

Welcome to ALI 476
Understanding God's mercy
Session One

What do you understand from this verse?

كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ

Your Lord has made mercy incumbent upon Himself
Sura An'am, no.6, verse 12 (and 54)

The Spiritual Journey

- ❖ Understanding God's mercy
- ❖ Being merciful to others

Defining Mercy

- ❖ Granting blessings to those worthy of it.
- ❖ Helping others reach a higher state that they have a potential for and which is worthy of them.

Allama Tabatabai, Tafsir al-Mizan

God's Mercy

- ❖ The most frequently mentioned attribute in the Quran – about 600 times explicitly.
- ❖ The name al-Rahman is used as an alternate name for Allah. (17:110, 25:63)
- ❖ The names ar-Rahman and ar-Rahim have been chosen to be repeated at the beginning of each chapter.

قُلْ اَدْعُوا اللّٰهَ اَوْ اَدْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ ۗ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا
فَلَهُ الْاَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۗ

Say, 'Invoke God or invoke al-Rahman (the All merciful). Whichever of His Names you may invoke, to Him belong the Best Names.

Sura Israa, no.17, verse 110

Aim behind creation

Indeed, the entire story of creation can be summarized in a few sentences: The Most merciful God wanted to show His mercy. Therefore, He created this world. He gave His mercy to human beings so that they would become His vicegerents on earth and become a means of His mercy.

Understanding God's Mercy, Part 1 – Dr. Shomali

Some Questions

- 1) Would 'not creating creation' go against the mercy of God?
- 2) If people do not benefit from this mercy is the aim of creation being fulfilled?
- 3) If God is merciful why would there be punishment?

Not creating creation

When talking about why creation we have to discuss it from two aspects;

- 1) That of the Creator (What made the Creator create?)
- 2) That of creation. (For what purpose did He create?)

Not creating creation when He could, and would be of benefit, goes against His qualities.

When an action is essentially good (حَسَنٌ بِالذَّاتِ) not doing it goes against virtue

All people do not benefit from creation

Even if a single person actually becomes the vicegerent of the Most merciful God, this world would be very valuable and worthy of being created. One perfect man overweighs and is much greater than millions of immoral people . . . As far as Allah is concerned, everyone can become a good person. He has given everyone this opportunity without any limit.

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Why Punishment?

Guidance and accountability are essential parts of His mercy for human beings to achieve the goal of creation

Justice is a part of His mercy. Mercy of God cannot be unconditional for that would entail injustice.

Can a doer of good and a doer of evil receive the same treatment?

Misunderstanding Attributes of God

- ❖ When talking about the attributes of God human beings compare them to human attributes. Mercy and anger in a human being involves change of state while this is not true for Allah.
- ❖ Our emotional states are dependent on external factors while God is independent of any factors.
- ❖ Our emotional states change to fulfill certain needs while God has no needs to be fulfilled.

Mercy of God and Anger of God

يَا مَنْ سَبَقَتْ رَحْمَتُهُ غَضَبَهُ

○ One whose mercy preceded His anger

Du'a Arafah

وَأَنْتَ الَّذِي تَسْعَى رَحْمَتُهُ أَمَامَ غَضَبِهِ

You are He whose mercy
runs before His wrath!

Sahifa Sajjadiyyah, Du'a no.16, line 8