511535 - How can we reconcile between affirming Allah’s exaltedness and the verse {and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand}?

the question

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Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There is no contradiction between affirming the exaltedness of Allah, may He be exalted, and the fact that on the Day of Resurrection He will roll up the heavens in His right hand, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

{They have not given due recognition to Allah. On the Day of Resurrection, the entire earth will be in His grip, and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand. Glorified and exalted be Allah far above the partners they ascribe to Him!} [az-Zumar 39:67].

That is because exaltedness means that Allah, may He be exalted, is above all things, above the heavens, above the Throne and above everything that is created. He is exalted in the sense of controlling and subduing, and exalted in His Essence (in a true sense). Thus He is the Exalted, the Most High, as is stated in His Book and by His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and as was unanimously agreed upon by the early generations of the ummah.

What is narrated in the texts about Allah being “in heaven” – such as the verse (interpretation of the meaning): {Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would begin to shake?} [al-Mulk 67:16];

The hadith narrated from Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him), according to

which the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Do you not trust me, when I am the trustee of the One Who is in heaven”;

The hadith narrated by Muslim (537) from Mu‘awiyah ibn al-Hakam as-Sulami about his striking his slave woman. He said: I came to the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and he regarded that as a grievous action on my part. I said: O Messenger of Allah, should I set her free? He said: “Bring her to me.” So I brought her to him and he said to her: “Where is Allah?” She said: In heaven. He said: “Who am I?” She said: You are the Messenger of Allah. He said: “Set her free, for she is a believer.”

What is meant by *fi’s-sama’* (translated here as “in heaven”) is exaltedness, because anything that is high above may be called *sama’* in Arabic.

Or it may mean above the heaven, because prepositions in Arabic may be used interchangeably, as in the verse in which Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): {and I will crucify you on [*fi* – lit. “in”] the trunks of palm trees} [Ta-Ha 20:71] and {So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout [*fi* – lit. “in”] the land} [at-Tawbah 9:2], meaning on the land.

None of Ahl as-Sunnah suggest that Allah is inside the seven heavens, or that anything of His creation encompasses Him; exalted be Allah far above that.

Abu’l-Hasan al-Ash‘ari says in his letter to the people on the border (*Risalah ila Ahl ath-Thaghr*, p. 130), regarding what was agreed upon by Ahl as-Sunnah: That Allah, may He be exalted, is above His heavens, above His throne. This is indicated by the verses (interpretation of the meaning): {Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would begin to shake?} [al-Mulk 67:16] and {To Him ascend all good words, and righteous deeds exalt them} [Fatir 35:10].

And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): {The Most Gracious rose over the Throne [in a manner that befits His Majesty]} [Ta-Ha 20:5]. His rising over the Throne does not mean that He has control of it, as the Qadaris said, because He, may He be glorified and exalted, has always been above all things. End quote.

Al-Bayhaqi said in al-I'tiqad (p. 112): Chapter regarding Allah's rising above the Throne. Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {The Most Gracious rose over the Throne [in a manner that befits His Majesty]} [Ta-Ha 20:5].

The Throne is the well-known seat that is known to people of reason. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says elsewhere (interpretation of the meaning): {and His Throne had been upon water} [Hud 11:7]... and {They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded} [an-Nahl 16:50], and {To Him ascend all good words, and righteous deeds exalt them} [Fatir 35:10] and {Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would begin to shake?} [al-Mulk 67:16].

What is meant is the One Who is above the heavens, as Allah says elsewhere: {and I will crucify you on [fi – lit. "in"] the trunks of palm trees} [Ta-Ha 20:71] and {So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout [fi – lit. "in"] the land} [at-Tawbah 9:2], meaning on the land.

Everything that is up above may be called *sama'* in Arabic, and the Throne is above the highest heavens.

What the verse means – and Allah knows best – is: Do you feel secure that He Who is on the Throne [will not cause the earth to swallow you up…], as is clearly stated in other verses. End quote.

Al-Hafiz ibn 'Abd al-Barr (may Allah have mercy on him) said: As for the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven would not cause the earth to swallow you and suddenly it would begin to shake?} [al-Mulk 67:16], what it means is: the One Who is above the heavens, meaning above the Throne.

The Arabic preposition *fi* ("in") may mean *'ala* ("above") as in the verses: and {So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout [*fi* – lit. "in"] the land} [at-Tawbah 9:2], meaning on the land, and {and I will crucify you on [*fi* – lit. "in"] the trunks of palm trees} [Ta-Ha 20:71]."(A*t-Tamhid* 7/130).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The scholars said: In response, we may

adopt one of two interpretations:

1. Either we may understand *as-sama'* as referring to what is up above, and *as-sama'* in the sense of what is up above is well known in Arabic, and indeed, in the Qur'an. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): {He sends down water from the heaven [*as-sama'*] and the watercourses flow} [ar-Ra'd 13:17]; what is meant by *as-sama'* [translated here as heaven] is what is up above, because the water comes down from the clouds, not from as-sama', which is the canopy of heaven, whereas the cloud is up high, between heaven and earth, as Allah, may He be exalted, says elsewhere (interpretation of the meaning): {and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth} [al-Baqarah 2:164].

So what is meant by the One Who is in heaven is the One Who is up above.

There is no problem after that, for Allah is up above; there is nothing at the same level as Him and nothing above Him.

2.. Or we may understand the preposition *fi* ("in") as meaning *'ala* ("above"), and regard *as-sama'* as being the canopy of heaven raised high, referring to the heavenly bodies, as the preposition *fi* ("in") may mean *'ala* ("above") in Arabic. In fact, in the Qur'an, Pharaoh says to his people, the magicians who believed: {and I will crucify you on [fi – lit. "in"] the trunks of palm trees} [Ta-Ha 20:71].

Thus the meaning of the One Who is in the heaven is the One Who is above the heaven."(*Sharh al-Wasitiyyah* 1/398).

Once this is clear, it is the same whether the heavens are there or Allah, may He be glorified, has rolled up the heavens in His Right Hand, for He is above all things, and He has no need of the heavens or the Throne.

At-Tahawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in his *'Aqidah* (p. 54): The Throne and the Footstool are real, and Allah has no need of the Throne nor anything beneath it; He encompasses and is above all things. End quote.

Conclusion:

The confusion about the apparent contradiction is only caused by thinking that Allah, may He be exalted, is in the heavens or that He needs the heavens to be exalted.

He, may He be glorified, is far above both, for nothing encompasses Him and He has no need of anything, may He be blessed, exalted and sanctified.

You should understand that there is no alternative to believing that He is exalted, except two views which are both false: the view that Allah is present everywhere, as the Jahamis said, and the view that Allah is neither inside the universe not outside it, as the Ash'aris said.

Adh-Dhahabi (may Allah have mercy on him) concluded his book *al-'Uluw li'l-'Ali al-Ghaffar* by saying:

Allah is above His Throne, as the early generations were agreed on and the leading scholars narrated it from them. They said that in refutation of the Jahamis, who said that Allah is everywhere, and quoted as evidence the verse (interpretation of the meaning): {and He is with you} [al-Hadid 57:4].

These two views are those that existed at the time of the Tabi'in and succeeding generations and they are reasonable views in general.

As for the third view which developed recently – which says that Allah, may He be exalted, is nowhere; He is not outside anything or above His Throne; He is not connected to His creation or separate from them; His holy Essence is not separate from His creation; He is not in any direction and is not outside the directions; and He is not this and not that, and so on – this is something that makes no sense and is incomprehensible, in addition to being contrary to the religious texts.

So flee for the sake of your faith and beware of the views of ahl al-kalam. Believe in Allah and what came from Allah, as Allah intended it, and delegate your affairs to Allah, for there is no power and no strength except with Allah."(A*l-'Uluw*, p. 267).

And Allah knows best.