



Research Article

An Appraisal of Aṭ-Ṭabarī's Views on Allāh's Position Over the Throne (ʿĀrsh) in His Tafsīr (Jāmicu-L-Bayān)

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Abstract. The position of Allāh on the Throne is a theological theme that an ample written have been made on it, due to its significance in Islām. It is regarded as part of the attributes of Allāh, hence, it directly and indirectly after the faith of a Muslim. However, various explanations have been given on the meaning of this term contextually and literally from different perspectives especially the various sects in Islam. Thus, the elucidation and view of Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī on this as contained in his Tafsīr

will go a long way in exposing the classical view on this since his Tafsīr served as source of information for many Tafsīr. Therefore, this paper aims at appraising his view along with other theologian views in Islām. The methods that adopted in this study are historical and analytical methods of research. Historical method has been used in accounting for the biography of Aṭ-Ṭabarī, while analytical method applied in elucidating the view of Aṭ-Ṭabarī and other theologian on the topic. The findings of this paper disclose that the exegetic corpus of Aṭ-Ṭabarī views Istiwā' as among the unseen act that Muslim should believe in. The study concluded by encouraging more research through the verses of the Qur'an to further theological discussion especially attributes of Allāh from the view of Aṭ-Ṭabarī for better understanding.

Keywords: Appraisal, Istiwā', al-^cArsh, Tafsīr, Theology, Attribute, View

INTRODUCTION

Islāmic theology in its formative medieval period, defined as a systematic discourse about God carried out by Muslims, evolved as part of the earlier world's most internally dissimilar belief (Bakar, 1998). It is a branch of Islāmic philosophy that is focus on interpretations of religious doctrine and the defense of these interpretations through discursive arguments. It sprang from the political and religious disputes that enveloped the Muslim community in its early years (Abdul Haleem, 1996).

The emergence of theology in the Islamic tradition during the later part of the 7th century is difficult to be isolated from the emergence of several other fields, including Arabic philology, Qur'ānic interpretation, Hadith, jurisprudence (fiqh), and historiography. Islamic theology, along with these other fields of religious knowledge, focuses on determining the details and background of the Islamic revelation and deciphering its meaning and consequences for Muslim beliefs and actions after the revelation ended and the Islamic community had to form its own path.

In the initial part of the eighth century, a series of inquiries centered on God's unity, justice, and other attributes, which were pertinent to human freedom, actions, and destiny in the next world. This formed the basis of discussion due to the rhetorical and dialectical "speech" employed in formulating the main points of Islamic belief, engaging in debates about them, and providing arguments against opponents who were Muslims and non-Muslims.

Gradually, *ilm al-kalām* expanded to encompass all topics that were either directly or indirectly pertinent to the formation and definition of religious beliefs. It also evolved its own necessary or practical systematic rational arguments concerning the nature of the world and human understanding (Mahdi, Al-Islam Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d).

On account of that, the Sahaba's exegeses were generally free of disputes over *Kalām* and religious doctrine, but their students' contributions to the development of theological exegeses in later times were significant. The earliest indications of theological disputes dated back to the Tābi^cūn period when scholars like Sa'id b. Musayyib and others were exceedingly circumspect in their interpretation of the Qur'an, offering no commentary on its verses other than to recount pertinent hadiths.

However, Mujahid b. Jabr (d. 104/722–732) approached the interpretation of the Qur'an with a liberal and logical mindset. For instance, in the passages "On that day there shall be radiant faces, Looking to their Lord" (75:22–23), he interpreted "looking" to mean waiting, since he believed that it was impossible to see God, he was receiving rewards from God.

Additionally, according to his interpretation of 2:65 which says: "We said to them: "Be you monkeys, hated and rejected," those individuals were not actually changed into apes; rather, the verse alludes to their lack of mercy. According to this perspective, Mujahid's exegesis served as the basis for the development of the Mu'tazili approach. Al-Hasan Baṣr, an Iraqi exegetical school student, is reported to have believed in divine justice and to be against divine predestination. In Islamic community, recent developments and occurrences were the primary causes of the kalam debates, and it is important to recognize that political and governmental forces can either support or undermine theological exegetical ideas (تفسير كلامي n.d).

Similar to what is the position of Allāh on the Throne which is believed to be one of the theological themes causing disparities among Muslim scholars but discerned their distinct opinions on it. It denotes that Allāh has no restrictions, nor any rivals in whatsoever. It is also established that Allāh's closeness in His loftiness beyond the limitation of stability on the Throne *Al-ʿArsh* because He is above everything, close to everything and nothing above Him. He is a nearer to all servants than his jugular vein and He is a witness over everything.⁷ But, His *Istiwa* position on the Throne, is unanimously agreed that is known but how He is established on it is unknown and even asking about it is infidelity in Islām (Al-Ashʿarī, n.d).

It is observed that ever since it is confirmed in Q19:93, that "*All those in the heavens and the earth must come to Allāh as His slave,*" and as it is cleared that Allāh is not a slave which must be an obligatory to believe, and therefore must be cleared to everyone that He cannot being in a place or direction, or on the Throne or the Chair, purposely not to confine Him in one position like ordinary human being (Al-Qurtubī, 1964).

This paper therefore, aimed to appraise the view of Aṭ-Ṭabarī and other Muslim theologians on the interpretation of word *Istawa* and the Allāh's establishment on the Throne *Al-ʿArsh* in the theological manner and also to establish its fact through the distinct standpoints of that theologians including Aṭ-Ṭabarī for the purpose of contributing to the knowledge. And then, this study intended to expose the stance of Aṭ-Ṭabarī's exegetic corpus on the theological discussion among others in exegetical arena.

Brief Biography of Aṭ-Ṭabarī

He is Imām AbūJaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr ibn Yazīd ibn Khālīd Aṭ-Ṭabarī. He was born in ĀmulTabarasitān in 224 (Ar-Razi, 1999). He grew up in a prosperous clan and his father was wholehearted to educate him. He memorized the Qur'ān at the age of seven years old and after that he began to write down Prophetic traditions at age of only nine years old. His longing for knowledge was enthusiastically when he was in infant age. In his early years, his enthusiasm made him realize that he could not attain his ambitions in his place of birth that led him to leave his town for other places

seeking knowledge at the age of twelve years. In the cause of that, he traveled to Ray that called Iran today, and visited some of its town where he learnt religious knowledge from different scholars such as Ad-Dulaabi, Ibn Humayd Ar-Rāzī and Ahmad Ibn Hammaad, who known as renown scholar of great *Ḥadīth* (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, n.d).

Aṭ-Ṭabarī was known as a famous and powerful Persian scholar, historian, and commentator of the Qur'ān from Tabaristan, the new Mazandaran in Iran. Up till today, he is a famous scholar for his proficiency in Islamic knowledge (Qur'anic interpretation and Islamic legislation) or history; he was described as a remarkably fertile polymath for his access and contributions to various aspects. He wrote on such subjects as poetry, grammar, ethics, medicine, lexicography, and mathematics (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d). He was very good-looking and fluent, and he lived for about eighty-five years before he met his demise in the year 320A.H./923CE. He was buried in Bagdad. Although his demise was not widely announced, a very large mass attended the funeral rite. It was accounted that the funeral prayers that were observed on his grave were repeatedly performed by different groups and individuals in the day lights and nights for many months. And it was reported that he was fervently expressed grief for intellectual scholars and righteous groups (Ahmad, 1977).

Theology: Conceptual Definition

This study is a theological theme that needs to be rooted from its genesis. In that sense, the definition of theology could come first before dabbling into the discussion of the topic.

The word *theology* is taken from the Latin "*theologia*" that means 'study or understanding of God or the gods', which also is a derivative word from the Greek "*theos*" (God) and *logos* (reason) (Ahmad, 1977). In Islām, the word theology is often referred to as 'Kalam,' which means the study and interpretation of the fundamental beliefs and doctrines of Islām (Adrew Louth, n.d).

The conceptual definition denotes that the study related to the having faith in oneness of God and knowing Him, as a science of monotheism which concerned with knowing God Almighty and all obligatory ascribed to Him. And all that contained in the six articles of faith. It is the most honorable and righteous of sciences before Almighty Allah, because the knowledge's reputation follows the honor of the thing known, but on the condition that it does not go beyond the meaning of the divine Book and the authentic *ḥadīth* and the unanimity of jurists and the understanding of sound minds within the limits of the legal principles and the rules of the Arabic language that is authentic (Quora.com, n.d).

It is also generated from other Muslim theologian that the unusual connotation of monotheism is the belief that God is One and has no partner. This science was named after its most important part, which is proving the oneness of God in essence and action in creating the universes, and that He alone is the reference of every universe and the end of every intention. This is the topic of which it was the ultimate goal that contained in the mission of the Prophet as the verses of the Noble Book testify to (Badir Ad-Dīn, 1990).

Theology (*Kalām*) as a branch of philosophy that studies matters of religion, faith, and the rational method of proving the existence and attributes of God and

other religious issues, is related to the sciences of the Qurʾān. The relationship between Qurʾānic sciences and theology is that both are concerned with the study of language and communication. Qurʾānic science focuses on the study of the Qurʾān in terms of text, meaning, interpretation, and application. It includes understanding the language, grammar, and context of the Qurʾānic verses. On the other hand, theology is the study of the mechanisms of human speech, including its production, perception, and phonetics. It is concerned with the physical properties of sound and how it is produced, transmitted, and received by the human auditory system. Both sciences have something in common in that they are concerned with the study of language and communication, but they approach them from different perspectives. Qurʾānic science focuses on the religious and spiritual aspects of language, while theology focuses on the religious and spiritual aspects of language. It is concerned with the physical and biological aspects of speech production and perception (Khairillāh, n.d).

The relationship between the Qurʾān and theology can be discerned through the aforementioned points of view in the comparison. Also, since the theology concerned with the physical and biological aspects of speech production and perception of a particular man, this can manifest his ability to give comments on the verses of the Glorious Qurʾān through his useful acquired knowledge pertaining to the religion. This is why the verses of the Qurʾān are used as evidences which discussing issues in Islāmic theology.

Imām Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī's view on Allāh's position on the Throne (*Istiṭwā*)

In Arabic, *Istiṭwā* means elevation and stability, while Al-ʿArsh (the throne) according to Al-Jawhari and others said: is the seat of the kingdom. In the Qurʾān has been used as in: *They denied her throne to her* (Q27:41). Also, Allāh says: *And he raised his parents upon the throne* (Q12:100). The throne (Al-ʿArsh) simply means the roof of the house (<https://www.ejaba.com>). The position of Allāh on the Throne (*Istiṭwā* ʿalā al-ʿArsh) is a theological discussion dealing with the study of position of Allāh and His throne which has to do with faith in attributes of oneness of Allāh and His majesty. On this, Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī explains thus:

القول في تأويل قوله تعالى: {ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ} قال أبو جعفر: اختلفوا في تأويل قوله: "ثم استوى إلى السماء". فقال بعضهم: معنى استوى إلى السماء، أقبل عليها، كما تقول: كان فلان مقبلا على فلان، ثم استوى عليّ يشاتمني - واستوى إليّ يشاتمني. بمعنى: أقبل عليّ وإليّ يشاتمني. واستشهد على أنّ الاستواء بمعنى الإقبال بقول الشاعر: أَقُولُ وَقَدْ قَطَعَنَ بِنَا شُرُورِي ... سَوَامِدَ، وَاسْتَوَيْنَ مِنَ الضَّجْوَعِ فزعم أنه عني به أنهن خرجن من الضجوع، وكان ذلك عنده بمعنى: أقبلن. وهذا من التأويل في هذا البيت خطأ، وإنما معنى قوله: "واستوين من الضجوع"، استوين على الطريق من الضجوع خارجات، بمعنى استقمن

عليه. وقال بعضهم: لم يكن ذلك من الله جل ذكره بتحوّل، ولكنه بمعنى فعله، كما تقول: كان الخليفة في أهل العراق يواليهم، ثم تحوّل إلى الشام. إنما يريد: تحوّل فعله. [وقال بعضهم: قوله: "ثم استوى إلى السماء" يعني به: استوت]. كما قال الشاعر: أَقُولُ لَهُ لَمَّا اسْتَوَى فِي ثَرَابِهِ ... عَلَى أَيِّ دِينٍ قَتَلَ النَّاسَ مُضْعَبُ

They differed (scholars) in the interpretation of His saying: *Then He directed Himself to the heaven*. Some of them said: The meaning of *He directed Himself to the heaven* is *He turned toward it*, as you say: So-and-so was turning toward so-and-so, then he directed himself to me, cursing me. Meaning: He turned toward me and cursing me. And the evidence that *istiwa* means approaching is the saying of the poet: *I say, and the wicked have cut us off... from the dead, and they have turned from lying down*. He claimed that he meant by it that they came out of lying down and that according to him meant: they approached. This is a wrong interpretation of this verse. Rather, the meaning of his saying, "And they stood upright from lying down," is that they stood upright on the road from lying down, meaning they stood still on it. Some of them said: This was not from God Almighty in the form of a change, but rather in the sense of His action, as you say: The caliph was in the people of Iraq, supporting them, and then he moved to the Levant. Rather, he means: His action changed. [Some of them said: His saying: "Then He rose to the heaven" means: It rose]. As the poet said: *I say to him when he rose in his dust... On what religion did Mus'ab kill people?* (Al-Qurtubī,)

In the above assertion, the word *istawa* is demonstrated by Ibn Jarīr to mean 'turning toward something' with distinct instances being given by him to establish the interpretation of Q2:29. On the other hand, the poet gives the interpretation of the *istawa* as 'approaching' in his poem quoted, but At-Ṭabarī disagreed with him and regarded it as a wrong interpretation. This is to reveal that the meaning of the word *istiwa* because of its relationship with the word *Al-ʿArsh* to give the appropriate interpretation to it as ascribed to Allāh.

وقال بعضهم: "ثم استوى إلى السماء"، عمد لها . وقال: بل كلُّ تارك عملا كان فيه إلى آخر، فهو مستو لما عمد له، ومستوٍ إليه. وقال بعضهم: الاستواء هو العلو، والعلو هو الارتفاع. ومن قال ذلك الربيع بن أنس. 588- حَدَّثْتُ بِذَلِكَ عَنْ عَمَارِ بْنِ الْحَسَنِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ الرَّبِيعِ بْنِ أَنَسٍ: "ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ". يَقُولُ: ارْتَفَعَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ . ثُمَّ اخْتَلَفَ مَتَأَوَّلُو الْإِسْتِوَاءِ بِمَعْنَى الْعُلُوِّ وَالْإِرْتِفَاعِ، فِي الَّذِي اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ. فَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ: الَّذِي اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَعَلَا عَلَيْهَا، هُوَ خَالِقُهَا وَمَنْشِئُهَا. وَقَالَ بَعْضُهُمْ: بَلِ الْعَالِي عَلَيْهَا: الدُّخَانُ الَّذِي جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ لِلْأَرْضِ سَمَاءً . قَالَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ: الْإِسْتِوَاءُ فِي كَلَامِ الْعَرَبِ مَنْصَرَفٌ عَلَى

وجوه: منها انتهاء شباب الرجل وقوته، فيقال، إذا صار كذلك: قد استوى الرجل. ومنها استقامة ما كان فيه أوّ من الأمور والأسباب، يقال منه: استوى لفلان أمره. إذا استقام بعد أوّ، ومنه قول الطّرمّاح بن حكيم: طَالَ عَلَى رَسْمٍ مَهْدَدٍ أَبْدُهُ ... وَعَفَا وَاسْتَوَى بِهِ بَلَدُهُ يعني: استقام به. ومنها: الإقبال على الشيء يقال استوى فلان على فلان بما يكرهه ويسوءه بعد الإحسان إليه. ومنها: الاحتياز والاستيلاء (1)، كقولهم: استوى فلان على المملكة. بمعنى احتوى عليها وحازها. ومنها: العلوّ والارتفاع، كقول القائل، استوى فلان على سريره. يعني به علوّه عليه.

Some of them said: *Then He rose to the heaven*, he intended it. He said: Rather, everyone who abandons an action that he was in for another is level with what he intended for, and level with it. Some of them said: Settling is loftiness, and loftiness is elevation. Among those who said that is Ar-Rabīʿ bn Anas as follows: *I was told that on the authority of ʿAmmār bin Al-Hasan, he said: 'Abdullah bn Abi Jaʿfar told us, on the authority of his father, on the authority of Ar-Rabīʿ bn Anas: Then He rose to the heaven. He says: He rose to the heaven. Then the interpreters of the word istiwa' differed in the meaning of elevation and height, regarding the one who rose to the sky. Some of them said: The one who rose to the sky and rose above it is its Creator and Originator. Some of them said: Rather, the one who rose above it is the smoke that God made a sky for the earth. Abu Jaʿfar said: Istiwa' in the speech of the Arabs is used in many ways: One of them is the end of a man's youth and strength, so it is said, when he becomes like that: The man has risen. Another of them is the straightening of what was in it of matters and causes, so it is said: So-and-so's matter has straightened out. If it has straightened out after a long time and from this, the saying of Al-Tirmaah bin Hakim: The eternity of the drawing of Mahdad has been prolonged... and his country has faded and leveled out for him. Meaning: He straightened it. And from it: turning towards something. It is said: So-and-so rose above so-and-so with what he dislikes and displeases after doing good to him. And from it: acquisition and domination, like their saying: So-and-so rose over the kingdom. Meaning he contained it and acquired it. And from it: elevation and height, like the saying of the speaker, so-and-so rose on his bed. Meaning his elevation over it (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, 2001).*

In another dimensional way, that was used to interpret the word *istawa*, which was mentioned in the above view as well as the meaning given to it. The submission of Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī was to interpret it as elevation and height because Allāh is on the throne and elevates higher above it. This word being interpreted by the Arab scholars in different phenomena; some explained it as the end, the end of man's youth and strength, and others interpreted it as to mean straight, which is not befitting the position of Allāh. Therefore, the correct meaning given to it in this aspect is elevation and height.

وأولى المعاني بقول الله جل ثناؤه: "ثم استوى إلى السماء فسوّاهن"، علا عليهن وارتفع، فدبرهن بقدرته، وخلقهن سبع سموات. والعجب ممن أنكر المعنى المفهوم من كلام العرب في تأويل قول الله: "ثم استوى إلى السماء"، الذي هو بمعنى العلو والارتفاع، هرباً عند نفسه من أن يلزمه بزعمه - إذا تأوله بمعناه المفهوم كذلك - أن يكون إنما علا وارتفع بعد أن كان تحتها - إلى أن تأوله بالجهول من تأويله المستنكر. ثم لم ينج مما هرب منه! فيقال له: زعمت أن تأويل قوله "استوى" أقبل، أفكان مُدْبِرًا عن السماء فأقبل إليها؟ فإن زعم أن ذلك ليس بإقبال فعل، ولكنه إقبال تدبير، قيل له: فكذلك فقل: علا عليها علو مُلك وسُلطان، لا علو انتقال وزوال. ثم لن يقول في شيء من ذلك قولاً إلا ألزم في الآخر مثله. ولولا أنا كرهنا إطالة الكتاب بما ليس من جنسه، لأنبأنا عن فساد قول كل قائل قال في ذلك قولاً لقول أهل الحق فيه مخالفاً. وفيما بينا منه ما يُشرف بذي الفهم على ما فيه له الكفاية إن شاء الله تعالى.

And the most appropriate connotations of Allāh's saying, the Most High: "*Then He rose to the heaven and made them even*," He rose above them and ascended, so He managed them with His power, and created them as seven heavens. And it is strange that someone denied the meaning understood from the speech of the Arabs in interpreting the saying of Allah: "Then He rose to the heaven," which means elevation and ascension, escaping in his mind from being obligated by his claim - if he interpreted it with its understood meaning in this way - that he rose and ascended after being under it - until he interpreted it with the unknown from his reprehensible interpretation. Then he did not escape from what he fled from! It will be said to him: You claimed that the interpretation of His saying "*Istawa*" is "approached." So was He turning away from the sky and then turning toward it? If he claims that this is not an approach of action, but rather an approach of management, it will be said to him: So say: He rose above it with an elevation of dominion and authority, not an elevation of transition and disappearance. Then he will not say anything about any of that except that he will make the same thing necessary for the other. And if we were not averse to making the book longer with what is not of its kind, we would have informed us about the corruption of the statement of every speaker who said something about that, opposing the statement of the people of truth about it. And in what we have explained of it is what guides the one with understanding to what is sufficient for him, by God willing (Aṭ-Ṭabarī).

Aṭ-Ṭabarī made it clear that it is very amazed that someone can deviate from the apparent meaning given to the word *istawa* by exegetes in Q2:29 that *Allah rose to heaven*, which meant elevation and ascension. This will signify that the denial is not fully comprehended until giving it another meaning as 'approaching' which can be interpreted as Allah having turned away from heaven before He turned toward it, with an approach of action rather than an approach of management. And He rose

above it with an elevation of dominion and authority, not an elevation of transition and disappearance.

Ibn Jarīr Aṭ-Ṭabarī's view on Al-ʿArsh

The term ʿArsh is referenced multiple times in the Qurʾān, which appears approximately in twenty-eight (28) instances. Throughout these mentions, the Qurʾān maintains a mysterious stance by offering no explicit description of the exact nature or existence of ʿArsh, which gives room for interpretation of its true essence and debate (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, n.d).

In the Qurʾān, references to ʿArsh can be categorized into two main forms. The first concerns to ʿArsh as a royal throne or seat. This was illustrated in the stories of Prophet Yusuf, his father, and his brothers, as well as Queen Balqīs, whose splendid throne was described in motivated way to King Sulaimān, prompting him to bring it to his own realm. These accounts are discerned in the chapters of the Qurʾān and clearly depict ʿArsh as a grand symbol of royal authority. The second form encompasses ʿArsh in relation to Allāh. Unlike the first one, this reference is encircled by ambiguity and remains beyond the full grasp of human understanding (Jawaid, n.d).

The first set of Qurʾānic instances to ʿArsh appears in eight chapters and nine verses, where Allāh is described as the owner of the ʿArsh. Two terms are used to convey this: *Dhu'l-ʿArsh* (Owner of the Throne) and *Rabb l-ʿArsh* (Lord of the Throne). Although these terms may have slight grammatical differences, but both indicate Allāh's sovereignty over the ʿArsh. Additional instances in the Qurʾān address Allāh's relationship with the ʿArsh which will accomplish with the preceding explanation of the word. The Qurʾān describes Allāh's "settlement" on the Throne in about seven instances. Two verses mention that certain angels holder the ʿArsh, and that of *Hamalatu'l-ʿArsh* (bearers of the Throne) is included in discussions about the faith of angelic classifications. One verse states that the ʿArsh is surrounded by angels, while another reveals that it is situated above water (Mrahorovic, 2017).

Analysis of the both words

However, in this regard, Aṭ-Ṭabarī opined that in the interpretation of the word *istawaala al-ʿArsh* as follows:

Who created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in Six Days? Then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne....(Q25:59)

The view of Aṭ-Ṭabarī on this verse established in his interpretation that the creation began on Sunday and was completed by Friday, with Allah's establishment over the Throne (Al-ʿArsh) which occurred on Saturday. And the phrase "ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ وَعَلَا عَلَيْهِ" was interpreted by him as: **Then the Most Merciful established Himself above the Throne and rose above it.** His view in this context goes thus; "established Himself above the Throne (Al-ʿArsh)" designates that Allāh took His place in a position of supreme authority and control over the universe, and then, it deduced obviously from the most interpretations of the Muslim exegetes of this word "Rose above it" which emphasizes His supreme exaltation and dominion in the way that manifested. In furtherance, the concept of "establishing Himself above the

Throne" in that quoted verse, it is also understood by its meaning as an indication of His dominion and authority over the universe, rather than a physical movement or change in location. On this Al-Qurtubī asserts that:

Regarding the statement of Allāh, the Most High: *Then He established Himself above the Throne*, this is a matter of 'establishing' (استواء), various scholarly opinions and interpretations about it were been discussed it theologically. According to Al-Qurtubī, fourteen different opinions of the scholars have mentioned concerning the concept in the book '*Al-Asna fi SharhAsma' Allah al-HusnawaSifatihi al-Ula'*' in detailed. In view of that, most of the early and later scholars agree that since Allāh, Exalted and Glorified, must be transcendent from direction and localization, it follows necessarily, according to the consensus of most of the early scholars and their leading followers among the later scholars, that Allāh is free from being in any particular direction. Therefore, according to them, there is no direction of 'above' with Allah. This is because, the theologians view that, if something is confined to a direction, it must be in a place or space, and a place or space requires movement and rest, as well as change and coming into existence. The early pious predecessors (*Salaf*) did not speak of denying direction nor did they articulate it; rather, they affirmed it for Allah as His Book and Messengers have stated. None of the pious predecessors denied that Allah truly established Himself above the Throne. The Throne was specifically mentioned because it is the greatest of His creations. They were simply ignorant of the exact manner of this 'establishing' (استواء), as its true nature is unknown. Malik, may Allah have mercy on him, said: 'The establishing (استواء) is known linguistically in meaning but the manner is unknown, **and asking about it is an innovation. This is also what Umm Salamah (may Allah be pleased with her) said** (Al-Qurtubī).

This assertion expresses the suggestion that while scholars may differ on the particulars of how Allah's establishment above the throne should be understood. There is a unanimous agreement on affirming this attribute for Allāh without ascribing any physical direction or localization to Him. It is also established from this assertion that the specific nature of Allāh's establishment above the throne is unknown, and inquiring about it is considered an innovation because of the misleading and going astray it may cause in the lives of believers. Meanwhile, the affirmation of this attribute for Allāh is enough for the true believer without causing any dispute. However, regarding the explanation of *istiwa al-ʿArsh* that has been discerned and established through the views and explorations of Aṭ-Ṭabarī and Imām Al-Qurtubī from the preceding statement, it is good enough to enlighten an unclear doctrine of some Muslims on the earth surface.

In Q57:4 Allāh says:

He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then rose (*Istawa*) over the Throne.

Similar to this report which came from the Messenger of Allāh quoted by the people of interpretation to buttress the point as follows:

Bishr told us, he said: Yazīd told us, he said: Sa'īd told us, on the authority of Qatādah, regarding his statement: (He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent), it was mentioned to us that while the messenger of Allāh, was sitting

with his companions, a cloud rose up against them, so he said: Do you know what this is? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said: It is the patch, a wave held back, and a ceiling Mahfouz said: Do you know how much is between you and it? They said: Allah and His Messenger know best. He said: A journey of five hundred years. He said: Do you know what is above that? They said the same. He said: Above it is another heaven, and between them is a journey of five hundred years. He said: Do you know what is above that? They said the same as the first time. He said: Above that is *Al-ʿArsh* the Throne, and between it and the seventh heaven is like what is between the two heavens. He said: Do you know what is beneath you? They said: Allāh and His Messenger know best. He said: It is the earth. He said: Do you know what is beneath it? They said to him the same as they said the first time. He said: "Underneath it is another earth, and between them is a journey of five hundred years." Until he counted seven earths, between each two earths is a journey of five hundred years. Then he said: "By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, if one of you were led by a rope to the other earth, he would fall upon God." Then he recited: "He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent. And He is Knowing of all things (Al-Qurtubī).

It is important to note that the Muslim should hold that Allāh is everywhere with His divine knowledge but He just established Himself on *Al-ʿArsh* the throne, not to have in their doctrines that He is only being in heaven or stable on the throne. However, the context of the above ḥadīth should be sufficient to the true believer to have it in their belief that Allāh's existence dominates everywhere. On this issue, some Muslim theologians observe as follows:

قَوْلُهُ تَعَالَى: ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ الْآيَةُ. هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ الْكَرِيمَةُ وَأَمْثَالُهَا مِنْ آيَاتِ الصِّفَاتِ كَقَوْلِهِ: يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ [48: 10] وَخَوْ ذَلِكْ ; أَشَكَلْتُ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِشْكَالًا ضَلَّ بِسَبَبِهِ خَلْقٌ لَا يُحْصَى كَثَرَةً، فَصَارَ قَوْمٌ إِلَى التَّعْطِيلِ وَقَوْمٌ إِلَى التَّشْبِيهِ، سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى غُلُوبًا كَبِيرًا عَنْ ذَلِكَ كُلِّهِ وَاللَّهُ جَلَّ وَعَلَا أَوْضَحَ هَذَا غَايَةَ الْإِيضَاحِ، وَلَمْ يَتْرِكْ فِيهِ أَيْ لَبْسٍ وَلَا إِشْكَالٍ، وَحَاصِلُ تَحْرِيرِ ذَلِكَ أَنَّهُ جَلَّ وَعَلَا بَيِّنٌ أَنَّ الْحَقَّ فِي آيَاتِ الصِّفَاتِ مُتَرَكِّبٌ مِنْ أَمْرَيْنِ: أَحَدُهُمَا: تَنْزِيهِ اللَّهِ جَلَّ وَعَلَا عَنْ مُشَابَهَةِ الْحَوَادِثِ فِي صِفَاتِهِمْ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَنْ ذَلِكَ غُلُوبًا كَبِيرًا. وَالثَّانِي: الْإِيمَانُ بِكُلِّ مَا وَصَفَ اللَّهُ بِهِ نَفْسَهُ فِي كِتَابِهِ، أَوْ وَصَفَهُ بِهِ رَسُولُهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ; لِأَنَّهُ لَا يَصِفُ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ: أَأَنْتُمْ أَعْلَمُ أَمْ اللَّهُ [2: 140] ، وَلَا يَصِفُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ أَعْلَمُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، الَّذِي قَالَ فِيهِ: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى [53: 3، 4] فَمِنْ نَفَى عَنِ اللَّهِ وَصْفًا أَنْبَتَهُ لِنَفْسِهِ فِي كِتَابِهِ الْعَزِيزِ، أَوْ

أَثْبَتَهُ لَهُ رَسُولُهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ زَاعِمًا أَنَّ ذَلِكَ الْوَصْفَ يُلْزِمُهُ مَا لَا يَلِيْقُ بِاللَّهِ جَلَّ وَعَلَا،
فَقَدْ جَعَلَ نَفْسَهُ أَعْلَمَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ بِمَا يَلِيْقُ بِاللَّهِ جَلَّ وَعَلَا. سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ.

The word of Allāh: *Then He established Himself on the Throne, covering the night with the day*. This noble verse and similar verses of the attributes, such as His statement: *The hand of Allāh is above their hands* (Q48:10) and the like; It has caused a great deal of confusion for many people, and because of it an uncountable number of people have gone astray. Some people have turned to nullification and others to likening. Glory be to Him, He is far above all of that. Allāh, the Most High, has made this very clear, and He has not left any ambiguity or confusion in it. The gist of clarifying is that He, the Most High, has made clear that the truth in the verses of the attributes is composed of two matters: One of them: The glorification of Allāh, the Most High, from resembling the accidents in their attributes, glory be to Him, and He is far above that, greatly exalted. The second: The belief in everything that Allāh described Himself with in the Qurʾān, or that His Messenger, depicted Him with. Because no one describes Allāh as more knowledgeable about Allāh than Allāh: *Do you know better or does Allāh?* (Q2:140), and no one describes Allāh after Allāh as more knowledgeable about Allāh than the Messenger of Allāh, , about whom He said: *Nor does he speak of desire. It is only a revelation revealed* (Q53:3,4). So whoever denies a description of Allāh that He affirmed for Himself in His Glorious Book, or affirms it His Messenger, claimed that this description would be attributed to him in a manner that is not befitting of Allāh Almighty. He has made himself more knowledgeable than Allāh and His Messenger about what is befitting of Allāh Almighty. Glory be to You, this is a great slander (Aṭ-Ṭabarī, n.d)

Many examples can be seen on this, while clarifying that everything that Allāh, the Most High, is characterized by from these attributes is of the utmost perfection, loftiness, and honor that cuts off the connections of all illusions of similarity between His attributes, the Most High, and the attributes of His creation, glory be to Him and He is far above that, far above it. So when you have realized all of that, you will know that He, the Most High, described Himself as sitting on the Throne, and described others as sitting on some of the creatures. So He, the Most High, praised Himself in seven verses of His Book for His sitting on His Throne, and He did not mention the attribute of sitting except in conjunction with other attributes of perfection and majesty. The judge by His greatness and glory, and that He is the Lord alone, the only one that can be worshipped.

In the first place: According to the arrangement of the Noble Qurʾān. His saying: *Indeed, your Lord is Allāh, who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself on the Throne....*(Q7:54). In the second place: The Almighty says: *Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself on the Throne. He directs the affair...* (Q10:3). The third place: The Most High says: *Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you can see. Then, He rose above (Istawa) the 'Arsh (Throne)...* (Q13:2) The fourth place: The Almighty says: *The Most Gracious is established on the Throne...* (Q20:5). The fifth place: The Almighty says: *Who created the heavens and the earth and all that*

is between them in six Days. Then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne... (Q25:59) The sixth place: The Almighty says: Allah it is He Who has created the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them in six Days. Then He Istawa over the Throne... (Q32:4). The seventh place: The Most High says: It is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He established Himself on the Throne...(Q57:4) (Ash-Shanqeetī, 1995)

He, the Most High, said in describing the episode of settling on some of the creatures which contained in the passage of the Glorious Qur'ān as follows: *In order that you may mount on their backs, and then may remember the favor of your Lord when you mount thereon, (Q43:13), And when you and those with you are settled on the ship (Q23:28), And it has settled on Al-Judi (Q11:44), and similar verses.*

وَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مِمَّا تَقْدَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِشْكَالَ فِي ذَلِكَ، وَأَنَّ لِلْخَالِقِ جَلَّ وَعَلَا اسْتِوَاءً لَا تَقَا بِكَمَالِهِ وَجَلَالِهِ، وَلِلْمَخْلُوقِ أَيْضًا اسْتِوَاءً مُنَاسِبًا لِحَالِهِ، وَبَيْنَ اسْتِوَاءِ الْخَالِقِ وَالْمَخْلُوقِ مِنَ الْمُنَافَاةِ مَا بَيْنَ ذَاتِ الْخَالِقِ وَالْمَخْلُوقِ ; عَلَى نَحْوِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ كَمَا تَقْدَمُ إِيضًا. وَيَنْبَغِي لِلنَّظَرِ فِي هَذِهِ الْمَسْأَلَةِ التَّأَمُّلُ فِي أُمُورٍ: الْأَمْرُ الْأَوَّلُ: أَنَّ جَمِيعَ الصِّفَاتِ مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ، لِأَنَّ الْمَوْصُوفَ بِهَا وَاحِدٌ، وَلَا يَجُوزُ فِي حَقِّهِ مُشَابَهَةُ الْحَوَادِثِ فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ صِفَاتِهِمْ، فَمَنْ أَثَبَتَ مَثَلًا أَنَّهُ: سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ، وَسَمْعُهُ وَبَصَرُهُ مُخَالَفَانِ لِاسْتِمَاعِ الْحَوَادِثِ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ، لَزِمَهُ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ فِي جَمِيعِ الصِّفَاتِ ; كَالِاسْتِوَاءِ، وَالْيَدِ، وَنَحْوِ ذَلِكَ مِنْ صِفَاتِهِ جَلَّ وَعَلَا، وَلَا يُمَكِّنُ الْفَرْقُ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ بِحَالٍ. الْأَمْرُ الثَّانِي: أَنَّ الذَّاتَ وَالصِّفَاتِ مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ أَيْضًا، فَكَمَا أَنَّهُ جَلَّ وَعَلَا، لَهُ ذَاتٌ مُخَالَفَةٌ لِجَمِيعِ ذَوَاتِ الْخَلْقِ، فَلَهُ تَعَالَى صِفَاتٌ مُخَالَفَةٌ لِجَمِيعِ صِفَاتِ الْخَلْقِ. الْأَمْرُ الثَّلَاثُ: فِي تَحْقِيقِ الْمَقَامِ فِي الظَّاهِرِ الْمُتَبَادِرِ السَّابِقِ إِلَى الْفَهْمِ مِنْ آيَاتِ الصِّفَاتِ ; كَالِاسْتِوَاءِ وَالْيَدِ مَثَلًا.

The fact can be learned and connoted from what has been mentioned above that there is no problem with interpreting the word in between the creation, and that the Creator, glory be to Him, that He has a status befitting His perfection and majesty, and the creation also has a status befitting His state. And between the status of the Creator and the creation there is a contradiction between the essence of the Creator and the creation, in a way that there is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, that was precedent explication. It is necessary for the observant of this case to ponder and think about these matters:

The first matter: All the attributes are from one aspect, because the one described by them is one, and there is no it is permissible for Him to resemble the creatures in some of their attributes. So whoever proves, for example, that He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and His hearing and sight are different from the hearing and sight of the creatures, then the same is required of Him in all the attributes, such as sitting, the hand, and the like of His attributes, may He be glorified and exalted, and it is not possible to differentiate between that in ordinary situation. The second

matter: The Essence and the Attributes are also from one door, so just as He, the Most High, has an Essence that is different from all the creations' one. So He, the Most High, has Attributes that are different from all the attributes of creation. The third matter: In realizing the apparent position, that was preceded and foremost understanding of the verses of the Attributes; such as the sitting and the hand, for example. (Ash-Shanqeetī, 1995)

...And He created for Himself a throne on which He settled as He willed, without it being in contact with it or the throne being a place for Him. It was said in the same state that it was being before He created space and time. So according to this statement: Whether it is permissible for Muhammad to sit on the throne or on the earth, because God Almighty's sitting on the throne does not mean moving, disappearing, or changing states from standing, sitting, and the states that occupy the throne, but rather He is sitting on His throne, as He has informed us. (Badir Ad-Dīn, n.d)

Another Muslim theologian's view as follows:

Abū Ḥanīfah said: Whoever says, "It is not cleared to me that my Lord is in the heavens or on the earth," that proof he has committed blasphemy. Likewise, whoever says, "He is on the Throne," and it is unknown to me whether the Throne is in the heavens or on the earth, and God Almighty is called from above, not from below, is not a description of Lordship or Divinity in any way. And upon him is what was narrated in the ḥadīth that a man came to the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, with a black slave girl and said, "It is obligatory upon me to free a slave. Will this suffice?" The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, said to her, "Are you a believer?" She said, "Yes." So he said, Where is God? She pointed to the sky. He said, "Free her, for she is a believer (Abū Ḥanīfah, 1999).

To buttress that, this view comes below:

When the servant is certain that God Almighty is above the heavens, exalted above His Throne without limit or manner, and that He is in His attributes as He was in His eternity, it becomes a direction for his heart in his prayer, his turning to Him, and his supplication. And whoever does not know his Lord by saying that He is above His heavens on His Throne, then he remains lost, not knowing the direction of his worshipped One. But if he knew Him by his hearing, his sight, and his eternity, and without this, that is an incomplete knowledge, unlike the one who knows that his God whom he worships is above things. So when he enters into prayer and glorifies Him, his heart turns toward the direction of the Throne is exalted, and His Lord, the Most High, is beyond limitation. He has made it unique, just as He has made it unique in His eternity and His eternality, knowing that these directions are among our limits and necessities, and we cannot point to our Lord in His eternity and His eternality except through them, because we are created, and the created must point to a direction in His pointing, so that pointing to his Lord occurs in a manner befitting His greatness, not as he imagines of himself, and he believes that in His loftiness He is close to His creation. He is with them in His knowledge, His hearing, His sight, His encompassness, His power, His will, and His essence, above things, above... The

Throne, and whenever his heart feels that in prayer or in the direction of prayer, his heart will shine, be enlightened, and be illuminated by the lights of knowledge and faith (Al-Juwainī, 1998).

Hence, Imām Az- Zāghūnī in his book: (*Al-Īdōh fī Usūlud- Dīn*) saying about the interpretation of this discipline of the meaning of *Istiwa'*: (You have in *istiwa'* on the throne, states that are not permissible in the right of the Almighty Creator in this speech which you have mentioned it, and that is because this speech, of which was mentioned, requires the proof of opposition and alignment. That is from the attributes of bodies, for nothing but two bodies are opposite each other, and nothing but two substances are aligned. As for what is not a body, it is not permissible to say what it is body and not aligned (Khalil al-ʿAlami, n.d).

According to him, if one says: The Creator has the attribute of being above and elevation and the Throne has the attribute of being beneath and near, then this determined by the attribute of bodies and substances, and this is exactly what prompted us to deny directions from Him, and that it is not permissible for Him to be confined or specialized in a direction nor to be referred to in a direction nor by what is estimated, 'the estimation' is the direction that ascribed in any case to the paucity that we mentioned, and what you have referred to leads to that then what leads to the impossible is impossible.

Then he said: (You have narrated about the establishment on the throne narrations that indicate the likening and the embodiment. You have narrated from the Prophet that he said: He established on the Throne, and nothing remains of Him except the amount of four fingers), and this suggests the admission of quantity and estimation into His essence the Most High. Because the two entities are equal in bone area, and one of them exceeds the other due to their equality in physicality and the individuality of one them (with a quantitative increase) and parts.

This is impossible with regard to the Almighty God, except according to the statement of the doubters and the anthropomorphist, who affirm that God Almighty has a physical quantity and magnitude, and this is something we agreed upon to declare the one who says it an unbeliever. And Az- Zāghūnī is trying to explain these narrations because it is not possible to agree to take their apparent meaning, and likewise it is an illusion but it is useful for embodiment (somatic) and likening (Khalil al-ʿAlami, n.d).

Another point of view shows loftiness (*fawqiyah*) of Allāh, who is above the seven heavens, earth and the Throne, He is above everything, with His loftiness (*fawqiyya*) and nothing above Him. All creations living and non-livings are worshipping Him, bowing and prostrating for Him. No place confines Him, He is nearer to everything in existence, and He is nearer to the servant than his jugular vein, as contained in the passage of the Qurʾān and also as He is a witness over all things.

CONCLUSION

Studying about Allāh and those attributes that relate to Him is a theological discussion and a component of faith in Islām. It is crucial to accept the opinions and judgments of theologians regarding Allāh's position on the throne, using Islamic perspectives to evaluate it. Due to the view of At-Tabari, which is the key to making

up this study his biography, and conceptual definition of term were discussed. It has been explored in this paper the view of At-Tabari and other Muslim theologians on the position of Allāh on the Throne with the submission on the opinion that His position on the Throne is known but how He established it is unknown, and asking about it is considered infidelity and disbelieving in His attributes.

The findings of this study manifest on knowing the attributes that are ascribed only to Allāh and that should not be attached to ordinary human beings like His throne, which is a special throne not like a worldly one, and His position on that throne is unlike the position of any king on his throne on the earth. It also shows the verdicts of the scholars on the concept theologically in order to open the eyes of the believers to the fact about His position on the throne. Indeed, the position of At-Tabari and his exegetic work manifested in the singularity manner in this study.

The study recommends further research on the other aspects of Allāh's attributes from the exegetical and theological standpoints to reveal the obligations attached to those attributes. And then, to distinguish between interpretations of some Qur'ānic verses and other Arabic words in using for Allāh the Creator and the creations like *Istiwā'* which may cause dispute among servants. It is recommended also to be conveying the science of monotheism and strengthening the faith of believers often and often in the life of the human cycle.

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