255524 - How can the scholars say that noor is reflected light when Allah is noor?

the question

I am interested in islam but im being confused that Allah said that moon is a noor which means light then how scholars say that it is reflected light when noor clearly means light such as Allah is noor. Please help i want to eager to know islam.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

The researcher often becomes confused when he researches a matter by studying some texts, but he fails to research some other, important texts that also speak of the matter in question, which leads to misunderstanding of the issue. Therefore putting all the religious texts together is required to research the matter and studying them as a whole is one of the most important steps in sound academic research.

The confusion that results from the fact that noor (light) is one of the attributes of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, even though noor – according to some interpretations (when mentioned in the case of the moon, as in Yoonus 10:5) – is a reflection of light and is not an inherent characteristic, provides us with an important example of the necessity of what we always call for of reflection and deliberation before believing in specious arguments. Here we will explain the basis of this confusion from several angles:

Firstly:

Most scholars of Arabic language and tafseer do not agree that noor is a transient reflection of daw’ (light) and they do not accept that it is not an inherent characteristic; they say that this understanding is in fact taken from the philosophers who study astronomy and nature. From a linguistic and Qur’anic point of view, there is nothing to support this understanding. Therefore this

specious argument is completely baseless, especially since many scholars of the Arabic language – such as Ibn as-Sikkeet – said that noor and diya' are synonymous, and it is not known that there is any differentiation between them from a linguistic point of view. The reason why the Qur'an uses the word diya' when referring to the sun and noor when referring to the moon is by way of variety and eloquence, with the use of synonyms. This is common in Arabic, and the Qur'an was revealed in a clear Arabic tongue. Abu Bilaal al-'Askari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The difference between diya' and noor: they are synonymous in linguistic terms.

End quote from Mu'jam al-Furooq al-Lughawiyyah (p. 332).

Ibn Abi'l-Hadeed says:

We say to him: why do you describe daw' as noor and more? Did you take that from the books of Arabic language study, or elsewhere? We have checked the books of Arabic language study, and we did not find – according to our research – what you mentioned, nor do people use these words in that sense.

If that (saying that daw' is noor and more) does not exist in the language at all or in customary usage, then you cannot interpret the words of Allah, may He be exalted, in that manner.

Ibn as-Sikkeet said in the book Islaah al-Mantiq – which is the most prominent book on the Arabic language, and the author is the leading scholar in the Arabic language, he affirmed that the meaning of noor and diya' is one and the same.

There is nothing in the verse, "It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya'] and the moon as a light [noor]" [Yoonus 10:5], to indicate that the words diya' and noor have different meanings, and there is nothing in the verse "To each among you, We have prescribed a law [shir'ah] and a clear way [minhaaj]" [al-Maa'idah 5:48] to suggest that the words shir'ah and minhaaj have different meanings.

End quote from al-Falak ad-Daa'ir 'ala al-Mathal as-Saa'ir (4/233).

Secondly:

Moreover, many linguists and commentators on the Qur'an say that noor is not accompanied by heat or harm; rather it is pure light that illuminates what is around it, whether what we mean by noor is light in either a literal or figurative sense. Therefore it is more appropriate that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, should be described as noor, as it is more befitting to His Majesty, without likening it (to what He has created of light), and He is not to be described as diya'. Obviously they rejected the view that noor is a reflection of diya' and is produced from another source.

As-Samarqandi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah made the sun diya' with heat, and the moon noor without heat. End quote from Bahr al-'Uloom (2/104).

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words diya', noor and so on refer to something that produces light by itself, such as the sun and moon, and such as fire. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya'] and the moon as a light [noor]"

[Yoonus 10:5],

"And We have made (therein) a shining lamp (sun)"

[an-Naba' 78:13].

Allah, may He be glorified, calls the sun siraaj (lamp) and diya' (light) because in addition to illuminating and shining, it produces heat and burning. So it is more akin to fire, unlike the moon, which illuminates without heat. Hence He says: "It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya'] and the moon as a light [noor]" [Yoonus 10:5].

The point here is that the words diya', noor and so on refer to something that shines and

illuminates by itself, such as the sun, moon and fire. What it refers to is the rays that may be produced as a result of that in the air and on land. The latter (the rays) are transient and result from something else; they are not the item that produces it and are not an inherent characteristic of it – rather they are something that happens because of it.

End quote from al-Jawaab as-Saheeh (4/368).

Ibn Rajab (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Diya' is noor that produces a kind of heat and burning, such as the diya' (light) of the sun, but not the moon, which is pure light that illuminates without burning. Allah, may He glorified and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): "It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya'] and the moon as a light [noor]" [Yoonus 10:5].

Hence Allah described the law of Moosa as being diya', as He said (interpretation of the meaning):

"And indeed We granted to Moosa (Moses) and Haroon (Aaron) the criterion (of right and wrong), and a shining light [diya'] [i.e. the Taurat (Torah)] and a Reminder for Al-Muttaqoon (the pious and righteous persons)"

[al-Anbiya' 21:48].

Even though He mentioned that there is noor in the Torah, as in the verse "Verily, We did send down the Tauraat (Torah) [to Moosa (Moses)], therein was guidance and light [noor]" [al-Maa'idah 5:44], what is prevalent in their law is diya', because of what it contains of restrictions and burdens. And the law of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is described as noor, because it is gentle and easy-going. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light (noor) and a plain Book (this Qur'an)"

[al-Maa'idah 5:15]

"So those who believe in him (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)), honour

him, help him, and follow the light (the Qur’an) which has been sent down with him, it is they who will be successful”

[al-A‘raaf 7:157].

Because patience is tough on people, it requires striving against one’s nafs and restraining it from following its whims and desires, so it is described as diya’. End quote from Jaami‘ al-‘Uloom wa’l-Hikam, 2/24

Thirdly:

Some of the scholars affirmed that noor refers to the origin and beginning of daw’. So it is appropriate for Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, to be described as noor, because His Essence has the attributes of perfection without being created or being initiated by any initiator, because He is the Creator Who creates the light of the universe that is spread everywhere.

As-Suhayli (may Allah have mercy on him) said, commenting on a line of poetry that says: “There appears in the land an illumination of light (diya’ noor)”:

This line of poetry explains to you the meaning of noor (light) and the meaning of diya’ (illumination), and that illumination (diya’) is what spreads from light (noor), and that noor is the origin of daw’, from which it begins and starts. In the Qur’an it says (interpretation of the meaning):

“then, when it lighted [adaa’at] all around him, Allah took away their light [noor]”

[al-Baqarah 2:17]

“It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya’] and the moon as a light [noor]”

[Yoonus 10:5],

because the light of the moon does not spread illumination (diya’) as much as the sun does, especially at the beginning and end of the month. In as-Saheeh it says: “Prayer is noor (light) and

patience is diya’ (illumination).” That is because prayer is the foundation of Islam, and consists of dhikr and Qur’an, and it forbids shameful deeds and evil. Patience in refraining from evil and patience in doing acts of obedience is the diya’ (illumination) that emanates from that noor (light) which is the Qur’an and dhikr (in the prayer). One of the names of the Creator, may He be glorified, is: “Allah is the Light (Noor) of the heavens and the earth” [an-Noor 24:35]. So it is not right to describe Him as diya’.

End quote from ar-Rawd al-Unuf, (2/164).

Fourthly:

Even if we accept the view of philosophers, that noor is a reflection of daw’, and that it is transient and is not part of the inherent characteristics of a a thing and generated by it, this is applicable to created, imperfect beings but it is not applicable to the perfect Creator, may He be glorified and exalted. In Arabic, the word noor may vary in meaning and usage according to the context and what is mentioned in conjunction with it. The noor of a person’s face, for example is not like the noor of the moon in terms of shining and illumination; the noor of knowledge and reason is not like physical noor, because the former is figurative and the latter is visible. The noor of a lamp is not like the noor of a candle in strength and clarity. The noor of the Creator is an attribute of perfection, which cannot have any shortcomings or imperfections in any way. So it cannot be similar in any way to the various forms of created light, such as being reflected or transient or weak. Rather it is perfect light that is not created and is not imperfect, as befits the perfection and Majesty of Allah, and it is not appropriate to compare created light with divine light.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is strange indeed that you deny that Allah, may He be glorified, is the light (noor) of the heavens and the earth in a real sense, and that His Countenance has light in a real sense, then you regard the light of the sun, moon and stars as being His light in a true sense, when people know for certain that this is not right, and they know that the light attributed to Him is exclusively His and is not the light of anything else. The light of a lamp emanates from the wick and spreads across

ceilings and walls, and that is not the light of the Lord, may He be exalted, which is the light of His Essence and sublime Countenance. Rather that is attributed to Him (in a genitive construction) in a real sense, just as the light of the sun, moon and lamps is attributed to them in a real sense. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It is He Who made the sun a shining thing [diya’] and the moon as a light [noor]”

[Yoonus 10:5]

“Blessed is He Who has placed in the heaven big stars, and has placed therein a great lamp (sun), and a moon giving light [muneera]”

[al-Furqaan 25:61]

“All praises and thanks be to Allah, Who (Alone) created the heavens and the earth, and originated the darkness and the light [noor]”

[al-An‘aam 6:1].

That (the light of the sun et cetera) is a created light that emanates from those physical entities, and is not to be attributed to the Lord, may He be exalted, except in the sense that it is created by Him – not in the sense of it being an attribute of His Essence.

Regarding as equal this (created light) and the light of His Countenance because of which darkness is eliminated and the well-being of this world and the hereafter is maintained, and by virtue of which those who seek refuge are granted refuge, is one of the falsest of falsehoods.

End quote from as-Sawaa‘iq al-Mursalah (424).

One of the main reasons why some groups went astray in their understanding of the divine names and attributes is the fact that they did not distinguish between what may be attributed to Allah as God (His Essence) and what may be attributed to Him as Creator. They did not understand the difference between different realities that may be referred to in the same terms that refer to all of them linguistically.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was suggested that most of the differences between the scholars are due to using the same word to refer to an attribute which is common to various things, which was the cause of disputes, with some people denying and some affirming (in the case of divine attributes)…

Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (7/664).

It is well known that one word may refer to several different meanings, and it should not and cannot be understood – in various contexts – as referring to one thing. This is a basic principle in the understanding of languages in general, and the Arabic language in particular. Therefore the word zulmah (darkness) may refer to darkness at the beginning of the night and darkness in the middle of the night, but the darkness at the beginning of the night is not like the other kind of darkness. Darkness on the night of the full moon is not like darkness when there is no moon; even though it is the same word, it varies in meaning in terms of strength and weakness.

The word rabb (usually translated as Lord) may refer to the head of a family (rabb al-usrah), who is the one who is in charge of the family’s affairs and well-being, and takes care of the family and spends on it. It may also refer to Allah, the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, Who is the Lord and Sovereign of all things. It is the same word, but its meanings vary according to context and what the speaker intends. By the same token, describing Allah as being the Light (Noor) of the heavens and the earth cannot be thought to mean that He is like the light (noor) of the moon or any of the other created lights in the universe; rather He, may He be glorified and exalted, has light which is perfect, for there is nothing like unto Him and there are no shortcomings in His attributes whatsoever. All the attributes of Allah, may He be exalted, are attributes of perfection and Majesty, as befits His Majesty.

Hence what the one who researches these matters must do is have deep understanding of the Arabic language and knowledge of the various ways of expression used by the Arabs. After that he must understand the terminologies coined by the scholars in various fields of knowledge.

Shaykh al-Islam (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Knowledge of languages and the ways in which the speakers of a language use that language is one of the most important matters to which attention must be paid in order to understand the intended meaning of a statement and what is meant by it, because for every language there is an original language, to which are added new terminologies, whether that is in the case of specialised branches of knowledge or among the ordinary people.

Anyone who is used to communicating on the basis of such terminologies thinks that this is the terminology used by all the speakers of that language, so he may interpret it as being what is usually said by the speakers of that language, and this leads to grave errors.

It was suggested that the reason for most of the differences in understanding between scholars is the fact that one word may refer to various meanings.

So in particular we have to understand the language of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in which he used to address people, because this is the way to understand his words and his intended meaning, even though there were differences in usage between Quraysh and other tribes, and whoever does not know that may make mistakes.

End quote from Bayaan Talbees al-Jahamiyyah (7/400).

Finally, the issue may be addressed from other angles, as mentioned by the scholars in their lengthy books of tafseer, hadith and ‘aqeedah, but we did not want to quote from them at length, so as not to make the answer too long.

The point we always try to make in such discussions is that it is essential for the researcher to do his utmost in making his research comprehensive, and he should not be content with examining only one text for one idea. The answer may be found when we look at a particular issue from all angles and we examine the meaning of various words from a linguistic point of view, and understand what is meant to be literal and what is meant to be figurative or metaphorical. In this manner we may realise that there is no need for confusion, when we do proper and thorough research.

And Allah knows best.