

*In the Name of Allah,
remembrance of Allah, and, For
Allah*

**Interpretation of Intrinsic
Attributes of Allah, the Most
High; Literal or Figurative?**

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Abstract: In this paper, by using the syntax, rules, grammar and allegory as well as interring the

intervaled temporal sequence in the clause “Then mounted He on the Throne”, it has been proved that, literal interpretation of intrinsic attributes of Allah the Most High in Quran is right approach.

Keywords: The intrinsic attributes of Allah, the Most High literal and figurative interpretation.

Introduction

There have been to this day many disputes among Muslims on the intrinsic attributes of Allah the Most High. These disputes exist, while no sect of Islam allows mere

imitation “*taqlid*” in the principles of religion. This is due to missteps in expressing and explaining the concept of those ideas; and sometimes it could emerge due to absence of sufficient command on the Book of Allah the Most High and neglecting the traditions of the innocent [saints].

It is worth mentioning that mere imitation in the principles of religion has no room in any sect and the followers of other sects of Islam are requested to read about this claim and research it. Indeed Allah the Most High being in just any

locations such as cabaret, toilets and other low areas is nothing more than insult to His Grace and is far from His infinite greatness. Many books have been already written on these subjects and in the present article, I have just presented reasons which I have either not found in them or if there had been any counterarguments I have provided reasons to reject them.

History:

From the very early Islamic centuries, the *Khavarej* appeared as a group who believed Allah the

Most High is embodied; followed by *Jahm bin Safvan* who questioned “Sunnat” [tradition] through theological debates. He believed in *idleness* of the attributes of Allah the Most High. This argument existed often as a discourse in the scope of Islamic studies and sometimes, by citing Arabic language syntax rules between Islamic scholars and those who expressed such beliefs.

Among those arguments, one may refer to a dialogue exchanged between *Abulhassan Asha’ri*- the person who described Asha’ri’s

views and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal; and at the end of the argument, Abulhassan Asha'ri surrenders and accepts Imam's Ahmad's view and admits to the literal interpretation of the intrinsic attributes of Allah the Most High.

A: The usage of ثم (Arabic word- *Thomma* [then] and تراخي (*tarakhi*) [the implied temporal sequence] in the verse «ثم استوى على العرش»: Then mounted Him the Throne.

As we know, “Thomma’ indicates both sequence and delay that is, an act which follows a certain act takes place with some delay and interval

from the precedent act “Thomma” refers to.

In addition, the word «استوی» means to: ‘becoming equal’, ‘evolving’, ‘ending’, ‘dominance’, ‘gaining` command’ and ‘establish’.¹

Not all those meanings could be used in verses containing the clause ‘Then, mounted He the Throne` and save for “dominance” and “gaining

¹ *Lesan alarab item “Sava”.*

command”, they want be meaningful.

Let us review the Farsi [translated into English] translations of verses containing this clause and phrase:

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ
النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ
مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ
رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾ [الأعراف: ٥٤]

“Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then settled on the Throne. He draws the night’s cover

over the day, which pursues it swiftly, and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, [all of them] disposed by His command. Look! All creation and command belong to Him. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.”

Ansarian's Translation:

“Indeed, your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, and then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty). He brings the night as a cover over the day, seeking it rapidly, and (He created)

the sun, the moon, the stars subjected to His Command. Surely, His is the Creation and Commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the '*Alamin* (mankind, jinns and all that exists)! “

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدِيرُ الْأَمْرَ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ذَلِكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ [يونس: ٣]

“Surely, your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then *Istawa* (rose over) the Throne (really in a manner

that suits His Majesty), disposing the affair of all things. No intercessor (can plead with Him) except after His Leave. That is Allah, your Lord; so worship Him (Alone). Then, will you not remember?” Yunus 3

Khorramdel's translation:

Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then started running the universe (directing the command). There is no intercessor, except by His leave. That is Allah, your Lord! So worship Him [and

not any other]. Will you not then take admonition [and find lessons in this]?

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾ [الرعد: ٢]

Khorramshahi's translation:

It is Allah who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see, and then dominated- established over the Throne. He disposed the sun and the moon, each moving for a specified term. He directs the command, [and] elaborates the

signs that you may be certain of encountering your Lord. (Al'Rad 2)

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاسْأَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا﴾ [الفرقان: ٥٩].

*Sadeghi Tehrani's
translation:*

Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six Days [time]. Then He Istawa (rose over) the Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty). The Most Beneficent (Allah)! Ask Him (O Prophet

Muhammad ﷺ), (concerning His Qualities, His rising over His Throne, His creations, etc.), as He is *Al-Khabir* (The All-Knower of everything i.e. Allah). [Al Furqan: 59]

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ مَا لَكُمْ مِّن دُونِهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ﴾
[السجدة: ٤]

Fooladvand`s translation:
It is Allah Who created the
heavens and the earth and

whatever is between them in six days, then He settled on the Throne. You do not have besides Him any guardian or intercessor. Will you not then take admonition?(Al-Sajdeh: 4)

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ
ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ
فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
بَصِيرٌ﴾ [الحديد: ٤]

Makarem Shirazi`s translation

He it is Who created the
heavens and the earth in six

Days [six eras] and then
Istawa (rose over) the Throne
(in a manner that suits His
Majesty). He knows what
goes into the earth and what
comes forth from it, what
descends from the heaven and
what ascends thereto. And He
is with you (by His
Knowledge) which ever you
may be. And Allah is the All-
Seer of what you do.[A-
Hadid:4]

Bahrampour`s Translation:

It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days-six eras_-then established Himself above the Throne-and ruling with Wisdom the Affairs. He knows what [all] penetrates into the earth and what emerges from it and what descends from the heaven and what ascends therein; and He is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.

Moezi's translation:

He is the One Who created the heavens and earth in six days then settled on the Throne, He knows

whatever goes inside the land and
what emerges from it, and
whatever falls from the sky and
whatever ascends there; and He is
with you, wherever you are, God
sees what you do.

It can be seen that three
translations have been provided for
“Istawa” on the Heaven. In
addition, in all translations, the
word thomma is translated
carrying the connotation of *doing
something with intervals and
delays in between.*

1.To settle in.

2.Rose over

3.To establish above.

By contemplation of the concepts, we can see it is only the third phrase which can serve as a true translation; for, even before creating the heavens and earth, Allah the Most High Did Have domination and governance on the Throne and was ruling over it. Therefore; by considering the word *thomma* which indicates temporal sequence verb *istawa Ala'l Arsh*” [establish above the heaven or

Throne” is done after the creation of the heavens and earth. Thus, the meaning which remains for Īstawa Alaa” is the very establishment and maintaining the position. Some believe, it means domination and the meaning of the Throne of Allah the Most High is his ruling place; and He has dominated them after creating the heavens and earth which are the lordship place of Him”. To answer this implication, it has been said if it was the essence of the phrase, instead of “thomma” the word “fa” must have been used to show “consecutiveness”

meaning following one after the other. On the other hand, the Arabic word *thomma* has appeared here; and by accepting this implication the verse would mean that Allah the Most High created the heavens and earth, and, after some time, He dominated them; which is obviously beyond any possibility.

A- Now, let us discuss other quotes and reasons:

Allah the Most High says,
“[Almalek]”

الف- الله تعالى می فرماید: ﴿أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ (16) أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ (17)﴾

Are you secure that He who is in the sky will not make the earth swallow you while it quakes? [Al Mulk 16] Or do you feel secure that He who [holds authority] in the heaven would not send against you a storm of stones? Then you would know how [severe] was My warning [fearing Me]?” [Al Mulk, 17].

Here the dreaded, is the one who is on top of the Heaven¹. Some have translated it as the angles “Malaék”; however this translation/interpretation cannot be accurate for three reasons:

¹ *Vei [on- above-in] figuratively means Alaa [on, above-top- over], as Allah the Most High ways, Move on the Land [Tawba] (the Repentance): 2; or in tongue of the cursed Pharaoh addressing the magicians who turned into Islam He says, and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees”[Taha: 71]*

- 1- *Malaék* in Arabic is a plural form while the verbs which are presented “feeling secure “and “send”-in Arabic grammar- are both singular. If by the “*mann*” conjunctive for the *Malaék* or angles if it conveys plural meaning, the pronouns addressing *Malaeik* must be then in plural form too and the verbs would be to “” warning to you- in plural form- Arabic grammar) and “send to you (in plural form)- In Arabic grammar.

- 2- It is only Allah the Most High, the Creator of Universes Who being on top of the Heavens can do acts such as order to be swallowed by earth or sending hurricane on earth. If “*mann*” meant referring *Malaék*, what kind of angles are in the heaven who can push people to be swallowed by the earth or send a storms.
- 3- Allah, the Most High in another part directly

addresses Himself when He says,

﴿أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾ (45) [النحل]

- a) Do then those who devise evil plots feel secure that Allah will not sink them into the earth, or that the torment will not seize them from directions they perceive not?" An-Nahl "45 . We see here the verb "*Yaqshaf*" (feel secure) Is directly attributed to Allah, the Most High).

- b) For revelations, the verbs descending or sending down (*Nozul and Enzal*) are used. It means revelation or sending message from Allah is descending, coming from above. Some believe the word Nozul or descend means lowering in rank. That is, the message of Allah is coming from a Highest rank to the lower rank. This cannot be accurate because the message is given by Allah the Most High to Gabriel  and is presented to

the Prophet ﷺ by Gabriel, while the rank of the Prophet ﷺ is higher than the rank of Gabriel ﷺ.

- c) One of the attributes of Allah the Most High is being in *Alaela*- above- top, in the heavens, while we are living in the world. These two are completely opposite each other with the difference that *Alaela* in Arabic grammar is masculine form and world is feminine. Therefore, it is improper to

believe a place in the World for
the One Who is in the Heaven.

- d) The definition of figurative language: In contrast to literal language, it has a secondary meaning and by considering discrepancies, the apparent meaning cannot be implied.

I say, if by attributes which are presented in Quran on Allah the Most High, a metaphorical or some figurative interpretation is meant, what could the discrepancy be?

If it is what intellectual judgment and mind dictates, how could this be sound judgment? Is it not true that God the Most High has said:

﴿فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ
النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ﴾ [الروم: 30]

So set you (O Muhammad ﷺ) your face towards the religion of pure Islamic Monotheism *Hanifa* (worship none but Allah Alone) Allah's *Fitrah* (i.e. Allah's Islamic Monotheism), with which He has

created mankind. No change let there be in *Khalq-illah*. Ar-rum:30 (translation of Makarem Shirazi-Farsi):

(Translation of Fooladvand):

So set your heart as a person of pure faith on this religion, the original nature endowed by Allah according to which He originated mankind (There is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know.)

Furthermore, Prophet ﷺ is quoted as saying,

«كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ
أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ...»

“All human beings are born with an inner belief of Islam and it is the parents [who change this innate feature] and make him a Jewish person, a Christian or a fire worshipper...”.¹ Is it not true when

¹ *Sahih Bukharai* 2006, *Sahih Moslem* 6926, 2927, 6928 and 6929, 69030, 6931 and 6932; *Abudavoud's Sonan* 4716 and 4718, *Tarmazi's Sonan* 2138, and many

Allah is mentioned to a child, he looks up to find Allah the Most High?

If the discrepancy is intellectual judgment, the interpretation can no longer be called literary interpretation, it will be rather interpretation according to own opinion. God the Most High on interpreting Quran says:

other quotations and narrations (Hadith) with proper documentations which are presented in Hadigh Nabavi book.

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ
وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾ [النحل: 44]

[We sent them] with manifest proofs and scriptures. We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect. (Al-nahl 44)

Hence, if we seek a discrepancy, it will be much better to resort to the tradition (Sunnat) of the Prophet ﷺ, while, Imam Beyhaqi (peace be upon his soul) has introduced 1082

Hadith (narration) in his book *Alasma va Alsefat* (Names and Attributions), 251 of those hadith¹ prove the literal interpretation of Allah, the Most High's attributes in Quran. It goes without saying the number of such narrations (Hadith) is many more than the number of Hadith in that book. On the other hand, on the frequently quoted Hadith it has been said in the verse Jonas 26:

¹ Hadith 616 to 771, 791 to 793, 835 to 991 and 943 to 958

لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ

(Those who are virtuous shall receive the best reward and an enhancement) the reward means heavenly reward and by enhancement, it means seeing Allah, the Most High.¹

Rejection of misgivings:

¹ Hadith or frequent news means a quotation which are quoted by so many narrators which would reject any possibility of set up or forging that piece of news and narration.

It might be said we have limited Allah the Most High by giving such attributions; however, Hadith (narration) from Prophet ﷺ as quoted by Abuzar (peace be upon his soul) disproves such claim:

يا أبا ذر ما السموات عند الكرسي إلا محلاة
ملقة بأرض فلاة وفضل العرش على الكرسي
كفضل الفلاة على الحلقة¹

¹ Ibn-Kathir interpretation, 2nd volume, page 419 – Tabari Interpretation, volume 5, page 399, hadith no. 5794- Ghortobi

“ O Abazar! the entire heavens are like a ring in Sahara before the Throne and the grace of the Heaven on the Throne is like the virtue of Sahara before the ring.¹

In this respect, although the farthest star known to man is 13 billion light

interpretation ,3rd volume,Page 278-
Below Ayatol korsi.

¹ Throne here conveys the same meaning in Ayatol Korsi: His throne has taken (covered) the heavens and earth. (وَسِعَ)

(كُرْسِيُّهِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ)

years away from earth¹ and in comparison with the universe, we are smaller than a speck, this heaven with the six other heavens are still like a speck before the Throne and the Throne is no more than a speck before the endless court (domination) of Allah, the Most High.

It could be argued that Allah, the Most High's being on top of the heaven is in conflict with this verse, saying:

¹ www.isna.ir/news/95030301230/

Makarem Shirazi:

And to Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn yourselves or your faces there is the Face of Allah (and He is High above, over His Throne). Surely! Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, All-Knowing. Al-Baqara 115.

Fooladvand:

To Allah belong the east and the west: so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah! Allah is indeed all-bounteous, all-knowing.

Khorramdel:

The east and west (and all other directions) belong to Allah the Most High, thus, you will face God wherever you turn. Indeed, Allah the Most High opens the path (does not take hard on people) and is All-knowing (on the intention and will of the person who had turned to Him).

One must note, by elaborating this narration, no matter where the man turns his face to the direction will be, in the end to Allah the Most High. In addition, one must note the word *thomma* (there) refers to objects in a distance and is not used

to point to near objects. Thus; the more beautiful translation of the verse will be: Wherever you turn- (in a long distance from man's view) Allah, the Most High is there.

It might be object that by this elaboration "we have considered a place for Allah, the Most High". In response, we say, Based on the views of followers of the Book, it neither says Allah the Most High dwells in a place, nor it says, Allah the Most High does not dwell in a place; for no such statement has been recorded in Quran or made by the Prophet ﷺ; however, we say,

when it is stated that Allah, the Most High is in the World too, this is the very attribution of giving Place to Allah, the Most high; for, it says, Allah, the Most High is in a place like the world as well.

It might be argued that “In this way, by taking the attributes of Allah, the Most High literally, we have figured and imaged Him like a created Being.” In response to this we quote Quran:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

There is nothing similar to Him and He Hears and Sees (Ash Shura: 11).

It means, Allah, the Most High is beyond understanding of a mind which images any materialistic affairs. In addition, the verse says, He Hears and Sees. If it is assumed whatever attributes which are possessed by Allah the Most High are not found in any other creatures and vice-versa, on what basis hearing and seeing are attributed to Him. One may argue, if He is a person who hears and sees? Nonetheless, it must be said, it is true Allah, the Most High Does hear and see, His hearing and seeing is not of any creatures'

faculties and qualities, nor they can be compared with any creatures.

The advantage of this article:

Believing Allah, the Most High separated from His creatures shows His Pure and Unmaterialized Being; and leads to developing a correct, actual and faithful understanding of Allah, the Most High; and contributes to keeping man on the nature with which the man is born and is addressed by Islam.

In conclusion, the reader is asked to contemplate on the contents of this article and check with numerous books available in *Almaktaba Alshamelat* (المكتبة الشاملة). This software is available on the internet and can be downloaded. I have already translated a number of these books, one of them is titled “Proof of Most Highness of Allah Most High”; available on Ketabnak.com website.

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