

Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: GOD - there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them,²⁴⁷ whereas they cannot attain to aught of His knowledge save that which He wills [them to attain]. His eternal power²⁴⁸ overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. And He alone is truly exalted, tremendous.

Malik: Allah! There is no god but Him: the Living, the Eternal. He neither slumbers nor sleeps. To Him belongs all that is in the Heavens and the Earth. Who can intercede with Him without His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them. They cannot gain access to any thing out of His knowledge except what He pleases. His throne is more vast than the heavens and the earth, and guarding of these both does not fatigue Him. He is the Exalted, the Supreme.

Pickthall: Allah! There is no God save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.

Yusuf Ali: Allah! there is no Allah but He the living the Self-subsisting Eternal. No slumber can seize him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to his creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of his knowledge except as He willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth and He feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. For He is the Most High the Supreme (in glory).^{296 297 298 259}

Transliteration: Allahu la ilaha illa huwa alhayyu alqayyoomu la takhuthuhu sinatun wala nawmun lahu ma fee alssamawati wama fee alardi man tha allathee yashfaAAu AAindahu illa biithnihi yaAAalamu ma bayna aydeehim wama khalfahum wala yuheetoona bishayin min AAilmihi illa bima shaa wasiAAa kursiyyuhu alssamawati waalarda wala yaooduhu hifthuhuma wahuwa alAAaliyyu alAAatheemu
Khattab:

Allah! There is no god ?worthy of worship? except Him, the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who could possibly intercede with Him without His permission? He ?fully? knows what is ahead of them and what is behind them, but no one can grasp any of His knowledge—except what He wills ?to reveal?. His Seat¹ encompasses the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not tire Him. For He is the Most High, the Greatest.²

Author Comments

247 - Lit., "that which is between their hands and that which is behind them". The commentators give most conflicting interpretations to this phrase. Thus, for instance, Mujahid and 'Ata' assume that "that which is

between their hands" means "that which has happened to them in this world", while "that which is behind them" is an allusion to "that which will happen to them in the next world"; Ad-Dahhak and Al-Kalbi, on the other hand, assume the exact opposite and say that "that which is between their hands" refers to the next world, "because they are going towards it", while "that which is behind them" means this world, "because they are leaving it behind" (Razi). Another explanation is "that which took place before them and that which will take place after them" (Zamakhshari). It would seem, however, that in all these interpretations the obvious meaning of the idiomatic expression *ma bayna yadayhi* ("that which lies open between one's hands") is lost sight of: namely, that which is evident, or known, or perceivable; similarly, *ma khalfahu* means that which is beyond one's ken or perception. Since the whole tenor of the above Qur'an-verse relates to God's omnipotence and omniscience, the translation given by me seems to be the most appropriate.

248 - Lit., "His seat [of power]". Some of the commentators (e.g., Zamakhshari) interpret this as "His sovereignty" or "His dominion", while others take it to mean "His knowledge" (see Muhammad 'Abduh in *Manar* III, 33); Razi inclines to the view that this word denotes God's majesty and indescribable, eternal glory.

28942 -

The Arabic word *kursi* can either mean seat or knowledge. There are some narrations attributed to Prophet Muhammad (?) that describe Allah's Throne ('Arsh) as being greater than His *Kursi*.

28943 -

According to Muslim belief, this is the greatest verse in the Quran.

259 - Wrong (themselves as well as others): *Zalimun*: for the root meaning of *zulm* see n. 51. ii. 35.

296 - This is the Ayat-ul-Kursi the "Verse of the Throne". Who can translate its glorious meaning, or reproduce the rhythm of its well-chosen and comprehensive words. Even in the original Arabic the meaning seems to be greater than can be expressed in words.

297 - After we realise that His life is absolute Life. His Being is absolute Being, while others are contingent and evanescent, our ideas of heaven and earth vanish like shadows. What is behind that shadow is He. Such reality as our heavens and our earth possess is a reflection of His absolute Reality. The pantheist places the wrong accent when he says that everything is He. The truth is better expressed when we say that everything is His. How then can any creatures stand before Him as of right, and claim to intercede for a fellow-creature? In the first place both are His, and He cares as much for one as for the other. In the second place, they are both dependent on His will and command. But He in His Wisdom and Plan may grade his creatures and give one superiority over another. Then by His will and permission such a one may intercede or help according to the laws and duties laid on him. God's knowledge is absolute, and is not conditioned by Time or Space. To us, His creatures, these conditions always apply. His knowledge and our knowledge are therefore in different categories, and our knowledge only gets some reflection of Reality when it accords with His Will and Plan.

298 - Throne; seat, power, knowledge, symbol of authority. In our thoughts we exhaust everything when we say "the heavens and the earth". Well, then in everything is the working of God's power, and will, and authority. Everything of course includes spiritual things as well as things of sense. Cf. Wordsworth's fine outburst in "Tintern Abbey": "Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, And the round ocean and the living air, And in the blue sky, and in the mind of man: A motion and a spirit that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, And rolls through all things."

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