298313 - Is it permissible to describe Allah, may He be exalted, as planning or plotting?

the question

Does Allah describe Himself as planning or plotting when He says in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “But I am planning a plan [akeedu kaydan]” [Taariq 86:16].

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

The original linguistic meaning of the Arabic word kayd (plan, plot, scheme) is simply planning, but after that the meaning may vary according to the way in which it is used and the context; it may mean planning for a good purpose or scheming for an evil purpose.

Abu Mansoor al-Azhari said:

Kayd means planning, for a negative or positive purpose.

End quote from Tahdheeb al-Lughah (10/327).

Secondly:

When Allah, may He be exalted, referred to Himself as planning or plotting against the wrongdoers, this refers to planning for a good and true purpose, to requite the wrongdoers for their planning or scheming for bad purposes. In the case of Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, it is a matter of perfection, even though the word kayd (planning or plotting) may be a shortcoming and blameworthy in the case of people, for Allah, may He be exalted, does not resemble His creation either in His Essence or in His attributes or in His deeds. He, may He be

exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing” [ash-Shoora 42:11].

Allah, may He be exalted, says regarding the requital of the disbelievers for their scheming and plotting against His believing slaves and their spreading mischief on the earth (interpretation of the meaning):

“Indeed, they are planning a plan,

But I am planning a plan.

So allow time for the disbelievers. Leave them awhile”

[at-Taariq 86:15-17].

Shaykh as-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Indeed, they” that is, those who reject the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the Qur’an “are planning a plan” to defeat the truth and support falsehood

“But I am planning a plan” to cause the truth to prevail, even if the disbelievers hate it, and to ward off what they have brought of falsehood, so that it may be known who will prevail, for humans are too weak and insignificant to be able to resist the Most Strong, All-Knowing and His plans.

“So allow time for the disbelievers. Leave them awhile” that is, for a short time, for they will come to know their fate when the punishment descends upon them.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di (919).

Thirdly:

The Qur’an did not attribute kayd (planning, plotting) in a general sense to Allah, may He be exalted, without qualification. Rather kayd (planning) is attributed to Him, may He be glorified, as

a counterpart to the kayd (plots and schemes) of the disbelievers, as we see in the verses quoted above and in similar verses of the Holy Qur'an.

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

These actions – plotting, making fun and mocking – if they are directed at one who does not deserve punishment, then they are wronging him. But if they are done to someone by way of requital and as a punishment to him by doing to him what he did to others, then doing them is justice.

End quote from Majmoo' al-Fataawa (7/111).

Hence it is not correct to attribute this characteristic to Allah, may He be exalted, in general terms; rather it should be qualified by stating that it is planning for a true purpose, and Allah, may He be exalted, cannot be called by a name derived from this word.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to an attribute of divine perfection that is to be qualified within a specific context, it cannot be attributed to Allah in a general sense, without qualification. This applies to actions such as plotting, deceiving, mocking and so on. These are attributes of perfection that are to be qualified within a specific context, and may be attributed to Him as actions done in requital for what they (the disbelievers) do. In that context, they are attributes of perfection, but in general terms, without qualification within a specific context, they are not to be attributed to Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Hence it is not valid to describe Him in general terms as a "plotter" or "mocker" or "deceiver"; rather these terms should be qualified and placed in a specific context. So we might say that He is a plotter against those who plot, He is a mocker of the hypocrites, He is a deceiver of the hypocrites, a schemer against the disbelievers – thus placing these words in context, because they are never mentioned except in such contexts.

End quote from Sharh al-'Aqeedah al-Waasitah (1/143).

Shaykh 'Atiyyah Saalim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The words “Indeed, they are planning a plan, But I am planning a plan” [at-Taariq 86:16] attribute this action to Allah, may He be exalted. The scholars said that this comes under the heading of a requital and response to their action, as in the verses

“And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned”

[Aal ‘Imraan 3:54]

and

“And when they meet those who believe, they say, ‘We believe’; but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say, ‘Indeed, we are with you; we were only mockers.’

[But] Allah mocks them…”

[al-Baqarah 2:14-15].

The early generations (salaf) were unanimously agreed that these actions cannot be attributed to Allah, may He be exalted, in general terms, and it is not permissible to derive a name for Him from them; rather they may be mentioned in the context of discussing what people did and how He counters their deeds, because without this context such actions are not appropriate for Allah, may He be exalted, but in that context it is very appropriate, wise and proper.

End quote from Adwaa’ al-Bayaan (9/164-165).

And Allah knows best.