

Where Is Allaah?

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

The Merciful Creator describes Himself in the Qur'aan, and the Prophet has described His Lord in the Sunnah, because human intellect is limited and cannot fathom the limitless scope of the divine. Allaah tells us what is necessary for us to know about Himself, helping to prevent confusion about His being, actions and location. After all, how can we love someone we do not know? Therefore, the Qur'aan and Sunnah tell us everything we need to know in order to worship our Creator. The divine attribute of 'Uluw, highness or transcendence, is the topic of this article.

Meaning and Significance

The divine attribute 'Uluw means Allaah is above His creation, and nothing is above Him. He is neither within His creation, nor part of His creation. Creation cannot encompass Him. The Creator is completely separate and distinct from His creation.

Before Islaam, Hindus believed God resided in animals, human beings and countless idols. The Jewish scripture stated that God came to earth in the form of a man and wrestled with Prophet Joseph who defeated Him (Genesis 32:24-30). Christians have claimed that God became flesh and came down to earth in the form of a man to be crucified. Some heretics also brought such ideas into Islaam. For example, Hallaj, a deranged mystic, openly claimed he and Allaah were one. These deviant ideas have become so widespread that if someone were to ask many Muslims today, 'Where is Allaah?' they will say that He is everywhere.

The main danger of this thought is that it opens the door to the worship of creation. If God is everywhere, it means He is in His creation. If that is true, then why not worship the creation itself? It becomes especially easy for people to start saying God is in their own souls and accept worship. Countless kings, ordinary individuals like the Pharaohs of Egypt and Jesus were so worshipped, though the latter did not accept being worshipped by his followers.

The Evidence

Allaah is not everywhere. There are five main proofs for it:

(1) Islaam states that every human being is born with certain tendencies that are not the result of his environment. Human beings are born with a natural realisation of a Creator who is separate and above His creation. The mere thought of God being in places of filth,

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which would be a natural consequence of God being everywhere, is repulsive to human nature.

(2) The Salaah prayer must be offered in a place clear of pictures or statues. A Muslim is forbidden to bend or prostrate in worship to any creation. If Allaah were everywhere and in everything, people could worship other people or themselves. There would be no sense to bend or prostrate to creation if God were inside it.

(3) Two years before the Prophet, (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*), migrated to Madinah from Makkah, he was taken on a miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem up beyond the seven heavens to meet Allaah. Allaah spoke directly to Prophet Muhammad (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*). There would have been no need for him to go up beyond the seven heavens to meet Allaah if He were present everywhere.

(4) Many verses of the Qur'aan tell us clearly that Allaah is above His creation.

The Qur'aan speaks of the angels rising up to Allaah:

["They ascend up to Him in a day whose length is like a thousand years by your reckoning."]¹

Prayers also rise up to Allaah:

["Every good saying goes up to Him."]²

Allaah describes Himself as above His servants:

["He is the Irresistible One above His creation."]³

He describes His worshippers as:

["Those who fear their Lord who is above them."]⁴

One of Allaah's beautiful names is al-Aliy which means, 'The Most High'; nothing is above Him.

(5) A companion of the Prophet, (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*), named Ibn al-Hakam had a slave who used to tend his sheep. One day, he came to see her and found out that a wolf had eaten one of the sheep from the flock she cared for. Learning this, he got angry and slapped her in the face, but later regretted doing so. So he came to Allaah's Messenger (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) and told him the story,

¹ Qur'aan [32:5]

² Qur'aan [35:10]

³ Qur'aan [6:18, 6:61]

⁴ Qur'aan [16:50]

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upon which the Messenger (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) asked him to bring her.

When she came, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) asked her, 'Where is Allaah?' She answered, 'Above the sky.' The Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) asked her, 'Who am I?' She said, 'You are the Messenger of Allaah.' He said, 'Free her, for she is a believer.'⁵

Here, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) affirmed her statement that Allaah was above the sky. Had Allaah not been, the Prophet (*May the peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him*) would have indeed reproached her as he reproached other false beliefs.

Is Allaah Detached From His Creation?

Allaah's being above His creation does not mean He is isolated from His creation. He is aware of all that happens in the universe. Nothing escapes His vision, hearing, power, and ability. The following verses should be understood in this context:

["And We are closer to Him than his jugular vein."]⁶

["Be aware that Allaah comes between a man and his heart."]⁷

These verses do not mean Allaah is inside a man. They simply mean that nothing escapes Allaah's knowledge. He knows even the most innermost thoughts of man, as Allaah says in another verse in the Qur'aan:

["Do they not realise Allaah knows what they hide and what they expose?"]⁸

In summary, based on the Qur'aan and Sunnah, Allaah is above the universe in a manner befitting His greatness; the creation is not in Him, nor is He contained by His creation. However, He is all Aware and Able in His knowledge, power, and ability operate within every single particle of the universe.

⁵ Saheeh Muslim

⁶ Qur'aan [50:16]

⁷ Qur'aan [8:24]

⁸ Qur'aan [2:77]