

Understanding where is Allah

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First of all we ask Allah سبحانه وتعالى for Hidayat, to stay on Siraat Mustaqeem and also leave this world with Imaan. For this we advise everyone to read this dua.

Surah Al Imran Ayat No. 8

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ (٨)

Our Rabb Do not cause our hearts to stray after you have guided us, and bestowed upon us mercy from Thy Presence. You are surely the Bestower. (8)

This question has never been asked by a Sahaabi, Taabee or any Imam in the past, that where is Allah سبحانه وتعالى. It has never been an issue. But unfortunately some people intentionally and deliberately cause great fitnah, misunderstanding, misconception and corruption, by posing this question, which is their very first and favourite question. They say ”brother do you know where Allah سبحانه وتعالى is”. The simple minded muslim says Allah سبحانه وتعالى is everywhere. After hearing this answer, they attack him, by posing another question that if Allah سبحانه وتعالى is everywhere, then is he in the toilet? How on earth, can a muslim say this about his creator, this is such a foolish and stupid question.

What should our Aqeedah be about Allah سبحانه وتعالى & What does Allah سبحانه وتعالى say about himself

Surah Ikhlāas

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (١) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (٢) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٣) وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٤)

Say: He is Allah سبحانه وتعالى , the One! (1) Allah سبحانه وتعالى , the eternally besought of all! (2) He did not give birth nor was he given birth to. (3) And there is none comparable unto Him. (4)

Aqeedah:

- Allah سبحانه وتعالى is azaliyyun abadiyyun qadeemun haiyyun qayyoomun meaning Allah سبحانه وتعالى has ever been and will ever remain, everything besides Allah سبحانه وتعالى is Haadis meaning did not exist, came to existence and in the end, will perish.
- Allah سبحانه وتعالى is pure and free from all similarities and dimensions.
- He is free from time and space. By saying Allah سبحانه وتعالى is on his arsh, a place is automatically being attributed to Allah سبحانه وتعالى . Once a form/shape is attributed to Allah سبحانه وتعالى , a defect, deficiency and insufficiency is being attributed to Allah سبحانه وتعالى . Since, time and place are both makhloq (created things) they cannot be attributed to Allah سبحانه وتعالى .
- Allah سبحانه وتعالى was how He was and still is the same. He is by the passing of time not affected. It is, therefore, incorrect to say Allah سبحانه وتعالى is on the Arsh.

We will not be questioned about this issue on the Day of Judgment without any doubt. As a result, much more important aspects of Deen are neglected, because of this unnecessary issue.

- Allah سبحانه وتعالى , his transcendence (Tanzeeh), which is proven by the Quran and is unanimously agreed upon.

The meaning of Tanzeeh

Tanzeeh refers to affirming, in absolute and emphatic terms, that there is no similarity between Allah سبحانه وتعالى and His creation. Allah سبحانه وتعالى does not resemble His creation in any way, and there is no creation that is similar to Him in any way. No mind can conceive Him and no perceptive can comprehend Him, as He is eternal absolute independent from all created beings.

Surah Ikhlaas Ayat No. 4

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٤) And there is none comparable unto Him

Surah Ash-Shura Ayat No 11

فَاطِرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهَا لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ

الْبَصِيرُ (١١)

The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you pairs of yourselves, and of the cattle also pairs, whereby He multiplied you. Not as His likeness; and He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing. (11)

Imam al-Nasafi states, “He (Allah) سبحانه وتعالى is not a body (jism), nor an atom (jauhar), nor is He something formed (musawwar), nor a thing limited (mahdood), nor a thing numbered (madood), nor a thing portioned or divided, nor a thing compounded (mutarakkab), and nor does He come to end in Himself. Nor is He placed in a space (makaan); and time (zamaan). Nothing resembles Him; that is to say, nothing is like unto Him.” (Saaduddin Taftazani & Najmuddin Nasafi, Sharh al-Aqa'id Nasafiyya, P: 92-97). Basically Allah سبحانه وتعالى is indescribable.

- To believe that Allah سبحانه وتعالى resembles His creation in any way, or attribute human forms and qualities to Him (anthropomorphism/Tashbeeh) constitutes disbelief (kufr).

Surah Baqarah Ayat 186

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ (١٨٦)

And when My servants question you concerning Me, then surely I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he cries unto me. So let them hear my call and let them trust in me, in order that they may be led a right. (186)

Surah Qaaf Ayat No 16

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ (١٦)

We verily created man and we know what his soul whispers to him, and we are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (16)

Surah Waqia Ayat No 85

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ (٨٥)

And we are nearer unto him than you are, but you see not - (85)

How close and near Allah سبحانه وتعالى is, we don't know and we don't need to know. The Aqeedah regarding Allah سبحانه وتعالى, is so complex, critical, dangerous and complicate that it hasn't got any space for contemplation, reflection or rational thinking, whatsoever, if someone does start thinking about Allah سبحانه وتعالى it is so dangerous, that he might even loose his Imaan.

This is why we don't think about Allah سبحانه وتعالى, we think and ponder over his power and creation. The only reservation in the Aqeedah of Allah سبحانه وتعالى is affirmation.

In Surah Al Imran Allah سبحانه وتعالى says

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (٧)

“He (Allah) سبحانه وتعالى is the One who has revealed to you the Book (the Quran). Out of it there are verses that are Muhkamat (of established meaning), which are the principal verses of the Book, and some others are Mutashabihat (whose definite meanings are unknown). Now those who have perversity in their hearts go after the Mutashabih of it, seeking (to create) discord, and searching for its interpretation (that meets their desires), while no one knows its interpretation except Allah سبحانه وتعالى; and those well-grounded in knowledge say: We believe therein; all is from our Lord. Only the men of understanding observe the advice.” (3:7)

There are four types of Ayaats in which the text is clear.

Zahir, Nas, Mufassar and Muhkam.

There are four types of ayaats in which the text of the Quran is not clear, it is ambigious.

Khafi, Mushkil, Mujmal and Mutashabih. The forth type Mutashabih no one knows the meaning of this Ayat, only Allah سبحانه وتعالى knows.

The meaning of Mutashabihat

The texts whose meanings are ambiguous, unclear, uncertain, indefinite and indistinct are known as (Mutashabihat)

The Ayat of Surah Al Imran is referring to the forth type of Ayat Mutashabih. We don't imagine how Allah سبحانه وتعالى is, rather we think about his creation, and leave the meaning to Allah سبحانه وتعالى this is called Tafweed, which is based on the above mentioned Ayat of the Quran

Surah Noor Ayat No.35

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٣٥)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similarity of His light is as a place wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah سبحانه وتعالى guides unto His light whom He wills. And Allah sets forth for mankind similarities, for Allah سبحانه وتعالى is Knower of all things. (35)

Surah Zukhruf Ayat No. 84

وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهُ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْعَلِيمُ (٨٤)

And it is he, who is the Lord in the heaven, and Lord in the earth. He is the Wise, the Knower. (84)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى is azaliyun abadiyyun meaning Allah has ever been and will ever remain everything besides Allah سبحانه وتعالى is haadis meaning did not exist, came to existence and in the end, will perish.

In Surah Haa Meem Sajdah Ayat No.9-12 Allah says

قُلْ أَنْبِئْكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩) وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيًا مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَرَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَامَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّالِبِينَ (١٠) ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ آتِنِي طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ (١١) فَفَضَّلَهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزِينًا لِّلسَّمَاءِ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (١٢)

(9) He placed therein firm hills rising above it, and blessed it and measured therein its sustenance in four Days, alike for (all) who ask; (10) Then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said unto it and unto the earth: Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly. They said: We come, obedient. (11) Then He ordained them seven heavens in two Days and inspired in each heaven its mandate; and we decked the rear heaven with lamps, and rendered it unbreakable. That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Knower. (12)

Surah Tahreem Ayat No.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ يَنْزِلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (١٢)

In this Ayat Allah سبحانه وتعالى is saying, he has created seven skies and seven heavens

The eight places where Allah سبحانه وتعالى says **ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ**, (He (Allah) سبحانه وتعالى did Istawaa on the Arsh)

1.Surah Taha Ayat No.5

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ (٥) The merciful mounted the Throne

2.Surah Aaraf Ayat No.54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ 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 (٥٤)

Lo! your Lord is Allah سبحانه وتعالى Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then mounted He the Throne. He covers the night with the day, which is in haste to follow it, and has made the sun and the moon and the stars obedient by His command. Verily for him is all creation and commandment. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of the Worlds! (54)

3. Surah Sajdah Ayat No.4-7

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٤) يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ ۖ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ (٥) ذَلِكَ عَلِيمٌ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٦) الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ۗ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ (٧)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى it is who created the heavens and the earth, and that which is between them, in six Days. Then He mounted the Throne. You have not, beside Him, a protecting friend or mediator. Will you not then remember? (4) He directs the rule from the heaven unto the earth; then it ascends unto Him in a Day, whereof the measure is a thousand years of that you reckon. (5) Such is the Knower of the Invisible and the Visible, the Mighty, the Merciful, (6) Who made all things good which He created, and He began the creation of man from clay; (7)

4.Surah Raad Ayat No.2

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بَلِقَاءَ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ (٢)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى it is Who raised up the heavens without visible supports, then mounted the Throne, and compelled the sun and the moon to be of service, each runs unto an appointed term; He ordered the course; He detailed the revelations, that happily you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord. (2)

5.Surah Hadeed Ayat No.4

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۗ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (٤)

He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six Days; then He mounted the Throne. He knows all that entered the earth and all that emerged there from and all that came down from the sky and all that ascended therein; and He is with you where so ever you may be. And Allah سبحانه وتعالى is Seer of what you do. (4)

6.Surah Furgan Ayat No.59

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ فَسْئَلْ بِهِ خَبِيرًا (٥٩)

Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six Days, and then He mounted the Throne. The Beneficent! Ask anyone informed concerning Him! (59)

7.Surah Yunus Ayat No.3

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣)

Lo! Your Lord is Allah سبحانه وتعالى Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, and then He established Himself upon the Throne, directing all things. There is no intercessor (with Him) save after His permission. That is Allah سبحانه وتعالى , your Lord, so worship Him. Oh, will you not remind? (3)

The Meaning of Istawaa

Imaam Maalik رحمه الله was asked about the Ayat in Surah Taaha,

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ (٥)

He answered 'Being above (Istawaa) is known but the reality is unknown, and questioning that, is innovation Bid'ah.'

Jalaluddin Suyyuti رحمه الله also comments on the Ayat saying, 'Istawaa (being above) according to whatever is appropriate for Allah سبحانه وتعالى . (Jalaalain vol. 2 p. 260).

Saaduddin Taftazani رحمه الله has explained the aspect of 'Where is Allah' in the following words, 'And He is not at any place'. (Sharh Aqaaid)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى exists beyond time, space, location and 'physical' direction and dimensions. He is where He has always been.

Hadhrat Ali رضي الله عنه says, "Allah سبحانه وتعالى existed when there was no place, and He is now where He has always been [i.e. without place]." (Al Farq bainal Firaq, P: 333)

Imam Tahawi رحمه الله states, "He (Allah) سبحانه وتعالى is beyond having limits placed on Him, or being restricted, or having parts or limbs. Nor is He contained by the six directions like all the created things." (Aqida Tahawiyya, Point: 38)

Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله further states, "How fitting is the response of Imam Malik رحمه الله when he was asked about istiwa. He said, 'istiwa is known [i.e. we know and accept that it has been mentioned in the

Quran, because in another narration Imam Malik رحمه الله said, ‘istiwa is not unknown’, the ‘how’ (kaif) is unknown (this has also been transmitted as ‘the how is not comprehensible’), asking about it is an innovation, and belief in it (i.e. accepting it to be part of revelation) is obligatory.’ This is the way of the early scholars (salaf) and the safest path, and Allah سبحانه وتعالى knows best.” (Fiqhul Akbar P: 127)

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله said, when asked about Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى istiwa on the Throne, “He performs istiwa upon the Throne, however He wills and as He wills, without any limit or any description that can be made by any describer.” (Daf’ Shubhah at-Tashbih, P: 28)

Qadi Abu Ya’la al-Hanbali رحمه الله says, “Indeed, Allah سبحانه وتعالى is not to be described with [residing in a] place.” (Daf’ Shubhah at-Tashbih, P: 43)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى physically is not in the heavens or on the throne, because these are creations of Allah سبحانه وتعالى, Allah cannot be confined to his creation.

Imam Baihaqi, Imamul Haramain al-Juwayni, Imam Raghīb al-Isfahani, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Imam Abul-Faraj ibn al-Jauzi al-Hanbali, Imam Fakhrudin Razi, Imam Baidhawi, Imam Nasafi, Imam Taqiuddin Subki, Imam Ibnul Humam al-Hanafi, Imam Suyuti رحمه الله عليهم and others (Allah have mercy on them all). They state that ‘istiwa’ does not mean Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى physical elevation over the Throne; rather, it refers to elevation of rank, status and dominion, and Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى subjugation of the Throne that is without a beginning like all of the attributes of Allah سبحانه وتعالى.

Sitting, standing, rising, ascending, descending, climbing, etc are all characteristics of created bodies, whilst Allah سبحانه وتعالى is pure from having any attributes of created things attributed to Him. Allah سبحانه وتعالى is not in need of a place in order to exist. Imam al-Tahawi رحمه الله sums this up by saying, “He (Allah) سبحانه وتعالى is independent of the Throne and that which is beneath it.” (Al-Aqida al-Tahawiyya, Point: 50)

It means we consign the knowledge of their reality to Allah سبحانه وتعالى, and avoid indulging into them. Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله states in his commentary of Al-Fiqhul Akbar, “Imam Abu Hanifa رحمه الله said in his Kitabul Wasiyya, ‘We agree that Allah سبحانه وتعالى performed istiwa (literal meaning: positioned Himself) upon the Throne without Him having any need for it or resting on it. He is the Guardian of the Throne and all besides the Throne. If He were in need [of the Throne], He would not have been capable of bringing the universe into existence and administrating over its affairs, like the created beings [for created things are in need, and the one in need of others cannot create the universe]. If He [Allah سبحانه وتعالى] was in need of sitting or settling [on the Throne], then before the creation of the Throne, where was He Most High? In effect, He is transcendent of all of this.’ (P: 126-127)

Imam Shafi’i رحمه الله would simply say regarding the Mutashabihat texts, “I believe in what has come from Allah سبحانه وتعالى as it was intended by Allah سبحانه وتعالى, and I believe in what has come from the Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى (Allah bless him and give him peace) as it was intended by the Messenger of Allah.” (Ibn Qudama, Dhammut Taweel)

The world is round so where is the arsh for those people living underneath. Allah سبحانه وتعالى has turned to his arsh means Allah سبحانه وتعالى is most high, exalted and has established himself on the Arsh, he is physically not there.

The texts whose meanings are ambiguous, unclear, uncertain, indefinite and indistinct are known as (Mutashabihat).

The best and safest option is to believe in Allah سبحانه وتعالى as He is without indulging into the details on these issues.

We have not even fully understood the reality of our souls, bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the sky, and so forth; then how are we expected to comprehend on this issue.

The most precautionous and safest option is, the opinion of the Sahabah, Taabieen, Muhadditheen), the four main Imams and the major scholars of their schools. Their view is that, the external claim of such texts is not intended, and only Allah سبحانه وتعالى knows the real meanings of such texts; they transfer their meanings completely and absolutely to Allah سبحانه وتعالى without attempting to figure out them – either exactly what is mentioned in the text or figuratively, symbolically or metaphorically. This option is known as Tafweed. This is, in fact what Allah سبحانه وتعالى wants us to do as highlighted in the translation.

In Surah Al Imran Allah says

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ (٧)

“He [Allah] سبحانه وتعالى is the One who has revealed to you the Book [the Quran]. Out of it there are verses that are muhkamat [of established meaning], which are the principal verses of the Book, and some others are Mutashabihat [whose definite meanings are unknown]. Now those who have perversity in their hearts go after the Mutashabih of it, seeking [to create] discord, and searching for its interpretation [that meets their desires], while no one knows its interpretation except Allah; and those well-grounded in knowledge say: **We believe therein; all is from our Lord.** Only the men of understanding observe the advice.”

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal رحمه الله said, when asked about Allah's istiwa on the Throne, “He performs istiwa upon the Throne, however He wills and as He wills, without any limit or any description that can be made by any describer.” (Daf' Shubhah at-Tasheeh, P: 28)

Other Mutashabihat Ayaat

Surah Mujadalah Ayat No.7

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا آدْنَىٰ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ آيَةً مَا كَانُوا تَمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (٧)

“No secret consultation takes place between three, but He [Allah] سبحانه وتعالى is fourth of them; nor between five, but He is sixth of them; nor between fewer than that or more, but He is with them wherever they may be...”

Surah Baqarah Ayat No, 115

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (١١٥)

Unto Allah سبحانه وتعالى belong the East and the West, and where ever you turn, there is Allah's سبحانه وتعالى face. Lo! Allah سبحانه وتعالى is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. (115)

In this Ayat Allah سبحانه وتعالى is saying which ever direction you turn to, the face of Allah سبحانه وتعالى is there. Now how many faces does Allah سبحانه وتعالى have?

Some brother's attack others by saying if your Aqeedah is not right then your salaah fast is not of any use.

There are other texts which indicate that Allah سبحانه وتعالى is everywhere and All-Encompassing. For example:

Surah Nisa Ayat No.126

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا (١٢٦)

Unto Allah سبحانه وتعالى belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Allah سبحانه وتعالى ever surrounds all things. (126)

These types of texts are known as Mutashabihat i.e. their meanings are not decisively known by us. Their outward apparent meanings indicate location for Allah سبحانه وتعالى or a similarity between Allah سبحانه وتعالى and His creation, and thus they go against the fundamental belief in Allah's سبحانه وتعالى transcendence (Tanzeeh),

One very interesting point to note and that is, that not a single Sahabi asked this question where is Allah سبحانه وتعالى. It's the human nature to say Allah سبحانه وتعالى is with him, even if you ask a Christian or a Jew he will say God is with us.

Every human being is born on nature. This is why people naturally say this. Allah's سبحانه وتعالى attributes sifaat is part of Allah سبحانه وتعالى it is not separate from Allah سبحانه وتعالى i.e. mercy seeing hearing etc. similarly strength is part of the person's knowledge is part of your personalities, it is not separate.

Allah's سبحانه وتعالى knowledge has ever been with him and will ever remain with him. Our knowledge has been acquired and we might lose it but when the person has knowledge it's with him and not locked in the safe or filing cabinet. When Allah سبحانه وتعالى says he can see and hear, it also means he is personally there because hearing and seeing is part of Allah سبحانه وتعالى. Allah سبحانه وتعالى is there but how is he there only Allah سبحانه وتعالى knows himself.

Surah Al Imran Ayat No.30

ط وَيَحْذَرُكُمْ اللّٰهُ نَفْسَهُ وَاللّٰهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (٣٠)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى warns, you beware of Him. And Allah سبحانه وتعالى is Full of Pity for (His) bondmen. (30)

Surah Al Imran Ayat No 185

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذٰبِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَاِنَّمَا تُؤَفَّقُوْنَ اُجْرَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَمَنْ زُحِرَ حَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَاَدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ (١٨٥)

Every soul will taste of death. And you will be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which ye have fairly earned. Whoso is removed from the Fire and is made to enter paradise, he indeed is triumphant. The life of this world is but comfort of illusion. (185)

Since Allah سبحانه وتعالى has a soul will he die, will Allah سبحانه وتعالى taste death

Surah Ar Rahman Ayta No.26-27

(٢٦) كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٢٧)

Everyone that is thereon will pass away; (26) There remains only the face of Allah سبحانه وتعالى The Mighty and Glory. (27)

The best and safest option is to believe in Allah سبحانه وتعالى as He is without indulging into the details on these issues.

We have not even fully understood the reality of our souls, bodies, the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the sky, and so forth; then how are we expected to comprehend on this issue.

Imam Tahawi رحمه الله states in his famous reference work on Muslim beliefs, “Anyone who describes Allah سبحانه وتعالى as being in any way the same as a human being has become an unbeliever. All those who grasp this will take heed and refrain from saying things such as the unbelievers say, and they will know that He, in His attributes, is not like human beings.” (Aqida Tahawiyya, article 34)

Imam Abu Hamid Ghazali رحمه الله states, “Whosoever thinks that Allah سبحانه وتعالى has a body made of organs is an idol-worshipper. Whosoever worships a body is considered a disbeliever by the consensus of all the scholars.

Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله states in his commentary of Al-Fiqhul Akbar, “We are unable to comprehend Allah سبحانه وتعالى. Whatever occurs in one’s mind [regarding Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى appearance], Allah سبحانه وتعالى is other than that, for Allah سبحانه وتعالى says: ‘But they shall not encompass Him with their knowledge.’ (P: 117)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى is not confined to time and space, since He is the creator of both and absolutely free from needing anything that He has created. “Surely Allah سبحانه وتعالى is independent of all the worlds.” (Quran 29:6)

Imam Abu Hanifa رحمه الله also states in his Al-Fiqhul Absat, “If it is asked, ‘Where Allah سبحانه وتعالى existed when there was no place, before creating the creation. And Allah سبحانه وتعالى existed when there was no ‘where’, no creation, nothing; and He is the Creator of everything.” (Al Fiqhul Absat, P: 21)

Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله states in his commentary of Al-Fiqhul Akbar, “Allah سبحانه وتعالى does not reside in a place from the places and neither in a time from the times, because place and time are from the created things whilst Allah سبحانه وتعالى has existed eternally when nothing from the created things were in existence with Him.” (P: 117)

Answer to the Hadith of Hadhrat Muawiya

Hadhrot Mu’awiya ibnul Hakam رضي الله عنه relates, as part of a long hadith, that he came to the Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى and asked various questions about his practices before Islam. From among the questions he said that he had slapped his slave girl, and whether he should free her. The Messenger of

Allah سبحانه وتعالى asked that she be brought before him, and then asked her, “Where is Allah?” سبحانه وتعالى She replied, “In the sky The Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى asked, “Who am I?” She replied, “You are the Messenger of Allah.” سبحانه وتعالى The Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى said, “Free her, for she is a believer.” (Sahih Muslim 537)

Imam Nawawi رحمه الله states in his commentary on Sahih Muslim, “Qadhi Iyadh said, ‘There is no disagreement among any of the Muslims – their jurists (fuqaha), their hadith scholars (muhaddithun), their theologians (mutakallimun), their polemicists (nuddhar) and their ordinary followers (muqallidun) – that the texts which outwardly indicate that Allah سبحانه وتعالى is in the sky – for example, the statement of Allah سبحانه وتعالى, “Have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He makes you sink into the earth?” (Quran 67:17) – are not to be taken literally; rather, according to them all [that is, all the Muslims and experts of every field of Shari’ah as mentioned above], they are to be interpreted figuratively.’” (Al-Minhaj sharh Sahih Muslim)

The hadith of the slave-girl whom the Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى asked, “Where is Allah?” سبحانه وتعالى and she responded by saying, “In the sky”, Imam Nawawi states, “This is one of the hadith which deal with the attributes [of Allah] سبحانه وتعالى . There are two options with regards to them.

The first position is to believe in them without delving into its meaning (Tafweed).

The second option is to interpret them figuratively and do (Taweel) in a manner that befits Him. Those who hold this option of taweel say that in this hadith the Messenger of Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى intention was to examine her to see whether or not she was one of those who worshiped idols that are before them, or one of those who believed in the Oneness of Allah سبحانه وتعالى and maintained that Allah alone is the creator, disposer, and one who effects [all things] – for He is the One that when a person supplicates to Him, he turns [his attention, or hands] towards the sky; just as when a person performs Salaah, he faces the Kaaba.

What is mentioned in the hadith is that Allah سبحانه وتعالى is not restricted in the sky, nor is he restricted in the direction of the Kaba. The sky is the direction for supplication (dua’), like the Kaba is the direction (qibla) for Salaah. So when she said that “He is in the sky”, it became known that she was one of those who believed in the Oneness of Allah سبحانه وتعالى , and not a worshipper of idols.” This was intended by asking this question. (Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim)

What the Muhadditheen say about this Hadith

Imam Ubbyi in his commentary of Sahih Muslim, Shaikh Muhammad Shanqiti, Imam Abu Bakr ibnul Furak in his Mushkilul Hadith, Qadi Abu Bakr ibnul Arabi in his commentary of Sunan Tirmidhi, Imam Ibnul Jawzi al-Hanbali in his Daf’ Shubhah at-Tashbeeh, Imam Abul Walid al-Baji, Imam al-Baidhawi, Imam Taqiuddin Subki رحمه الله عليهم, the purpose of this question was not to ask regarding the physical location of Allah سبحانه وتعالى , but about His rank and status; and the slave-girl’s response was not intended to describe Allah سبحانه وتعالى physically being in the sky, rather to express His tremendousness), superiority, nobility and elevation of status and rank.

Mulla Ali Qari رحمه الله states in his commentary on Mishkatul Masabih in relation to this hadith, “Qadhi Iyadh al-Maliki رحمه الله said, ‘By asking this question, the Messenger of Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى objective was not to ask about Allah’s سبحانه وتعالى location, for verily He is above and beyond space, as He is above and beyond time. Rather the intent of his question to her was to find out whether she was a believer in His oneness or someone who associated partners with Allah سبحانه وتعالى , because the unbelievers of the Arabs used to worship idols, and each tribe used to have a specific idol in its midst which it worshipped.

The Messenger of Allah ﷻ meant to determine what she worshipped. When she said, ‘In the heavens’ – and another narration says that she made a sign towards the heavens – it was understood that she was a believer in Tauheed. His objective by this line of questioning was the disowning of the gods of the earth, which are the idols; not the establishment of the heaven as a location for Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ is greatly exalted from the sayings of the wrong-doers.” (Mirqat al-Mafatih)

Mutashabihat Ahaadith

Hadhrat Abu Huraira رضى الله عنه relates that the Messenger of Allah ﷻ said, “Our Lord ‘Yanzilu [literal meaning: descends]’ every night to the closest heavens...” (Sunan Tirmidhi 2414)

There are innumerable and countless number of Ahadith in which it is clearly stated, that Allah ﷻ has human bodily forms and organs such as face, soul, ears, eyes, hands, palm, fingers, foot, shin, he is internal and external,

How do we deal with such texts?

The most precautionous and safest option is, the opinion of the Sahabah, Taabieen, Muhadditheen), the four main Imams and the major scholars of their schools. Their view is that the external claim of such texts is not intended, and only Allah knows the real meanings of such texts; they consign their meanings completely to Allah ﷻ without attempting to deduce them – either literally or figuratively. This option is known as Tafweed.

Imam Sufyan ibn Uyaina رحمه الله says, “All that Allah ﷻ has described Himself with in His Book; its explanation is its reciting and keeping silent about it.” (Baihaqi, Al-Asma’ was sifat 2/158)

The human intellect is very limited, and thus it is very difficult for it to comprehend Allah’s ﷻ being.

Imam Abdul Wahhab Sha’rani رحمه الله expresses this point in a very beautiful manner. He states that Allah’s ﷻ attributes of ‘istiwa’, ‘elevation’ and ‘nuzul [descending] to the heavens’ are all eternal (Qadeem), for He is eternal with all His attributes; whereas there is a consensus that the Throne and everything surrounding it is created. Allah ﷻ had the attribute of ‘istiwa’ and ‘nuzul’ even before He created the Throne and the heavens. So where was His ‘istiwa’ before creating the Throne, and upon what did He do ‘nuzul’ before creating the heavens and the sky? Therefore, the way you imagine Allah’s ﷻ ‘istiwa’ upon the Throne and His ‘nuzul’ to the heavens before the creation of the Throne and the heavens, imagine it in the same manner after their creation. (Al-Yawaqit wa ‘l-Jawahir)

Every Muslim must firmly believe in Allah’s transcendence (Tanzeeh) – that is to say, Allah ﷻ is above and beyond having any resemblance with His creation. He Most High is not to be described with limits, organs and other such characteristics belonging to created things; and is not confined to time and space. “There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him.” (Quran 42:11) This amount of belief is sufficient for an average Muslim to attain salvation, insha Allah.

As for the Ayaats of the Blessed Quran and Ahadith describing Allah ﷻ to be in the heavens/sky and above His Throne – or giving Allah ﷻ bodily forms which go against the belief in Allah’s ﷻ transcendence. So in this situation what do we do? There are three options.

The option of the Jamhoor (majority of the predecessors) was **Tafweed**, and this is the safest, most cautious and most in accordance with His statement ﷻ, “No one knows its interpretation except Allah ﷻ. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: we believe therein” (3:7) (Takmila Fathul Mulhim 5/379-80)

Allah سبحانه وتعالى does not hold human-like attributes and qualities. So, if anyone does any of the following will be negating Tashbeeh (anthropomorphism) and applying Tanzeeh the Aqeedah of Allah's سبحانه وتعالى transcendence.

1. Consign the meaning completely to the knowledge of Allah سبحانه وتعالى , this is **Tafweed**
2. Interpret the texts figuratively, in a manner that befits Allah سبحانه وتعالى , this is known as **Taweel**
3. Affirm the literal meaning but negate Tashbeeh (anthropomorphism) meaning absolute rejection of a similarity between Allah سبحانه وتعالى and His creation – and then consign the actual meaning of such texts to the knowledge of Allah سبحانه وتعالى , this is known as **Tasbeeth**.

All three options are part of affirming the meaning and knowledge to Allah.

Final Say

Imam Shafi'i رحمه الله would simply say regarding the Mutashabihat texts, “I believe in what has come from Allah سبحانه وتعالى as it was intended by Allah سبحانه وتعالى , and I believe in what has come from the Messenger of Allah سبحانه وتعالى as it was intended by Rasoolullah. صلي الله عليه وسلم ” (Ibn Qudama, Dhammut Taweel)

The most precautionous and safest option is, the opinion of the Sahabah, Taabieen, Muhadditheen), the four main Imams and the major scholars of their schools. Their view is that, the external claim of such texts is not intended, and only Allah knows the real meanings of such texts; they transfer their meanings completely and absolutely to Allah without attempting to figure out them – either exactly what is mentioned in the text or figuratively, symbolically or metaphorically. This option is known as Tafweed.

So, we advice all our brothers to remain calm in this very complex and delicate issue. May Allah سبحانه وتعالى grant us the correct Aqaaid and keep us steadfast on Siraat Mustaqeem and the ability to leave this material world with Iman and the pleasure of Allah سبحانه وتعالى Aameen.