288236 - Response to a dubious question about where Allah is if the angels are carrying the Throne

the question

This provocative question was asked by some apostates around us who have left the faith: where will Allah be when the eight angels carry His Throne, as it says in the verse (interpretation of the meaning): “And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight [of them]” [al-Haaqqah 69:17].

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

What is indicated by many texts is that Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is above all of His creation, for He is the Most High, Most Exalted, may He be blessed and sanctified.

The Throne is the roof of all creation and Allah, may He be exalted, is above the Throne, risen above it, as He tells us in seven places in His Book. The word istiwaa’ (referring to His having risen above the Throne) is known from a linguistic point of view, how is not known, and believing in it is obligatory, as was narrated from Anas ibn Maalik (may Allah have mercy on him).

See also the answer to question no. 992 .

Secondly:

Allah, may He be exalted, tells us that His Throne is great, and that it has bearers who carry it. There is a hadith which describes their huge size.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], "Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire” [Ghaafir 40:9].

Abu Daawood (4727) narrated from Jaabir ibn ‘Abdillah that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “I have been given permission to speak of one of the angels of Allah, one of the bearers of the Throne. The distance between his earlobe and his shoulder is like the distance of seven hundred year’s travel.” Classed as saheeh by al-Albani in Saheeh Abi Daawood.

Thirdly:

The Throne has bearers who are carrying it now and will carry it on the Day of Resurrection, as indicated by the verse quoted above, and as mentioned in the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “… but when our Lord, may His name be blessed and exalted, decrees some matter, the bearers of the Throne glorify Him, then the inhabitants of heaven who are closest to them glorify Him, until the tasbeeh (glorification) reaches the inhabitants of this lowest heaven. Then those who are nearest to the bearers of the Throne say: What did your Lord say? And they tell them what He said…” Narrated by Muslim (2229).

But it is narrated that the bearers of the Throne now are four, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be eight; it was said that they will be eight angels, or they will be eight rows of angels.

The view that the bearers of the Throne now are four is the view of the majority of mufassireen; this view was thought most likely to be correct by a number of scholars, including Ibn Katheer.

Ibn al-Jawzi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: It says in the hadith that today they are four, and on the Day of Resurrection Allah will send four more angels to support them. This is the view of the majority. End quote from Zaad al-Maseer (4/331).

See: Tafseer Ibn Katheer (7/130).

The hadith referred to is what was narrated by at-Tabari with his isnad from ‘Abd ar-Rahmaan ibn

Zayd ibn Aslam who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Today it is carried by four and on the Day of Resurrection it will be carried by eight.” This is a da‘eef (weak) hadith, because its isnad (chain of narrators) is interrupted.

At-Tabari also narrated with his isnad from Ibn Ishaaq who said: It was narrated to us that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Today they – meaning the bearers of the Throne – are four, and on the Day of Resurrection Allah will support them with four others, so they will be eight.” See Tafseer at-Tabari (29/59).

The soundest evidence to support that is what was narrated by Ahmad (2314), ad-Daarimi in his Sunan (2745), and al-Bayhaqi in al-Asmaa’ wa’s-Sifaat (771) from Ibn ‘Abbaas, that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) confirmed something that Umayyah said in his poetry. He said: “A man and a bull under its (the Throne’s) right foot, and an eagle under the other foot, and a lion lying in wait.”

The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “He has spoken the truth.”

This hadith was classed as saheeh by Ibn Katheer, and by Ahmad Shaakir in Tahqeeq al-Musnad.

Ibn Katheer said in his Tafseer (7/130): This is a jayyid (good) isnad. It implies that the bearers of the Throne today are four, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be eight, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning): “And there will bear the Throne of your Lord above them, that Day, eight [of them]” [al-Haaqqah 69:17].

End quote.

It says in al-Bidaayah wa’n-Nihaayah (1/21): This is a hadith with a saheeh isnad; its men are thiqaat (trustworthy). It indicates that the bearers of the Throne today are four. End quote.

Al-Bayhaqi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: The only one who narrated this hadith was Muhammad ibn Ishaaq ibn Yasaar with this isnad.

What is meant by it is narrated in another hadith from Ibn ‘Abbaas, according to which the Kursiy

is carried by four angels, an angel in the form of a man, an angel in the form of a lion, an angel in the form of a bull, and an angel in the form of an eagle.

End quote from al-Asmaa' wa's-Sifaat by al-Bayhaqi (2/206).

The editor and annotater, Shaykh 'Abdullah al-Haashidi, classed the hadith as saheeh, and discussed its isnaads (chains of narration).

Fourthly:

With regard to the answer to the question: where will Allah be when the (eight) angels carry His Throne?

The answer is:

That Allah, may He be exalted, is above His Throne, and His Throne is above all of His creation; the Throne and its bearers are created beings, and Allah has no need of the Throne and has no need of its bearers, for He is the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence, the maintainer of all things, and everything is sustained by Him. The angels only carry His Throne by His power, may He be glorified, for it is He Who gave them the power to do that.

Imam ad-Daarimi (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Allah is mightier than all things and greater than every created thing. The Throne did not have the power or strength to bear Him, and the bearers of the Throne do not have the power in themselves to carry it, and they are not able to carry His Throne because of what they possess of strength and power; rather they carry it by His power, His will and His support. Were it not for that, they would not have been able to carry it.

It has been narrated to us that when they carried the Throne, above which is the Almighty in His glory and majesty, they were too weak to carry it, and they felt humbled and fell to their knees, until they were prompted to say "Laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billah (there is no power and no strength except with Allah)," then they were enabled to carry it by the power and will of Allah. Were it not for that, the Throne would not be able to bear Him, and neither would its bearers, the heavens and the earth and all those who are in them.

End quote from Naqd Bishr al-Mareesi (1/457).

In conclusion, the answer to this dubious question is that Allah, may He be exalted, is the Lord, the Sovereign, the Almighty Who does whatever He will. It was His will, may He be glorified, to rise above His Throne, and it was His will that His Throne should have bearers now and on the Day of Resurrection; it is He, may He be glorified, Who enabled them to carry this mighty Throne and enabled them to do that by His might and power.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The explanation is that is as follows:

Allah has no need of anyone else, for He is the Creator of every created thing, and He did not become above His creation by means of some of the things that He created. Rather He, may He be glorified, created all created things and He, by His Essence, is above them and has no need of any of them to be exalted, as created beings need something to help them to be lifted up. Allah, may He be glorified, is the One Who carries, by His might and power, the Throne and the bearers of the Throne.

According to one report, when Allah created the Throne, He commanded the angels to carry it. They said: How can we carry Your Throne, when Your Majesty is above it?

He said: Say: Laa hawla wa laa quwwata illa Billah (there is no power and no strength except with Allah).

So they are only able to carry the Throne by His might; when Allah puts strength into a created being, that created being becomes able to carry what Allah wills that he should carry of His greatness and so on.

So by His might and power, it is He Who carries both the bearer and what the bearer carries. So how could He be in need of anything?

End quote from Dar' al-Ta'aarud (7/19).

Abu’l-Hasan al-Ash‘ari (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated two views concerning the bearers of the throne and what they are carrying.

In al-Maqaalaat (p. 211), he said: The scholars differed concerning the bearers of the Throne and what they carry.

Some said that the bearers are carrying the Creator, and when He becomes angry, the Throne becomes heavier on their shoulders, and when He is pleased, it becomes lighter, and thus they are able to distinguish between His wrath and His pleasure. And the Throne makes a sound when it becomes heavy, like the creaking of a saddle.

And some of them said that the Creator does not become heavier or lighter, and that the bearers do not carry Him; rather it is the Throne that becomes lighter or heavier, and is carried by the bearers. End quote.

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Bayaan Talbees al-Jahamiyyah (3/238):

There are two views concerning the bearers of the Throne. The first view is that the bearers of the Throne carry the Throne, but they do not carry the One Who is above it.

The second view is that they carry the Throne and the One Who is above it, as mentioned above.

Then he mentioned the argument of both parties.

The argument of the first party is: we do not accept that those who carry the Throne must necessarily be carrying the One Who is above it.

The reason being that the one who carries the roof is not necessarily carrying what is above the roof, unless that which is above the roof is actually resting on it, because air, birds and so on are above the roof, but they are not carried by other things that the roof may be carrying. Similarly, the heavens are above the earth, but the earth is not carrying the heavens. Moreover, each heaven has another heaven above it, and the lower is not carrying the upper.

If it is the case with regard to created things that a thing does not necessarily carry what is above it – rather that may or may not be the case – then the Throne is not necessarily carrying the Lord, may He be exalted, unless there is evidence to prove that. If the Throne is not carrying the Lord [for He is above the Throne], then it is more appropriate to say that the bearers are not carrying that which is above it.

The argument of the second party is that we do not accept the notion that if the Throne and its bearers are carrying Allah, that must mean that Allah needs them.

For it is Allah Who created them and created their strength and their deeds, so they only carry Him by His might and help, which is applicable to all of their deeds.

So in reality, no one carries His essence except Him.

Similarly, if His slaves call upon Him and He responds to them, and it is He, may He be glorified, Who created them and created their supplication and their deeds, then He is the One Who responds to what He created and helps them with what they do of deeds. End quote.

Thus it becomes clear that there is no problem with the idea that the angels are carrying the Throne now and will do so on the Day of Resurrection.

Allah, may He be glorified, is above His Throne and distinct from His creation, and He has no need of the Throne or its bearers.

“And your Lord creates what He wills and chooses; not for them was the choice. Exalted is Allah and high above what they associate with Him” [al-Qasas 28:68]

“He is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned” [al-Anbiyaa’ 21:23].

For more information, please see the answer to question no. 12290.

We ask Allah to guide us and you, and make us steadfast.

And Allah knows best.