27036 - The prostration of everything in the universe to Allaah

the question

It says in Soorat al-Hajj 22:18 that the dawaab (moving living creatures, beasts, etc.) prostrate to Allaah. What is the nature of this prostration?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Note that this universe and all the created beings in it is in thrall to Allaah, whether by choice or by force. The believer worships Allaah by choice and is rewarded for his worship. Even though the kaafir may be alienated from his Lord and failing to worship Him, the atoms of his body and everything in him is worshipping Him and glorifying Him, but because our understanding and perception are limited, we are unaware of that tasbeeh (glorification of Allaah) and unable to understand its nature. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein, glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His Praise. But you understand not their glorification. Truly, He is Ever Forbearing, Oft-Forgiving”

[al-Isra’ 17:44]

What this means is that every created being is in a state of submission to Allaah and worships Him in a manner appropriate to its situation. The sun, moon, stars, trees and animals are all in a state of subjugation to Allaah and prostrate to Him, and all of them worship Him in an appropriate manner. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“See you not that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and Ad-Dawaabb [moving (living) creatures, beasts], and many of mankind prostrate themselves to Allaah. But there are many

(men) on whom the punishment is justified. And whomsoever Allaah disgraces, none can honour him. Verily, Allaah does what He wills”

[al-Hajj 22:18]

“Have they not observed things that Allaah has created: (how) their shadows incline to the right and to the left, making prostration unto Allaah, and they are lowly?

And to Allaah prostrate all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, of the moving (living) creatures and the angels, and they are not proud [i.e. they worship their Lord (Allaah) with humility]”

[al-Nahl 16:48-49]

Imaam Ibn Katheer said: Allaah is telling us of His Might, Majesty and Pride, for everything submits to Him and all things and creatures humble themselves before Him, inanimate objects and animals, and those which are accountable among mankind and the jinn, and the angels. Allaah tells us that everything that has a shadow that inclines towards the right and towards the left – i.e., morning and evening – prostrates to Allaah. Mujaahid said: When the sun passes its zenith everything prostrates to Allaah.

Allaah has confirmed that all beings prostrate to Him, and He has explained how some of them prostrate, which is by the inclining of its shadow towards the right and the left. It does not mean that everything prostrates on seven parts of the body; that applies only to the Muslims. The prostration of all other beings is in accordance with their nature. The fact that this prostration is prostration in the real sense is indicated by the apparent meaning of the text, because there is no valid reason for not interpreting the text as it appears to be, so we must accept it. That is also supported by the fact that the prostration of the sun, moon, stars, trees and animals is mentioned in conjunction with the prostration of the angels and humans, which indicates that this is prostration in a real sense for all the entities mentioned. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allaah have mercy on him) said:

Prostration is a form of humility, so the prostration which includes all creatures implies the utmost submission and humility. For every created thing submits to His greatness and humbles itself before His might and power. This does not mean that everything prostrates like human beings do, on seven parts of the body, putting the forehead on the ground. This kind of prostration is only for human beings. Some other nations bow but do not prostrate, and that is their prostration. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

‘and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: “Forgive us”’

[al-Baqarah 2:58]

It was said that this means enter it bowing, and some of them prostrate on their sides like the Jews. Sujood (prostration) is a generic term but because the way in which Muslims prostrate is so well known, many people think that this is how everything prostrates.

Jaami’ al-Rasaa’il, 1/27

And he said:

It is known that everything prostrates according to its nature, and the prostration of these created entities does not mean that they put their foreheads on the ground.

Majmoo’ al-Fataawa, 21/284

This prostration includes the submission and humbling of these created entities to Allaah and their surrendering to His Lordship, Might and Sovereignty. Imam Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“It is the prostration of humility and submission, for everything submits to His Lordship, humbles itself before His Might and is subject to His Sovereignty.”

Madaarij al-Saalikeen, 1/107

The prostration of these created entities is a prostration in a real sense as befits each of these entities. So man prostrates in the manner that suits him, in the manner that is well known, on

seven parts of the body. The sun prostrates in the manner that suits it, as mentioned in the saheeh hadeeth of Abu Dharr (may Allaah be pleased with him) who said: “The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said to Abu Dharr when the sun had set, ‘Do you know where it went?’ I said, ‘Allaah and His Messenger know best.’ He said, ‘It has gone to prostrate beneath the Throne, then it asks for permission to rise, but soon it will prostrate and its prostration will not be accepted, and it will ask for permission to rise and that will not be granted to it, and it will be said to it, “Go back from whence you came,” and it will rise from the west. This is what Allaah says:

“And the sun runs on its fixed course for a term (appointed). That is the Decree of the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing”

[Yaa-Seen 36:38].’”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 3199)

So it prostrates in a real sense, as is suited to the sun, but how does it prostrate to Allaah beneath the Throne? Allaah knows best how this prostration happens. The apparent meaning of the hadeeth proves that what this prostration means is not simply submission to the command of Allaah and obedience to Him. Indeed, it is submission, humility and surrender by prostrating in a real sense, but we do not understand how it happens. Similarly it is said that the moon, the trees, the animals and all other entities prostrate in a manner that suits them. What the believer should do is not to let the fact that he does not know how some entities prostrate prevent him from believing in this prostration, rather he must believe in what Allaah has told him about other entities prostrating to Him.

And Allaah knows best.