

ALLAH EXISTS WITHOUT A PLACE

Praise be to *Allāh*, the Lord of the worlds. To *Allāh* belong the endowments, befitting perfection, and commendations. We ask *Allāh* to raise the rank of Prophet *Muḥammad* ﷺ, and to protect his nation from what he fears for it. Thereafter:

The belief that *Allāh*, *taʿālā*, exists without a place is the creed of the Messenger of *Allāh* ﷺ, the Companions, and those who graciously followed them, and it shall so be until the Day of Judgment. The proof of this precious statement is what *Allāh* said in the *Qurʾān*, in *Surat ash-Shūrā*, *ayah 11*:

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which means: <<There is absolutely nothing like *Allāh* whatsoever, and He has the attributes of Hearing and Seeing.>> This *ayah* absolutely clears *Allāh* of resembling the creations. It comprises that *Allāh*, *taʿālā*, is absolutely different from the creations in the Self, Attributes, and Actions. Hence, it shows that *Allāh*, *taʿālā*, exists without a place, because whatever exists in a place is, by nature, i.e., composed of particles, i.e., it is a body, occupying a space. *Allāh*, *taʿālā*, is clear of occupying spaces.

Al-Bukhārīyy, *al-Bayhaqīyy* and *Ibnul-Jarūd* related that the Messenger of *Allāh*, ﷺ, said:

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which means: << *Allāh* existed eternally and nothing else existed.>> This *ḥadīth* proves that only *Allāh* existed without a beginning, i.e., before creating any of the creation. There was nothing with *Allāh*: no place, no space, no sky, no Earth, no light, and no darkness. It is determined in the rules of the Religion and the judgments of the sound mind that *Allāh*, the Exalted, does not change. Hence, it is impossible that after having been existing without a place, *Allāh* will change and dwell in a place, because this is a development. The development is a sign of needing others, and the one who needs others is not God.

Imām Abū Mansūr al-Baghḍādīyy related in his book, *Al-Farḡu Baynal-Firaḡ*, that *Imām* ^*Aliyy*, the fourth of the caliphs, may *Allāh* reward his deeds, said:

which means: << *Allāh* existed eternally and there was no place, and He now is as He was. [i.e., without a place]>>

Imām Abu Hanifah, who is one of the authorities of *Salaf*, said in his book *Al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*: << *Allāh* existed eternally and there was no place. He existed before creating the creation. He existed, and there was no place, creation, or thing. He is the Creator of everything.>>

Imām Hafidh al-Bayhaqiyy said in his book, *Al-Asma'u waṣ-Ṣifat*, on page 400: <<...What was mentioned towards the end of the *ḥadīth* is an evidence for negating that *Allāh* has a place and negating that the slave is alike to *Allāh*. *Allāh*, the Exalted, is *adh-Dhahir* (). Hence, it is valid to know about Him by proofs. *Allāh* is *al-Batin* (). Hence, it is invalid that He dwells in a place.>> *Al-Bayhaqiyy* also said: <<Some of our companions used, as a proof to refute attributing the place to *Allāh*, the saying of the Prophet, ﷺ: <<You are *adh-Dhahir* () and there is nothing above You, and You are *al-Batin* () and there is nothing underneath You." Therefore, if there is nothing above Him and nothing underneath Him, He is not in a place."

Imām Ahmad Ibn Salamah, Abu Ja'far at-Tahawiyy, who was born in the year 237 after *Hijrah*, wrote a very famous book called *al-ʿAqidah at-Tahawiyyah*. He mentioned that the content of his book is an explanation of the creed of *Ahlus-Sunnah wal Jama'ah*, which is the creed of *Imām Abu Hanifah*, who died in the year 150 after *Hijrah*, and his two companions, *Imām Abu Yusuf al-Qadi* and *Imām Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥasan ash-Shaybaniyy* and others. He said in his book:

which means: << *Allāh* is supremely clear of all boundaries, extremes, sides, organs, and instruments. The six directions do not contain Him, for these are attributed to all created things.>> Such is the saying of *Imām Abu Ja'far* who is among the heads of *Salaf*. *Abu Ja'far* explicitly stated that *Allāh* is clear of being contained by the six directions. The six directions are above, below, ahead, behind, right, and left.

The linguist and scholar of *Ḥadīth*, *Imām Muḥammad Murtada az-Zabidiyy*, narrated by a continuous chain from himself back to *Imām Zayn al-ʿAbidin ʿAliyy Ibn al-Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAliyy Ibn Abi Talib*, (who was among the best of *Salaf*, who earned the title of *as-Sajjad*, i.e., the one who prays a lot), that *Zayn al-ʿAbidin*, in his treatise *as-Ṣahifah as-Sajjadiyyah*, said about *Allāh*:

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which means: <<O Allāh, You are clear of all imperfection. You are Allāh, the One Who no place contains You.>> He also said:

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which means: <<O Allāh, You are clear of all imperfection. You are Allāh, the One Who is not within boundaries.>>

In the explanation of *Al-Bukhariyy* in the chapter on *Al-Jihad*, Hafidh Ibn Hajar al-Asqalaniyy said: "The fact that the two directions above and below are impossible to be attributes of Allāh, does not necessitate that Allāh would not be attributed with aboveness, because attributing aboveness to Allāh is a matter of status and the impossibility lies in it being physical.>>

The Hanafiyy scholar Zaynud-Dīn Ibn Nujaym, in his book *Al-Bahrur-Ra'iq*, on page 129 said: <<Whoever says it is possible for Allāh to do a doing which has no wisdom commits blasphemy. Moreover, he commits blasphemy by affirming a place to Allāh, the Exalted.>>

Imām Ahmad ar-Rifa'īyy al-Kabīr, who lived around the year 600 after *Hijrah*, said:

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which means: <<The ultimate knowledge about Allāh is to be certain that Allāh exists without a how or a place. Imām Muḥammad Ibn Hibah al-Makkiyy, wrote a book called *Hada'iqul-Fuṣul wa Jawāhirul-ʿUqul*. It came to be known as *Al-ʿAqidatus-Salahiyyah*, after he gave it as a gift to Sultan Salahud-Dīn al-Ayyubīyy, who ordered that this book be taught to the children in schools and broadcast from the top of minarets. In his book he said:

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Which means: << Allāh existed eternally and there was no place, and the judgment about His existence now is that He is as He was [i.e., without a place]>>.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq said: <<He who claims that *Allah* is in something or on something or from something commits *shirk* (blasphemy). Because, if He was in something, He would be contained, and if He was on something, He would be carried, and if He was from something, He would be a creature.

Shaykh ^Abdul-Ghaniyy an-Nabulusiyy said: <<He who believes that *Allah* fills the heavens and Earth or that He is a body sitting above the *^Arsh* (ceiling of Paradise; throne) is a *kafir*.>>

Imam Fakhrud-Din Ibn ^Asakir said in his *^Aqidah*: *Allah* existed before the creation. He does not have a before or an after, an above or a below, a right or a left, an ahead or a behind, a whole or a part. It must not be said: When was He, Where was He, or how was He? *Allah* exists without a place. He created the universe and willed for the existence of time. He is not bound by time or designated with place.>>

Imam Abu Sulayman al-Khattabiyy said: <<What is obligatory upon us and upon every Muslim to know is that our Lord has no shape or form, because the shape has a <<how>>, and <<how>> does not apply to *Allah* or His Attributes.>>

Know beyond doubt that the question <<how>> (*kayf*:) does not apply to *Allah*. <<How?>> is a question related to shapes, bodies, places, depths, and dimensions. *Allah* is clear of all such attributes. Also be firm that it is invalid to say about *Allah* <<... but we do not know how>>, because in essence, it falsely indicates that *Allah* has a color, shape, dimensions, body and place, but one is simply ignorant of its <<how>>.

Imam al-Ghazaliyy said: << *Allah*, the Exalted, existed eternally and there was no place. He is not a body, *jawhar* (minute indivisible particle), or bodily property, and He is not on a place or in a place.>>

All of these sayings show that attributing the physical aboveness and the place to *Allah* is contrary to the *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Ijma'*, and intellectual proof. The intellectual proof that *Allah* exists without a place lies in the fact that God has the attributes of perfection. Needing others is not an attribute of perfection. The one who occupies place needs that place. The one who needs others (whether it is a place or any other creation) is not God. Moreover, as the mind determines that *Allah* existed without a place before creating places. The mind also determines that after *Allah* created the places, He still exists without a place.

The scholars, like *Imam Ahmad ar-Rifa'iyy*, determined that lifting the hands and the faces towards the sky when performing *du'a'* (supplication) is because the heavens are the *qiblah* of *du'a'* just as the *Kabah* is the *Qiblah* of *Salah*. From the heavens, the mercies and blessings of *Allah* descend.

Hence, it is clear for the one who seeks the truth that the saying that *Allah* exists without a place is what complies with the *Qur'an*, *Hadith*, *Ijma'*, and criteria of the sound intellect. Be firm and certain that before creating places,

Allah, Who created everything (places and everything else), existed without a place, and after creating places, *Allah* still exists without a place.

Since we have determined that the creed of the Muslims is that *Allah* exists without a place and that the question "how" does not apply to *Allah*, it is clear to us that the *^Arsh* (Throne), which is the largest of all the creations and the ceiling of Paradise, is not a place for *Allah*, the Exalted.

Imam Abu Mansur al-Baghdadiyy related that *Imam ^Aliyy Ibn Abi Talib*, the fourth caliph, said:

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which means: <<*Allah* created the *^Arsh* as an indication of His Power and did not take it as a place for Himself.>>

Imam Abu Hanifah said in his book, *al-Wasayyah*,: <<...and He is the Preserver of the *^Arsh* and everything else, without needing them, for had He been in need, He would not have the power to create, manage, and preserve the world. Moreover, had He been in a place needing to sit and rest, before creating the *^Arsh*, where was *Allah*?>> That is, the question <<where was *Allah*>> would have applied to Him, which is impossible.

Also, in his book, *Al-Fiqh al-Absat*, *Imam Abu Hanifah* said: <<*Allah* existed eternally and there was no place; He existed before creating the creation. He existed and there was not a place, creation, or thing; and He is the Creator of everything. He who says 'I do not know if my Lord is in the heavens or on Earth', is a *kafir*. Also is a *kafir* whoever says that 'He is on the *^Arsh*, and I do not know whether the *^Arsh* is in the heaven or on Earth.'>>

Consequently, *Imam Ahmad* declared whoever says these last two phrases that is a *kafir*, because they contain attributing a direction, boundary, and place to *Allah*. Everything that has a direction and boundary is by necessity in need of a Creator. Thus, it is not the intention of *Imam Abu Hanifah* to prove that the heaven and *^Arsh* are places for *Allah*, as those who liken *Allah* to the creation claim. This is by virtue of the aforementioned saying of the *Imam*: <<Had He been in a place needing to sit and rest, then before creating the *^Arsh* where was *Allah*?>>, which is clear in negating that *Allah* has a direction or a place.

In his book, *Ihya'u ^Ulumid-Din*, *Imam al-Ghazaliyy* said: <<...places do not contain Him [*Allah*], nor do the directions, Earth, or heavens. He is attributed with an *istiwa'* () over the *^Arsh* as He said in the *Qur'an*, with the meaning that He willed and not as what people may delude. It is an *isti'wa'* () which is clear of touching, resting, holding, moving, and containment. The *^Arsh* does not carry Him, but rather the *^Arsh* and those who carry it are all carried by *Allah's* Power, and they are subjugated to Him. He is above the *^Arsh*, the heavens, and everything in status, with an aboveness that does not give Him

proximity to the ^Arsh or the heavens as it does not give Him farness from Earth. He is higher in status than everything: higher in status than the ^Arsh and the heavens, as He is higher in status than Earth and the rest of the creation.>>

Shaykh ^Abdul-Ghaniyy an-Nabulusiyy said: <<He who believes that Allah filled the heavens and Earth or that He is a body sitting above the ^Arsh, is a kafir.>> Ayah 93 of Surat Maryam:

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means: <<All those in the heavens and Earth must come to Allah as slaves.>> In this *Tafsir* (book of explaining the Qur'an), *Imam ar-Raziyy* said: <<and since it is affirmed by this ayah that everything that existed in the heavens and Earth is a slave of Allah (i.e., owned by and subjugating to Allah) and since it is obligatory that Allah is clear of being owned, thus He is clear of being in a place or direction, or on the ^Arsh or Kursiyy.>>

Hence, ayah 5 of Surat Taha, in the Qur'an:

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clearly does not mean that Allah sits on the ^Arsh or that Allah is firmly established on the ^Arsh. In the Arabic language, the word *istawa* () has fifteen (15) different meanings, among which are to sit, subjugate, protect, conquer, and preserve. Based on what we have covered so far, it is obvious that it is blasphemous to apply the meaning <<to sit>> to Allah. However, the terms to preserve and to subjugate are in compliance with the Religion and the Arabic language.

Imam Hafidh Ibn Rajab al-Hambaliyy explained the meaning of *istiwa'* () as *istila'* (), which means subjugating. That is, Allah attributed Himself with subjugating the ^Arsh in eternity (the status of existing without a beginning, that is, before creating the creation). Since the ^Arsh, the largest creation of Allah, is subjugated to Allah, then everything else which is smaller than the ^Arsh is under the control of Allah.

It was affirmed about *Imam Malik Ibn Anas*, may Allah reward his deeds, in what *al-Bayhaqiyy* related with a sound chain from the route of ^Abdullah Ibn Wahb, that <<We were at Malik's when a man entered and said, <<O Abu ^Abdillah, (meaning Imam Malik), *ar-Rahmanu ^alal-^Arsh istawa*, how did He *istawa*?>> Malik looked down dismayed and he lifted his head and said <<*^alal ^Arsh istawa* as He attributed to Himself. It is invalid to say how, and 'how' does not apply to Him. I see that you are an innovator. Order him out.>> Hence, the saying of *Imam Malik*, <<'How' does not apply to Him,>> means that His *istiwa'* over the ^Arsh is without a how, i.e., it is not with a body, place, shape, or form like sitting, touching, suspending above, and the like.

Hence, there is no basis for the saying of those who liken *Allah* to the creation, which they falsely attribute to *Imam Malik*, that *istiwa'* is known and the how of it is unknown. This saying of theirs is invalid, because sitting, no matter how it is, will be by organs and body parts that fold. Moreover, the statement claiming that *Imam Malik* attributed a <<how>> to *Allah* is a fabrication.

Imam al-Lalika'iyy narrated about *Umm Salamah* and *Rabi'ah Ibn Abi ^Abdir-Rahman*:

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which means: <<The attribute of *istiwa'* () is not unknown, because it is mentioned in the *Qur'an*. The *kayf* (), that is, its how is inconceivable, because its applicability to *Allah* is impossible.>> Hence, the *hadiths* and the *ayahs* that attribute aboveness to *Allah*, refer to the aboveness of status and not the aboveness of place, distance, direction, touching, or suspending.

In *Surat al-An'am ayah 61*, *Allah* said:

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which means: <<He [i.e., *Allah*] is the One Who subjugates His slaves>>. Hence the term *fawq* used in this *ayah* refers to subjugation and not to a place or a direction.

Beware of what appeared in the so-called Translation of the *Qur'an* by Yusuf Ali and the so-called revised version issued and printed by King Fahd Holy *Qur'an* Printing Complex in *al-Madinah al-Munawwarah*, where on page 879, in interpreting *ayah 5* in *Surat Taha*:

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they say: <<The Most Gracious is firmly established on the throne,>> and in the footnote they explicitly say: <<Who encompasses all creation and sits on the throne.>>

Similarly, be aware of all the other parts of this book which liken *Allah* to His creation, like on page 1799 where in *ayah 42* of *Surat al-Qalam*:

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They attribute a shin to *Allah*, while the term <<*saq*>> () in this verse means <<hardship>>. Hence the *ayah* means <<The Judgment Day will be a day of anguish and hardship for the blasphemers>>. On page 1015 in interpreting *Surat an-Nur, ayah 35*:

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They say <<Allah is the light>> and in the footnote they say explicitly: <<We can only think of Allah in terms of our phenomenal experience.>> Allah cannot be imagined. This verse means that Allah is the Creator of the light of guidance for the inhabitants of the heavens and the believing inhabitants of Earth, as was explained by [^]Abdullah Ibn ^Abbas.

Another translation of the Qur'an was published also by King Fahd Printing Complex under the name of <<The Noble Qur'an >>. The two translators followed the methodology of the *mushabbihah* in translating the meanings of the *mutashabih* verses. They attribute to Allah different bodily parts (see page 81, footnote V3:73).

The *mushabbihah* are those who liken Allah to the creation; they believe Allah resembles the creation. They attribute to Allah places, directions, shapes, and bodies, and they try to camouflage it by saying: <<However, we do not know how His place is, or how His sitting is, or how His face is, or how His shin is, or how His light is.>> All of that does not clear them of blasphemy, because Allah is not composed of body parts and does not resemble the creation in any way whatsoever.

Praise be to Allah the Lord of the worlds, the One Who is clear of resembling the creation, all nonbefitting attributes, and all that which the blasphemers unrightfully say about Him.

Allah knows best.