else that was present and this was the element that was split in two. One part was created as the earth in two days and in another he created the seven heavens. The material beings that we see were created out of the rest. Now, the meaning of the verse becomes clear.

When He says, "*we created the heavens in six days*" it means the amalgamation of its components and then separating it from other elements. As we have said, the heavens were created in two days and so was the earth and now the two days left out of the six were used to create and establish other things like the orbit of the sun by the earth, the fluctuation of the north and the south poles, the creation of the air and the sustenance on the earth.

When He says, "*The throne was on water*" it means that the throne was above the water when God was busy creating the heavens and the earth. It also means that one day His Lordship was stationed above the water (a source of sustenance for us).

Every king has a station or throne that is stationed above the seats of his subjects and when we say that certain king attained the throne of the kingdom and sat on it we do not mean the years of His struggle and bloodshed that He had to undergo for it, but it means that He sat over the throne as the ruler and administrator of that particular country.

So the word *Istawa* means that God was busy in creating and adorning the heavens and the earth when His throne was on water. Some commentators have opined that *Arsh* means “to create” or to erect and this is what they have taken from the word “*Mimma Ya’rishuna*” from the verse 68 of Surah Nahl that says, “Take your habitations in the mountains, and in the trees and in what they erect.” But the idea is farfetched from the actual meaning of the words.

“Which of you is best in deeds.”

God wants to tell us - *If we have created the heavens and the earth with a surprisingly glorified system then it is a source of your trial so that the ones who do good are separated from those who do evil.*

The real aim is not the trial or tribulation. Wherever there is trial, the good is separated from the bad, and the likeable from the distasteful. It is the same with piety and evil. The test was not to separate the pious from the evil, then there were other hidden aims or purposes.

The purpose may be the reward, but this also is not correct because this was just to make the person under trial active and this was that person whose promise was true. God says in verse 7 of Surah Kahaf, “Verily! We have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it in order that We may test them- as to which of them are best in deeds” and in verse 37 of Surah Anfal he explains the term separation “In order that Allah may distinguish the wicked from the good.”

He then speaks of the reward in verse 22 of Surah Jathiya, “And Allah has created the heavens and the earth with truth, in order that each person may be recompensed as to what he has earned, and they will not be wronged.” In verse 104 of Surah Anbiya, it is for sitting on the throne and for those promises that had been given. God says, “And remember the day when He shall roll up the heavens ... We began the first creation and we shall repeat it.” And the other verses that purpose of the worship by the Jinns and mankind is the main purpose of worship, as He says, (in verse 56 of Surah Zariyat) “And I created not, the Jinns and humans, but that they worship me.”

If the good deeds or the pious man is taken as the purpose of creation then it will not be compatible with the verse because the creation has other purposes and mankind is just one of them. So, the Unity of God that rules the entire universe suggests that once man is mentioned as a purpose and in other times some other creations are enumerated. These creations were and will be existing for a long period.

Between the earth and the heavens stands the perfect creation of man as a physique. If mankind protects himself with piety then he is termed as the supreme creation with a very enhanced status. Though the heavens have a very unique and soft existence God speaks to the disbelievers and says, "Are the humans perfect as far as creation goes or the heavens?"

The perfection of any creation that is based on perfection and defects rests on God, and this is why the existence of man under goes various stages, one; when he did not exist, two; when he was conceived and three; when he was an infant and then the later stages that take him towards perfection. The main purpose is the creation and birth of man and the same is valid for other creations.

This tells us that the perfect humans found among the human society are the purpose behind the creation of the heavens and the earth. The verse is unable to prove the same for it says "the ones with the best deeds" so the main purpose is the creation of person who is better in deeds compared to others; the others may not have very good deeds, or may have them. But he who has the best deeds even though the others may be good in deeds or may not be pious, but evil though the purpose of the creation is to judge between them.

This explanation clarifies the words,

Had it not been to create you I would not have created the heavens.

So he (The Messenger) is the best among all creations on this earth.

Al Jibai is recorded in Majmaul Bayan to have said,

This verse first proves the existence of the angels before the creation of the heavens and the earth, because the verse says the throne of God was above water before the heaven and earth were created. This is no great feat but when we establish the Presence of God the creator of water and the Arsh.

Ali bin Isa considers Jibai's idea to be wrong because it assumes that the Arsh was on water before the creation of the heavens and the earth. The benefit is not just for the learned men of the times or those living in those times, but it may be possible that this may have some prudence for those who were created after the creation of the heavens and the earth like the Jinns and mankind. We therefore cannot accept Jibai's assumption and Syed Murtaza too is of the same view about it.

The Compiler's word

It is the Mutazzila sect that bases it on these two assumptions.

They say the actions of God have some purpose and He does nothing with a definite aim. It may be that He creates the angels and tells them that His Arsh is above the water and they derive lesson out of it, by believing on God and one of the reasons may be highlighted by their belief. I have said previously that this is not correct because anything (purpose, aim, result or reason) can say nothing about God that can make Him subservient. We have said that no matter what manner of creation it is it will always be below the power of God.

- The power and decree is for God only.
- He is the creator of all things.
- No one else has the power to rule and
- He has created all other things.

Direction, beauty and purpose that rule us and instigate us to certain work so that the purpose is attained. All these three are bereft of our deeds the way we desire to do them and through which we attain the well being in this life.

Is God like us for things to affect him?

No, He is above all needs.

- These things are mere tools that He uses to create things.
- It is certain that He is the creator of this universe and the system that rules it.
- It is never possible that the created can exist before the creator.
- The purpose exists before the action and leaves its effect on the doer.

In this verse the creation of the universe or the heavens and the earth is attached to the words, “ He might try which of you is best in deeds” and such expression of purposes have come earlier too in the Qur’an. It is the reason behind these rules that is manifest in the creations and is attached to the purposes behind it. In another place God says that His actions are not without beauty. He said, in verse 7 of Alif Lam Mim Sajda “ Who made everything. He has created good.” He created everything and adorned them. He is the entity devoid of mischief and He is the beauty without flaw and someone who has these attributes will never be the cause of mischief and flaws.

We do not mean to say that beauty does not emanate from God or that He has ordered His creation to perform certain deed though it may seem unpleasant. Qabih is that which does not come from God or the people have been asked not to do it even if the mind tells us that it is something worthwhile because these things are not compatible with the verse 28 of Surah A’raf that says “ Say no, Allah never asks us to things that are hideous.”

God says in this verse “ *But if you were to say to them - You shall indeed be raised up after death - Those who disbelieve would say - This is but sheer magic.*”

From the verse we understand that the disbelievers called the Qur’an as magic especially about those meanings that reject their frivolities. They regard the news, the Messenger and the Qur’an given too as magic. Their contention that Qur’an and all that it stood was magic are a false accusation and is an animosity with the divine truth.

It is quite possible that they may be saying that the Qur’an presents the wrong as the right. We may try to interpret what they say in any way but it will not be what the verse in discussion tells us. In Surah Mumin verse 88 “ Say - In whose hands is the sovereignty of everything? And He protects all while against Him there is no protector, if you know.”

The word of God “ *That He might try which one of you is best in deeds*”

Daud bin Mahbar in the book Aql, Ibn Jareer, Ibn Abi Hatim and Hakim have quoted in History through Marduiya that Ibn Umar said,

The Messenger recited the verse “ That He might try which one of you is the best in deeds.”

I asked, what the sentence meany. He said,

It means that God wants to test you to know which among you is the best. The best among you is he who practices abstinence from sin and all that is distasteful to God and obeys Him the most.

Kafi has quoted Imam Sadiq that he explained the verse quoted above and said,

God does not want to know who among you does the most deeds but He desires to know who among you acts according to the situation or in other words does the right thing.

This correctness comes from the fear of God and the acknowledgement of the divine truth. Keep your deeds till the time they consolidate. The purest deed is that which does not accept that any one other than God should praise it. This is harder than the deed itself but we should know that the intention itself is in that deed and then he recited this verse - Every man acts on his own intentions.

MIR AHMED ALI (AR)

Refer to the commentary of Araf: 54 for the creation of the universe, and al Baqarah: 255 for the seat of divine authority. The creation of the universe is not a sport, nor a whim, on the part of Allah. This life is testing time, but the disbelievers, who do not believe in a future life of the hereafter, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality.

Aqa Mahdi Puya says:

Water, the perennial matter, from which the physical universe (terrestrial and celestial bodies) has been formed, is described as liquid, amenable to take any form, to prove that there is no limit to the possibility of development or, change in the matter, which implies a free competition in the process of continuity and progress. However perfect one may be, the possibility of further perfection is always there to try and attain, for which the Quran asks the Holy Prophet to pray in verse 114 of Ta Ha.

After dealing with the process and purpose of creation, the reference to "raising up after death" may either refer to the present state in which man is (when he is nothing, unworthy of mention-Dahr: 1) or to the resurrection as the consequence of the life of this world. The raising up after death through an evolutionary process, which the Qur'an frequently mentions, appears as a fascinating but unreliable statement to the ignorant disbelievers, therefore they say it is a sorcery.

AYATULLAH KAMAL FAQIH IMANI AND SEVERAL SCHOLARS

There are three principal issues discussed in this noble verse:

First, the creation of the world of existence which represents a display of Allah's Omnipotence, specially the initiation of creation which signifies His Power, as well as the reasons for His glory. The verse says:

" And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth within Six Days (periods), ..."

The word 'Days' here means epochs, whether long or short. Then it adds:

"... and His Throne was over the Water ..."

Some of the scientists believe that at very early time of creation, the world of existence was in the form of some molten materials, (or some extra ordinary pressed gases which had the form of some liquid materials).

Then, some great bursts happened inside this very liquid substance and parts of its outside surface were continuously separated off which, finally, formed the stars and germs of the systems in the sky.

Therefore, the world of existence, maybe, at first was located on this great material, the liquid like.

The second issue hinted at in this verse, is the objective of the creation of the cosmos, the main aim of which refers to the supreme fruit of the process of creation, namely man. Man who must be subjected to educational processes, thus evolving and approaching the Almighty even further. It says:

"... so that He might try you which of you is best in conduct. ..."

Imam Sadiq (a.s.) says:

Good conduct refers to that kind of conduct which is coupled with knowledge, sincerity and virtue, not a mere action which is practiced in abundance. Therefore, the heavens and the earth have been created for good deeds and not for the sake of happiness, pleasure- seeking, and negligence.

Definitely, those who deny the Day of Resurrection have no reasoning for their claim and they only take recourse to accusations of sorcery and hallucinations. The verse says:

"... And, if you were to say to them: 'Verily you shall be raised up after death', the unbelievers would surely say: 'This is(not)but a manifest sorcery'. "