

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 13: Pondering over God's Signs

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا رُجُومًا اثْنَيْنِ يُغِشِي اللَّيْلَ
النَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

It is He who has spread out the earth and set in it firm mountains and streams, and of every fruit in it He has made two kinds. He draws the night's cover over the day. There are indeed signs in that for a people who ponder. (Raḍ

13:3)

Reflections:

All of God's creation has been created with the truth.¹ That is the very fabric and core of the natural order, having emanated from the Truth itself. Hence, every created entity is a truthful sign pointing to God.

One of the keys to being able to decipher God's signs in the cosmos is to engage in *tafakkur*. It is the practice of pondering and reflecting over a phenomenon, as opposed to taking it for granted. When we engage in this practice, our hearts begin to notice the order and connectivity within the natural world. If properly nurtured, we come to realize that this unity indicates the oneness of its purpose. In other words, we come to realize that there must only be one Caretaker and Lord managing its affairs. Hence, instead of seeing the natural world as a random assemblage of disparate matter or the wavering result of imaginary competing deities, we come to see it as the intentionally willed creation of the One God based on wisdom and purpose. It is this act of pondering that brings life to our hearts, as the noble Prophet (ṣ) has said: "Pondering is the life of the heart of an intelligent person in the same way that the seeker of light walks in the darkness through the light [he seeks]."²

When we look around, we notice that our earth is not flat but has both mountains and valleys. This means that when there is precipitation, streams and rivers emerge that flow over the earth. The streams then irrigate vegetation, and what results are fruits of all kinds—summer and winter, sweet and sour, moist and dry. The alternation of the day and night assist not only in the fruit's formation, but also in the human cycle of resting and seeking one's sustenance. All of these phenomena when reflected on together indicate a common purpose.

In the above verse, Allah (swt) attributes all of these phenomena directly to Himself (in the singular) because He is ultimately the cause of all causes. This is not to deny the secondary and dependent role of natural causality because in many other verses, He uses the plural term to describe the same acts: "And *We* spread out the earth, and cast in it firm mountains, and *We* grew in it every kind of balanced thing, and made in it [various] means of livelihood for you and for those whom you do not provide for."³ The use of the plural is to indicate the role of natural causality, but this does not remove Allah from the picture, for all natural agents are, after all, under His command: "To Allah belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth."⁴

Imam 'Alī (ʿa) says, "The one whose consumption is reduced, his thought [and pondering] is purified."⁵ One of the ways to develop *tafakkur* is through detachment, and what better month to sharpen this gift than the month of Ramaḍān. It is in this month that we can reduce the attachments that we have built over the year so as to be able to see things in their true light.

To ponder: What does it mean to for thoughts to be purified?

References: Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Tafsīr Tasnīm*; Allāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān*.

¹ 15:85

³ 15:19-20

⁵ *Ghurur al-ḥikam*, v. 1, p. 617

² *al-Kāfi*, v. 2, p. 598

⁴ 48:4