

THE HEAVENS IN THE TERMINOLOGY OF THE SHARI'AH

The manner in which the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth use the word Samaawaat gives a different dimension to the meaning of the word. As with the definition of man, the philosophers give the description of a mere animal, differentiated from other animals only because of the ability to think and reason. However, the Shari'ah adds the dimension of spirituality as well. Along with the physical universe as we see it, the Shari'ah accepts another universe as well, which is the realm of the 'higher universe' where the angels reside, and with which man has a very deep relationship. This realm is safeguarded by the angels and it is here that the records of people's deeds are preserved. Furthermore, the angels also assist man and take a liking to righteous people and dislike the evil ones.

In terms of the Shari'ah, the clouds, trees and other seemingly inanimate objects engage in Tasbeeh and are also associated with the angels when we see that by Allaah's command, the angels make the winds blow, the rain fall, etc.

Just as the Qur'aan and the Ahadeeth establish this relationship between the angels and man and the angels and other objects, so too do Ahadeeth and verses of the Qur'aan like the Hadith of Mi'raaj speak of the deep relationship that the Samaawaat have with the angels. These verses and Ahadeeth make it clear that the Samaawaat are part of the realm of the unseen just as the Arsh, the Kursi, the soul and so many other things are. In as much as they are all existing phenomena, they are not apparent to the human eye. It is, however, necessary to believe in all of this and doing so has an impact on our salvation. Although the reality of the Samaawaat is not known to us, the Ahadeeth and Qur'aan have described them so that we have an idea about what they are like. The Qur'aan says:

1. Thereafter, Allaah turned (His attention) to the sky, which was smoke... (Surah HaaMeem Sajdah, verse 11)
2. (These Kuffaar are so obstinate that) If they see a portion of the sky hurtling down (towards them as a form of punishment) they (will deny it and) say, "This is (only) a cloud in stacked layers." (Surah Toor, verse 44)
3. 'Have you not seen how Allaah has created the seven skies in layers and has made the moon a celestial light in them (in the skies) and the sun a (bright) lamp (from which you derive immense benefit) ? "' (Surah Nooh, verse 16)
4. He has created the seven heavens in layers. You will not see any inconsistency (defect, fault) in Allaah's creation. Look again. Do you see any cracks (in the sky)? (Surah Mulk, verse 3,4)
5. Verily, We decorated the sky of this world with the adornment of the stars... (Surah Saaffaat, verse 6)
6. Within two days, Allaah then made them (the skies) into seven skies, and issued a suitable

command to (the angels occupying) each sky. Allaah decorated the sky of the world with lanterns (stars) and made them a means of protection (to be used to pelt the Shayaateen who attempt to eavesdrop on the conversations of the angels). This is the decree of the Mighty, the Wise. (HaaMeem Sajdah, verse 12)

7. Verily We have placed stars in the sky and decorated it for spectators. (Surah Hijr verse 16)

8. (To realise Our power to resurrect the dead,) Have they not looked at the sky above them and seen how (well) We have made it, beautified it and that it has no cracks (despite its size, height, age and many functions) ? (Surah Qaaf, verse 6)

9. The doors of the heavens (Surah A'raaf, verse 40)

10. Allaah is the One Who created the sun as a (bright) light, the moon as a (gentle) glow and has appointed stages (phases of waxing and waning) for it (the moon) so that you may know the count of the years (by the passing of months) and calculation (of time). Allaah has created these only with the truth (for a purpose and not for nothing). He explains the Aayaat for people of knowledge (people who ponder about these Aayaat and learn lessons from them). (Surah Yunus, verse 5)

11. We have stipulated stations (phases) for the (waxing and waning of the) moon, until (after it passes the waning phase at the end of the month) it returns (to a state when it looks) like a branch of an old date palm. It is not possible for the sun to catch (overtake) the moon (so that the sun appears during the night), nor is it possible for the night to precede the day. They all (sun and moon) swim within their orbits (without entering the orbits of each other). (Surah Yaaseen. Verses 39, 40)

12. Allaah (is so Mighty that He) created the skies without any pillar that you see (Surah Luqmaan, verse 10)

13. Verily Allaah withholds the heavens and the earth from moving (Surah Faatir, verse 41)

14. The time shall certainly come on the Day of Qiyaamah) When the sky shall split asunder and become red like hide. (Surah Rahmnaan, verse 37)

The above verses of the Qur'aan and many Ahadeeth make it apparent that there is a big difference in the concepts of the ancient philosophers and the Shari'ah. Here are a few:

1. While the philosophers regarded the Aflak to be in existence from forever and that they will exist forever, the Qur'aan makes it clear that they were created by Allaah and that they will all be destroyed on the Day of Qiyaamah. (See Surah Muzammil and the above verses)

2. While the philosophers speak about the eighth heaven, the Qur'aan speaks of seven (Surah HaaMeem Sajdah)

3. While the philosophers regard the seven celestial bodies to be the seven heavens, the

Qur'aan speak only of the sun and the moon and says that they travel in their designated orbits (Surah Yaaseen and Surah Ambiyaa)

Fatawa Rahimiyyah (Vol.1)

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