

Then he asked her, 'Who am I?' She said, 'The Messenger of Allah'. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allah ordered me, 'Free her. She is a believer.' (Muslim)

The Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) chose one particular question, 'Where is Allah?' The slave girl gave him the correct answer, 'Above the heaven'. The Prophet declared her to be a believer. Hence, the answer 'Above the heaven' is the only valid belief regarding Allah, as the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam) declared the slave girl to be a believer based upon this answer. This hadith also proves that it is permissible to ask the question: 'Where is Allah?'

Proof from the Salaf

Imaam Abu Haneefah was asked about someone who says, 'I do not know if my Lord is in the heavens or the earth?' So he said, '**He has disbelieved since Allaah, the Most High says: The Most Merciful ascended above the throne** [at- Taaha 20:5]. And His Arsh is above the heavens'. (al-Fiqh ul-Akbar, p.19 of the Egyptian print). Sadly many of those who claim to follow the Hanafi madhab oppose this great Imaam in a fundamental issue of the deen. Look at the severity of the Imaam's words; he attributed kufr to the one who does not believe that Allah is above the throne.

What about the following verses?

Those who claim that Allah is everywhere misinterpret a number of verses to prove their claim. We will mention two of their 'evidences' from the Qur'an and then explain their correct meaning.

1. "And He is God (Ilaah) in the Heavens and He is God (Ilaah) on the Earth" [43: 84]

The above verse is not referring to the existence of Allah in the heaven and on the earth. The term, 'Ilaah' means, 'the worshipped'. The famous mufassir, Qatadah explained the above verse as meaning: "It is He Who is worshipped in the heaven and worshipped on the earth".

2. Do you not see that Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth? There is no secret counsel of three, but He is their fourth, nor of five, but He is their sixth, nor of fewer than that, nor of more, but He is with them wherever they may be. Then on the Day of Resurrection He will inform them of what they did. Surely, Allah knows all things full well." (58:7).

There are four noteworthy points about this verse.

- The opening words of the above verse speak of Allah's knowledge, not His location.
- Private counsel, or secret talk, is the theme of this verse.
- Allah confirms that He will inform them of their secret talk on the Day of Resurrection.
- The verse ends therefore, confirming Allah's knowledge.

Ibn Kathir says: "This means that Allah is well acquainted with their utterances and private talks and thoughts." Al-Qasimi says: "The scholars among the Prophet's companions held this verse to mean that Allah is above His 'Arsh, but His knowledge is everywhere."

In summary, Allah is above His throne, separate from His creation. The belief that 'Allah is everywhere' originated from paganism, not from Islam and leads to the worship of other than Allah.

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EVERYWHERE?

Why the question?

At first this might seem a strange question as most people believe that Allah is everywhere, and secondly, does it really matter? This issue is in fact of paramount importance. The belief that “Allah is everywhere” is extremely dangerous as it encourages and rationalises the greatest sin in the sight of Allah - the worship of creation.

What is the correct belief regarding Allah?

Allah is above and beyond His creation (by creation we mean everything other than Allah, i.e. the entire universe and all it contains). Allah is neither part of His creation, nor is His creation part of Him. Allah is separate and distinct from the creation. However His attributes operate throughout the creation – He sees, hears, knows and controls everything. As stated in a number of ayaat and hadith, **Allah is above the Throne, above the seven heavens.**

So how did the belief that “Allah is everywhere” come about?

The Hindus believed that Brahman, the Supreme Being was in every place and everything, so they worshipped countless objects including idols, animals and even human beings. This belief was later adopted by a number of Christian sects. During the Abbasid Caliphate, the books of India, Greece and Persia were translated into Arabic. A number of philosophical concepts that were totally alien to Islam were adopted by Muslim philosophers and by Sufi orders. From these foreign beliefs was the belief that Allah is everywhere. The “Allah is everywhere” argument was also used by certain ‘Muslim’ philosophers such as Jahm ibn Safwan, in their debate with the atheists about the existence of God. However their entire argument was founded upon pagan Greek philosophy which led to them to believe in a God which had no attributes whatsoever. A sect called the Mu’tazilah adopted the “Allah is everywhere” belief from Jahm ibn Safwan, this was later transmitted to a sect called the Ash’aris. Many of the centres of Islamic learning today follow the deviated Ash’ari belief.

Hence this belief has no basis in Islam and was unknown to the early generations of Muslims. When certain Muslim thinkers became dissatisfied with the Quran and Sunnah and turned to pagan Greek and Hindu philosophy for guidance, many false beliefs were adopted and over time these took root amongst the Muslim masses.

Why is it dangerous to believe that Allah is everywhere?

Once a person accepts that Allah is everywhere, it’s not difficult to convince them that Allah was more in some humans than others. This belief gave birth to other blasphemous beliefs such as hulool- indwelling of Allah in man, and ittihad- the complete unification of the human soul with Allah. In the ninth century, a mystic named Hallaj claimed that he and Allah were one. Although he was executed for this heresy, many sufis of today consider him to be a great saint.

Ibn Arabi, another famous sufi, believed that there is no difference between the Creator and the creation. He claimed that nothing exists except Allah. Therefore, according to him, the idols worshipped by the people of prophet Nuh were in fact a reflection of Allah and had the people of Nuh abandoned their idols, they would have been blameworthy.

One who believes that Allah is everywhere cannot admonish an idol worshipper for his shirk. The latter can easily claim that he is not worshipping the object itself, but God who is inside this idol. If Allah is everywhere, then it is perfectly acceptable to worship anybody and anything.

Islam came to take us away from the worship of created beings and to the worship of the Creator alone. The Creator and creation are two separate distinct entities. If Allah was part of the creation, then the command to worship the Creator alone would be meaningless.

What is the proof that Allah is above the throne?

Proof from the Quran

The proofs from the Quran are numerous. From them:

“They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded” [an-Nahl: 16: 50].

Some verses mention the ascent of things up to Him

“O Isa. I shall cause you to die, and raise you up to Me” [Aali Imran: 3:55]

Some verses mention the descent of things from Him

“Verily it is We Who have sent down the thikr” (the Qur’an) [al-Hijr: 15:9].

Some verses mention that Allah is above the heavens:

“Do you feel secure that He, who is above the heaven, will not cause the earth to sink” [al-Mulk 67:16]

“Ar-Rahmaan ascended the Throne” [Taa Haa: 20:5]

Proofs from the Sunnah:

We also have the following statements of the Prophet (salallahu alaihi wa sallam):

“Be merciful to those on earth, so that the One above the heavens will be merciful to you.” [Bukhari]

“When you ask Allah, azza wajull, ask Him for Firdaws, because it is situated in the midst and Highest point of Jannah from where the rivers of Jannah spring, and above it is the ‘Arsh of the Most Merciful. ” [Bukhari]

Mu’awiyah as-Sahmi reported: “I had some sheep which I kept between Uhud and Juwaniyyah with a slave-girl to look after them. One day, I went out to check on my sheep and discovered that a wolf had devoured one of them. Since I am just a human, (I became angry) and struck the girl. Later on, I came to the Prophet (saw) and reported to him the incident. He terrified me with the gravity of my action. I said, ‘Messenger of Allah! Shall I free her. He said ‘Call her over’. When I did, he asked her, ‘**Where is Allah?**’ She said, ‘Above the heavens’.