344142 - Is it permissible to say “a perfectly formed baby” or “a baby with physical defects”?

the question

When someone wants to congratulate someone else on his wife’s pregnancy, he says to him: “I ask Allah, may He be exalted, to bless you with a perfectly formed [healthy] baby.” Or when someone is asked what gender he hopes the baby he and his wife are expecting will be, he says, for example: “The gender doesn’t matter; what matters is that the baby is perfectly formed [healthy],” or: “We ask Allah to bless us with a baby who is free of physical defects.” Is it permissible to say phrases such as “perfectly formed” and “physical defects”? Because it seems as if it is indicating that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, may not create perfectly, but He says (interpretation of the meaning): *“Indeed, We created humans in the best form” [at-Teen 95:4]*.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Allah creates humans in the best form

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): *“Indeed, We created humans in the best form” [at-Teen 95:4]*.

At-Tabari (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The scholarly view that is most likely to be correct with regard to that is the view which says that is what is meant is: We have created humans in the best shape, with the best proportions, because the phrase translated here as “*the best form*” is a description of something that is not

mentioned but is implied, which is that humans are created in a form that is the best form. It is as if it means: We have created humans in a form that is the best form.

End quote from *Tafseer at-Tabari* (24/513).

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

With regard to the words "*Indeed, We created humans in the best form*", what is meant is that Allah, may He be exalted, created humans in the best shape and form, in an upright form, with faculties and limbs that function well and look good.

End quote from *Tafseer Ibn Katheer* (8/435).

A baby may be born imperfectly formed, for a reason based on divine wisdom.

But the verse is general in meaning and refers to humans and humankind in general. Not all people have the same level of beauty and physical perfection. For some people, Allah decrees that they will be born with some physical defects, for reasons based on divine wisdom, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing"

[al-Insaan 76:2].

But we know that some people are born deaf or blind.

The fact that a Muslim prays to his Lord to spare his child from physical defects does not mean that he thinks negatively of Allah, may He be exalted; rather it is because he is aware of Allah's perfect sovereignty and that He creates whatever He wills and chooses, may He be glorified.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses; not for them was the choice. Exalted is Allah and high above what they associate with Him”

[al-Qasas 28:68].

Al-Bukhaari narrated in *al-Adab al-Mufrad* (1256) that Katheer ibn ‘Ubayd said: When a child was born among them – meaning among her family – ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) would not ask whether it was a boy or a girl. Rather she would say: Is (the baby) in perfect shape? If the answer was yes, she would say: Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds.

Classed as hasan by Shaykh al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Adab al-Mufrad* (p. 485).

Secondly:

Ruling on saying “physical defects”

When people say “physical defects”, that does not mean that they are thinking negatively of Allah, may He be exalted, or that they are showing poor etiquette with Him, as if they are criticizing His creation and His actions. Rather what is meant is that the defect that Allah has decreed in the physical makeup of a person is usually something for which the person is shamed by people when he mixes and interacts with them.

Hence we find that the scholars describe the defects that Allah, may He be exalted) has decreed in the physical makeup of some animals and people as “faults (*‘uyoob*)”, as in the descriptions of what is to be avoided in animals that are to be offered as sacrifices, and as in the case of physical defects that are valid grounds for annulling a marriage, and so on.

Shaykh ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan al-Barraak was asked:

Is it permissible to use the phrase “physical defect” when a child is born with a physical deformity, or missing a limb or faculty?

He said: This is describing the facts, not criticizing the Creator, for Allah, may He be exalted,

creates whatever He wills, however He wills. *“It is He who forms you in the wombs however He wills” [Aal ‘Imraan 3:6].* He creates those who are beautiful and those who are ugly, those who are perfectly formed and those who are imperfectly formed. *“formed and unformed” [al-Hajj 22:5]*. There is nothing wrong with that, because it is a physical defect, as opposed to a defect in character; some people may have something wrong in their manners and attitude, such as being hot-tempered, or they may have something wrong in their physical makeup, which is less serious.

End quote from the website of Shaykh al-Barraak.

Shaykh ‘Abdullah ibn Jibreen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked:

What is the ruling on people using the phrase “physical defects”?

He replied: There is nothing wrong with that; what is meant is visible defects, such as being one-eyed, lame, paralyzed, missing a tooth, missing a finger, having extra digits, having a hunchback, being nonverbal, and so on. What is meant is that it is something that Allah has created, and it is how that person was made.

That is in contrast to defects in manners and attitude, which refers to inherent inclinations, such as having a tendency to be angry, resentful, foolish, a liar, a wrongdoer, aggressive and so on. A person is not to be excused for that, because he is able to protect himself from that.

End quote from the website of Shaykh Ibn Jibreen.

And Allah knows best.