

Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem

Ayatul Kursi

Commentary

Verse of the Throne (of Allah)
Glorified and Exalted is He.

Al Baqarah II: verse 255

“Allaahu Laa Ilaaha illa hua al Hay'yul qay'yoom. Laa ta 'khuzuhoo sinataw (n) walaa Naom. Lahoo Maa fis'samaa-waati wamaa fil- arz. Mandal ladee yash'fa-oo inda-hoo il'la bi iznih. Ya 'lamu maa bai-na ayi-deehim wa maa khalfa-hum. Walaa yuhee-toona bi shayim-min- ilmi-hee illaa bimaa shaa-a. wasi-a' kursi-yuhus-samaawaati wal arz. Walaa ya-oo-duhoo hif-zu-humaa. Wa Hual-alee-ul Azeem.”

“Allah is He, besides Whom there is no god, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting (by Whom all subsist); slumber does not overtake Him, nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him, but by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend of His knowledge, except what He pleases; His Chair (knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth; and the preservation of them both tires Him not; and He is the Most high, the Great.” II: 255.

Merits of the verse of the Throne:

- **Aqa Mahdi Puya** says this is a verse of protection. In it is contained all that we, the mortals, can ever know about Allah.
- **Al Mizan** records the following from Prophet Muhammad (pbuh&p). It (the verse of the Throne) is the best that was revealed. It is of the treasures from below the Throne (Arsh). No other Prophet was given this.
- **Ali A.S.** said, “If you but knew what it is, you would not leave it on any condition.” “I have not spent a single night since I heard it from the Messenger of Allah (pbuh&p), without reciting it ...” (Details for the above are on pages 4 & 5)

Allama Tabatabai's commentary in Al Mizan:

- ❖ *“Allah is He, besides Whom there is no god, the ever living, the self subsisting (by Whom all subsist); Al'laahu Laa ilaaha il'la hua al Hay'yul-Qay'yoom.”*

The word “Allah” is combination of *Al* + *Alaha*. *Al* is the definite article. *Alaha* means astonishment. Thus, *Allah* means the one who is beyond the reach of conception, imagination, and out of range of knowledge. According to Penrice's dictionary of the Qur'an, *Alaha* means, “to adore.”

The name *Allah* ultimately means the Being who concentrates in Himself all the attributes of perfection. There is no god except He. It shows that other deities, besides Allah, in fact have no existence at all.

❖ **“The Ever-Living.”** *al Hay’yi*. It not only means living, but also denotes perpetuity.

Thus, it is interpreted as Ever-Living. The Qur’an describes among the living, the vegetables (Plants), the animals, and human beings. (21:30, 29:17, 35:22, 41:39)

Allah describes various types of life in the Qur’an. *“They shall say: “Our Lord! Twice didst Thou make us subject to death, and twice hast Thou givest us life,”* (40:11). According to Allama Tabatabai, the two lives here refer to a) the life of *Al-Barzakh*; i.e., the time after death in this world till the Day of Resurrection, and b) the new life beginning on the Day of Resurrection.

A comprehensive verse about the life of this world is *“And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and play; and as for the next abode, the most surely is the life- did they but know!* (29:64) Allah has described the life of this world as unsound, imperfect, and insignificant. He says, *“... this world’s life is nothing compared with hereafter, but (only a) means.”* (13:26). *“... this world’s life is naught but means of deception.”* (57:20).

Thus, the life of this world is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Thus according to the commentator, the life of this world is not the real life, it is transitory life. The life of hereafter is real life. It is the permanent life, death will not reach it. *Allah says, “... insecurity; they shall not taste therein death, except the first death.”* (44:55, 56). *“They shall have therein what they wish, and with Us is more yet.”* (50:35) Thus the life of hereafter is secure, permanent, and free of any deficiency. It has no death, and thus it is real life. However, the life of hereafter is not independent either. It depends upon Allah. It is a gift from Him.

Going one-step further, it will be realized that the real life is that which “cannot” be overtaken by death. The life of hereafter will not be over taken by death; but it “can” be overtaken by Allah swt, if He so pleases. Therefore, even the life of hereafter is not truly real life. Real life is that in which non-existence at any stage is impossible; where life is not acquired, but the being is life itself, and life is the being Himself. Allah says, *“... and rely on the Ever-Living Who dies not.”* (25:58). Thus, the only real life is the Divine Life, the Essential Being, i.e., Allah. In reality He is the only living one, because, real life, unconquered by death or deterioration, is His alone.

According to Sheikh Makaram Shirazee (Tafseer-e-Namoona): Life mentioned in this verse is not in the physical sense, like ours. It is the perfect and eternal existence. It is power and knowledge.

❖ **“the self subsisting (by Whom all subsist);”** *Al-Qay’yoom*.

It is derived from the Arabic word *Qiyaam* (from *Qaamaa*) which means to Stand, to stand fast and firm. *Al-Qay’yoom* is an intensive form, showing maximum quality. Thus the original meaning of the word (a verb) may encompass other qualities like; protecting a thing, accomplishing a task, managing and maintaining it, bringing up a thing, looking after it and having [power over it. In another place Allah says, *“Is it He then Who Stands* (Arabic word used here is *Qaaimun*, i.e., watches) *over every soul as to what it earns?* (13:33). In another place, “Standing” is used in the sense of maintaining. Refer to (3:18).

Allah is the originator of everything. Existence, attributes, qualities and effects of everything originates from Him. There is no weakness or flaw in His “Standing.” Things cannot stand except by His will and Mercy. Thus, “Standing” cannot be found except in Allah. Allah is never in any state but Standing, as understood by the sentence, *“slumber does not overtake Him, nor*

sleep.” Thus the above discourse leads to understand that the name *Al-Qay’yoom* “the standing” is the basis of all other Divine Attributes of actions, like the Creator, the Sustainer, the Originator, the Bestower of life, the Giver of death, the Forgiver, the Compassionate, etc.

❖ **“Slumber does not overtake Him, nor sleep”.** *Laa ta’khuzuhoo sintaw(n) walaa Naom.* Slumber and sleep are opposite of “Standing”, thus the states of slumber and sleep are negated.

❖ **“Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him, but by His permission?”** *Lahoo Maa fis’samaa-waati wamaa fil-arz. Mandal laadee yash’fao inda-hoo illa bi iznih.* The perfect and comprehensive “standing” means sole ownership of the heavens and the earth, and everything in them. All things and their attributes exist because of Him, and by His Will.

Intercession means being an intermediary in bringing about a good, or averting an evil, in this world of “cause and effect”. An intermediary may be creative, like Sun that gives light, warmth, etc. Intermediary may be legislative, like the recompense on the day of judgment. Below is a verse addressing the topic of intercession: *“Allah is He Who created the heaven and the earth and what is between them in six periods, and He is fully established on the throne (Arsh); you have not besides Him any guardian or any intercessor; will you not then ponder?”* (32:4)

❖ **“He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend of His knowledge, except what He pleases;”** *Ya’lamu maa bai-na ayidee-him wa maa khalf-ahum. Walaa yuee-toona bi shayim min ilmi-hee illaa bimaa shaa-a.* This sentence follows the topic of intercession, and may refer to the intercessors that Allah knows well, their knowledge being limited to the extent that Allah had granted.

The following verse is on the same subject: *“The knower of the unseen! So, He does not reveal His secret to any, except to him who He chooses of an apostle; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him, so that He may know that they have indeed delivered the message of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them, and He takes account of everything.”* (72: 26-28)

The above verses indicate that Allah’s knowledge encompasses the angel, the Prophets, the past and the present. His authority is total and complete, He is fully capable of maintaining it, and He is able to guard His secrets.

❖ **“His Chair (knowledge) extends over the heavens and the earth:”** *wasi-a’ kursi-yuhus-samaawaati wal arz. Al Kursi* means the Chair. Metaphorically, it is sometimes used for kingdom; thus, the chair of a king means the sphere of his authority, and region under his sovereignty. Thus the whole universe belongs to Allah, being under His authority, and encompassed by His knowledge

❖ **“And the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the most High the Great. .** *Walaa ya-oo-duhoo hif-zu-humaa. Wa Hu-al alee-ul Azeem.”* The word ‘*Al-Aod*’ means to tire, to weigh down, or to be depressed.

Thus, one may understand the message of the verse of the throne as follows:

Allah is the only god, life belongs to Him only, He is *al Qay’yoom* (Standing), fully in-charge, with full authority over His creation, i.e., the entire universe. No

one has access to His knowledge, except whom He grants. Managing the universe and all His creation is easy for Him, and He never experiences fatigue or sleep, not even drowsiness. He is High and Great; the hands of His creation cannot reach Him.

Traditions regarding the verse of the throne. (These traditions are recorded in the Qur’anic Tafseer, “Al Mizan” of Allama Tabatabai.)

All-Ayyashi narrates in his at-Tafsir from As-Sadiq A.S., “Abu Dharr said ‘O’ Messenger of Allah! What is the best of that which has been revealed to you?’ He said, ‘The verse of the Chair (*Al Kursi*). The seven heavens and the seven earths in the *Chair* are like a ring thrown in a vast open space.’ Then he said: ‘and surely the excellence of *Al-Arsh* (The Throne) over the *Chair* is like that of the open space over the ring.’”

Allama Tabatabai writes that this verse was given the special name of the “the verse of the Chair or the verse of the Throne” during the lifetime of the Prophet to show its importance. It not only is very elegant, but also establishes the sublime belief in oneness of Allah (Tawheed), then shows His great attribute of “standing.” *Al-Qay’yoom*, which is the foundation of all the names that describe His attributes of action. The attributes showing His authority over big and small affairs of the universe. That is why this verse is called “the Greatest verse of the Qur’an.”

At-Tusi has narrated in Al-Amaali through his chains from Abu Amanah al-Bahili, that he heard Ali bin Abi Talib A.S. say: “I do not think that a man who enters into Islam, by attaining wisdom, or was born in Islam, should pass a night’s darkness (the whole night) until he recites this verse, ‘*Allah is He besides whom there is no god ...*’ Ali A.S. recited the complete verse till its end. Then he said, “If you but knew what it is, you would not leave it on any condition. Surely, the Messenger of Allah said, ‘I have been given the verse of the Chair from the treasure (that is) below *Al-Arsh* (the Throne); and no Prophet before me was given this’” **Then Ali A.S. continued: “I have not spent a single night since I heard it from the Messenger of Allah (pbuh&p), without reciting it ...”**

Zurarah said, “I asked Abu Abdillah A.S. about the words of Allah: ‘His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth,’ whether the heavens and the earth encompass the Chair, or the Chair extends over the heavens and the earth? He said: ‘Verily, everything is in the Chair.’” (Al-Kafi)

Hafs ibn Al-Ghiyath said, “I asked Abu Abdillah A.S. about the words of Allah ‘*His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth*, he replied, ‘(its) His Knowledge.’” (Ma’ anil-Akhbaar)

There is another tradition in the same book from the same Imam, which says: “The heaven and the earth and whatever is between them is in the Chair (*Kursi*), and the Throne (*Arsh*) is that knowledge which no one can measure.”

Hunnan said, “I asked Abi Abdillah A.S. about the Throne (*Arsh*) and the Chair (*Kursi*). He replied, ‘Verily, the Throne has many diverse attributes. Allah uses in the Qur’an various adjectives to describe its various aspects. In the verse: ‘*Rab’bul Arshil Azeem.*’ (9:129), The Lord of the Great Throne, means Lord of the great kingdom or authority. Moreover, He says, ‘*The Beneficent (God) on the Throne is firm*’ (20: 5) It means He is firmly established over His Kingdom, and it is the knowledge of the ‘how’ of the things. In addition, the Throne is distinct from the Chair (although they are together); because they are the two of the greatest doors of

unseen, from which appears creation, and from which all things come. The Chair is the manifest door of the unseen from which manifests His Creation, from which all things come. The Throne is the concealed door of the unseen in which is found the knowledge of the states, conditions, existence, of measure and limit, of Will and intention, as well as knowledge of words, action & omission, and the knowledge of the beginning and return. Thus, these are the two gates of knowledge joined together. The dominion of the Chair is other than the dominion of the Throne (*Arsh*). The knowledge about the Throne is much more hidden.”

As-Sadiq A.S. said in a tradition, “Everything that Allah created is in the receptacle of the Chair (*Kursi*), except His Throne (*Arsh*), because *Arsh* is too great for the Chair to encompass.” (Al-Ihtijaj)

Al-Ayyashi narrates in his At-Tafsir from Muawiya ibn Ammar that he asked As-Sadiq A.S. about (the verse), “*who is it that can intercede with Him, but by His permission?*” He replied, “We are those intercessors.”

(The End)

References: - 1.) Al - Mizan (English) by Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn at-Tabatabai. 2.) The Holy Qur’an, translation and commentary by Aqa Mirza Mahdi Puya. 3.) Tafseer-e-Namoona. (Urdu) by Ayatullah Nasir Makaram Shirazee.

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“I have not spent a single night without reciting it (Ayatul Kursi) since I heard it from the Messenger of Allah (pbuh&p)...” Ali A.S.