

Surah 41. Ha-Mim

Asad: And ¹¹ He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke; ¹² and He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, "Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!" - to which both responded, "We do come in obedience." ¹³

Malik: Then He turned towards the sky, which was but smoke, He said to it and to the earth: 'Come forward both of you, willingly or unwillingly,' and they submitted: 'We shall come willing'.

Pickthall: Then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the earth: Come both of you, willingly or loth. They said: We come, obedient.

Yusuf Ali: Moreover He Comprehended in His design the sky and it had been (as) smoke: He said to it and to the earth: "Come ye together willingly or unwillingly." They said: "We do come (together) in willing obedience." ^{4474 4475 4476}

Transliteration: Thumma istawa ilā alssamāi wahiya dukhanun faqala laha walilardi itiya tawAAan aw karhan qalata atayna taiAAeena

Khatab:

Then He turned towards the heaven when it was ?still like? smoke, saying to it and to the earth, 'Submit, willingly or unwillingly.' They both responded, 'We submit willingly.'

Author Comments

11 - Whenever the particle thumma is used, as in the above instance, to link parallel statements - statements not necessarily indicating a sequence in time - it has the function of a simple conjunction, and may be rendered as "and".

12 - I.e., a gas - evidently hydrogen gas, which physicists regard as the primal element from which all material particles of the universe have evolved and still evolve. For the meaning of the term sama' ("sky" or "skies" or "heaven") in its cosmic connotation, see note [20] on [2:29](#).

13 - Explaining this passage, Zamakhshari observes: "The meaning of God's command to the skies and the earth to 'come', and their submission [to His command] is this: He willed their coming into being, and so they came to be as He willed them to be...: and this is the kind of metaphor (majaz) which is called 'allegory' (tamthil)... Thus, the purport [of this passage] is but an illustration (taswir) of the effect of His almighty power on all that is willed [by Him], and nothing else..." (It is obvious that Zamakhshari's reasoning is based on the oft-repeated Qur'anic statement, "When God wills a thing to be, He but says

unto it, 'Be' - and it is.") Concluding his interpretation of the above passage, Zamakshari adds: "If I am asked about the meaning of [the words] 'willingly or unwillingly', I say that it is a figurative expression (mathal) indicating that His almighty will must inevitably take effect."

4474 - For istawa see n. 1386 to x. 3. Cf. also ii. 29.

4475 - From lxxix. 30 it would appear as if the earth was spread out after the sky was made. In the present passage the creation of the earth and the evolution of life on our globe are mentioned first; and the making of the sky into the seven firmaments is mentioned last. The two statements are not inconsistent. It is stated here that when the sky was made into seven firmaments, it had existed previously as smoke, or vapour, or steam. The idea I derive from a collation of the relevant Quranic passages is that Allah first created primeval matter, which was as yet without order, shape, or symmetry. This state is called Chaos as opposed to Cosmos in Greek Cosmogony. The next stage would be the condensation of this primeval matter, into gases, liquids, or solids: on this subject no precise information is given to us: it belongs to the realm of Physics. About the earth we are told of four stages or Days, and about the heavens, of two stages or Days. For Days see n. 4477 below. If these stages proceeded or proceed together in time, it is obvious that each stage as we know it on earth is half as long as each stage in the heavens. But these are questions of Physics, Astronomy, or Geology.

4476 - I take this to mean that Allah's design in creation was not to keep heaven and earth separate, but together, as we indeed are, being part of the solar system, and travellers through space, crossing the path of several comets. And all matter created by Allah willingly obeys the laws laid down for it.

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