

وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

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There is big difference between *arsh* (*throne*) and seat (*kursi*). Although both may be used by a king, they are utilized for two different positions of authority or .audience

.Generally, a king's throne or seat represents his authority

.Hence *arsh* and *kursi* signify two different levels of authority of God

*His seat embraces the heavens and the earth* is a metaphoric reference to God's .universal dominion, power, absolute control and authority

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Since the discussion was about God's knowledge as well, 'His seat' might also be a reference to His knowledge ('ilm) from which nothing escapes

Hafs ibn Ghiyath reports, "I asked Imam al-Sadiq (a) about *His seat embraces the heavens and the earth*. He said, "His knowledge." (Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 30)

.In this case *kursi* refers to the active knowledge of God

وَ عِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ وَ مَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَ لَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَ لَا رَطْبٍ وَ لَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ

*With Him are the treasures of the Unseen; no one knows them except Him. He knows whatever there is in land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowing it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or withered but it is in a manifest Book (6:59).*

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In effect God's knowledge is His will, and His will is His creation, and His creation is His authority. Authority is not separable from creation

:That is why we have in hadith

امام الرضا (ع): علم و شاء و اراد و قدر و قضى و امضى

He Knew, then He wanted, then He willed, then He measured (destined), then He decreed, then He implemented.

امام الرضا ع: ان الله اذا شاء شيئا اراده و اذا اراده قدره و اذا قدره قضاه و اذا قضاه امضاه

When Allah wants something He wills it, when He wills it, He measures (destines) it, when He destines it, He commands it, after He commands it, He implements it

# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

Some have imagined the 'seat' and the 'throne' of God in literal sense due to their .anthropomorphic understanding of God

.the anthropomorphists have also understood it literally as a place where God sits

Fakhr al-Din al-Razi says that it is given in correct reports that the *kursi* is a huge .body under the *arsh* and above the seventh heavens

و اعلم أن لفظ الكرسي ورد في الآية و جاء في الأخبار الصحيحة أنه جسم عظيم تحت العرش و فوق السماء

السابعة (تفسير الكبير، ج ٧، ص ١٣)

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Razi then goes on to offer other metaphoric meanings for the *kursi* such as authority (*sultan*), power (*qudrah*) and dominion (*mulk*) of God or God's knowledge because it is the 'seat' of the All-knowing.

But then he goes back to the literal meaning and says, 'ignoring the apparent meaning without proof is impermissible'. (تفسير الكبير، ج ٧، ص ١٤)

However, Most Muslims, and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (*a*) in particular, have insisted that God has no physical form, nor can He be confined to a fixed place or ascribed any limitation, such as being bound by time and space.

Imam al-Rida describes Him as, 'He is not in anything or above anything.' لا في شيء ولا على شيء بحار

الأنوار، ج ١٠، العلامة المجلسي، ص ٣١٩

# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

The traditions from Ahl al-Bayt tell us that the whole creation is in the *kursi* and the *kursi* is inside the *'arsh*, and *'arsh* is carried by God.

Here are some of those narrations.

From Imm Ja'far al-Sadiq (*a*) that Abu Dharr asked, "O Apostle of God! What is the best of that which has been revealed to you?" He said, 'The verse of the Seat (*kursi*). The seven heavens and the seven earths in the Seat are but like a ring thrown in a vast open space."

Then he said, "And surely the excellence of the Throne (*'arsh*) over the Seat is like that of the open space over the ring." ('Ayyashi, 1/137)

## وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

This hadith shows that *His seat embraces the heavens and the earth* mean it extends beyond them and encompasses them fully, rather than just to mean it is as wide and vast as they are in the spatial sense.

From Imam al-Sadiq (a), “Everything which Allah has created is in the receptacle of the Seat, except His Throne, because that is too great for the Seat to encompass.”

(Ihtijaj, 2/352)

Zurarah asked Imam al-Sadiq (a) about: *His seat embraces the heavens and the*, whether the heavens and the earth encompass the Seat or if the Seat extends over the heavens and the earth. He replied, “Indeed, everything is in the Seat.” (Kafi, 1/325)



# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

Allamah Tabatabai has commented on this tradition saying,

In many traditions the same point has been emphasized in reply to similar questions. This question looks strange, because nobody has ever recited the verse in a way which could justify such confusion.

He continues, apparently, the questions were based not on the recital of the Qur'an but on the common understanding that the Seat was a particular body kept over the heavens or over the seventh heaven, and from there the affairs of the material world were managed.

## وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

That being the picture of the Seat in their minds, it was reasonable to suppose that the heavens and the earth encompassed the Seat because it was placed over the heavens as a wooden or iron chair is placed over a floor.

And that gave rise to the question as to why the Qur'an, instead, said, *His seat embraces the heavens and the earth*? A question of the same type was asked about the 'arsh and the reply was given that the encompassing was not as a material thing encompasses another material thing. (al-Mizan, 2/338)

# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

## The difference between 'Arsh and Kursi

From Hannan ibn Sadir, 'I asked Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a) about the Throne (*'arsh*) and the Seat (*kursī*). He replied,

“Indeed, the Throne has many diverse attributes. Allah uses in the Qur'an various adjectives to describe its various aspects. He says: *and He is the Lord of the Great Throne (9:129)*. It means; Lord of the great kingdom or authority. And He says: *the All-beneficent, settled on the Throne (20:5)*. It means that He is firm in His kingdom. And it is the knowledge of the 'how' of the things.

Also, the Throne, is distinct from the Seat; because they are two of the greatest doors of the unseen, and they both are unseen.

# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

And they are together in the unseen, because the Seat is the manifest door of the unseen, from which appears creation and from which all the things come. And the Throne is the concealed door of the unseen in which is found the knowledge of the states, conditions and existence; of measure and limit; of will and intention; as well as the knowledge of words, actions and omissions, and the knowledge of the beginning and the return.

Thus, the two are two gates of knowledge joined together, because the dominion of the Throne is other than the dominion of the Seat, and its (the Throne's) knowledge is more hidden than the knowledge of the Seat. That is why Allah said, *and He is the Lord of the Great Throne (9:129)* ; because its attribute is greater than that of the Seat, and both are joined in it." (Ma'ani al-Akhbar, pp. 321-323)

# وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

This narration is fabulous in the depth of knowledge that it conveys; something that cannot be found anywhere but with the Holy Family.

The statement, “the Seat is the manifest door of the unseen” may be understood in the light of the Seat representing the level of the knowledge of measured things nearer to our material world whereas the Throne represents infinite knowledge which has no limits. That is the realm of

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ

*There is not a thing but that its sources are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure. (15:21)*

وَلَا يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا

*and He is not wearied by their preservation*

وَلَا يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا

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*Ya'uduhu* is from *awd*, which means to tire or weigh down.

Although the pronoun *hu* after *ya'udu* is generally taken to refer to God i.e. He is not wearied by their preservation,

it may be equally correct to associate the pronoun to the Seat (*kursi*) and read it as 'It (the Seat) is not wearied by their preservation.'

As said before, God is the only true independent reality and all else is constantly perishing unless preserved by Him.

## وَلَا يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا

The relationship of God to His creation is like that of a thinker to his thoughts or the sun to its rays and not that of a builder to a building.

Creation cannot therefore be imagined to exist on its own without the *rabb al-'alamin* - One who constantly sustains the Universe.

*He is not wearied* is mentioned because man immediately tries to understand what he hears or reads in terms of his own experience. Constant preservation of a thing – even if it is just a thought – would tire and exhaust man. But God does not rely on a physical body or any medium to preserve or maintain what He creates.



وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

*and He is the All-exalted, the All-supreme.*

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And He is the All-exalted, the All-supreme.

The All-exalted (*al-'aliyy*) is literally 'the most high' but since God is not 'above' or at any fixed location, its meaning is that He is too exalted and 'high' to be comprehended by any of His creation.

The All-supreme (*al-'azim*), another of God's beautiful Names, is also an exaltation of God as being too great and mighty to be fathomed by anyone or anything.

We know His *azamah* (greatness) by the greatness of His creation.