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There are seven verses in the Noble Qur'an which speak of سماوات سبع (seven heavens).

From amongst all the various interpretations that have been mentioned in this regard, the interpretation which appears to be most applicable is that سماوات سبع means exactly what it states: The seven heavens; however, heaven does not mean planets, but rather the entire collection of stars and celestial objects of the upper world; and seven is the number and an allegorical expression denoting multiplicity.

However, from other verses of the Qur'an it can be deduced that all the stars, planets, galaxies and nebulae that we observe are all associated with the collection of the first heaven. Accordingly, beyond this gigantic collection that we witness, there exist six other colossal collections (six heavens) – each one greater than the other – which are beyond the reach of human knowledge (at least for the present).

In verse 6 of Suratul Saffat, we read:

إِنَّا زَيْنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَاكِبِ

“Surely We have adorned the nearest heaven with an adornment, the stars.”

Verse 12 of Suratul Fussilat says:

وَ زَيْنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمِصَابِيحَ

“...and We adorned the lower heaven with brilliant stars.”

And this very meaning, albeit with a slight difference, has also been mentioned in verse 5 of Suratul Mulk.

Interesting to note is the fact that the late 'Allamah Majlisi has also mentioned this as one of the interpretations of the verse. In his book *Biharul Anwar*, he states: The third probability that strikes my mind is that all the firmaments that have been established for the celestial objects are referred to as the 'lower heaven'!¹

It is true that our present day scientific instruments have been unable to uncover the other six worlds as yet. However, as far as science is concerned, there is no evidence to deny their existence; and it is quite probable that this enigma shall be solved in the future.

In fact, discoveries of some astronomers indicate signs of the existence of other worlds, at this present moment. This is similar to the statement released by the renowned Palomar Observatory in connection with the enormity of the universe and that which we have previously presented. The portion of it, which substantiates our words, states:

By means of the telescope of the Palomar Observatory millions of new galaxies have been discovered, some of which are at a distance of a thousand million light years from us. However, beyond the distance of a thousand million light years, a gigantic, dark and dreadful space meets the eye within which nothing can be seen and observed.

But undoubtedly, within that dark and dreadful space there exist hundreds of millions of galaxies, such that the world on our side is held together in place by the gravitational force of those galaxies. This entire gigantic universe, which meets our eyes and possesses hundreds of thousands of millions of galaxies, is nothing but a small and trivial speck in comparison to a more gigantic universe ... and we are not yet certain that beyond that second universe there does not exist yet another universe!²

Another scientist, in a detailed article written in connection with the enormity of the world of existence, after discussing the vast and astounding distances between the galaxies and presenting stupendous figures, all of which were in terms of light years, says: Until this juncture, the astronomers are of the opinion that presently they have only managed to proceed halfway towards the 'visible' fringes of the colossal universe ... they still need to seek out the undiscovered space!³

Thus, the worlds that have opened up before man – despite all their enormity – constitute just a mere speck of this gigantic universe, and can be reconciled with the issue of the seven heavens.⁴

1. Biharul Anwar, vol. 55, pg. 78

2. Majallah Fadha, Number 56, month of Farwardeen, 351

3. Newsweek, year 1964. (It should not be forgotten that this testimony is related to 24 years earlier.)

4. Tafsir Payam-e-Qur'an, vol. 2, pg. 179

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