SAMPLE

The Throne and the Chair: The Seat of Sovereignty

Al-Arsh and Al-Kursi in the Quran

Aira Aurora

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This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

The Quran describes Allah as the Lord of the Throne — not as a figure of speech, not as a metaphor, but as a theological statement about the nature of divine sovereignty. The Throne (al-Arsh) and the Chair (al-Kursi) are among the most majestic and most mysterious of the unseen realities. They are mentioned throughout the Quran, always in connection with Allah's power, His knowledge, His authority, and His dominion over all that exists.

The Throne is the greatest of created things. The Chair is the instrument of His encompassing knowledge. Both belong to the unseen — no human being has seen them, no imagination can fully comprehend them, and no language can adequately describe them. These are not small or incidental creations — they are the crown of the cosmos, the summit of the divine architecture, the ceiling of everything that exists.

And yet the Quran mentions them repeatedly, inviting the believer to contemplate their meaning and their significance.

This book explores the Throne and the Chair as the Quran presents them: the meaning of the Throne as the symbol of divine sovereignty, Ayat al-Kursi as the most comprehensive statement of Allah's encompassing knowledge, the distinction between the Throne and the Chair, the angels who bear the Throne, the Throne's relationship to creation as its highest point, the Throne on the Day of Judgment as the seat of justice, the believer's nearness to the Throne, and the human throne of Sulayman as a reflection of divine kingship.

The Quran does not introduce the Throne as a new concept that the believer must learn from scratch. It introduces the Throne in the context of the believer's existing knowledge of Allah as the Creator, the Sustainer, and the Judge. The Throne is the symbol of these attributes — the seat of the Creator's sovereignty, the instrument of the Sustainer's preservation, and the position of the Judge's justice. When the believer learns about the Throne, they are not learning about a new god or a new religion — they are learning about the majesty of the God they already worship, and they are discovering the scale of the sovereignty they have already affirmed.

The Quranic treatment of the Throne and the Chair is awe-inspiring and humbling. These are not small things — they are the greatest things. And the Quran mentions them not to satisfy curiosity but to inspire reverence, to remind the human being of the scale of the One they worship, and to place all of creation in its proper perspective beneath the sovereignty of Allah.

Chapter 1: The Meaning of the Throne — The Symbol of Sovereignty

The Arabic word arsh means throne — the seat of a king, the symbol of sovereignty, the place from which authority is exercised. In the Quran, the Throne of Allah is mentioned more than twenty times, always in connection with His lordship, His power, and His dominion.

The Throne in the Quranic Vocabulary

The Quran uses the word arsh in two contexts: the Throne of Allah and the thrones of human kings. The human thrones are always lesser — they are temporary, they are inherited, they can be lost. Sulayman's throne was magnificent, but it was a human throne. The Pharaoh's throne was powerful, but it was a throne of tyranny. The Throne of Allah is different from all of these

— it is eternal, it is uncreated in its significance, and it is the throne of the true King.

The Quran says: "Blessed is He in whose hand is the dominion, and He is over all things powerful" (67:1). The dominion (mulk) belongs to Allah, and the Throne is the symbol of that dominion. When the Quran says "Lord of the Throne" (37:49, 85:15), it is saying that Allah is the King — not a king among kings, but the King whose kingship is the source and the model of all kingship.

The Throne as the Greatest of Creation

The Quran does not describe the Throne in physical detail. It does not give its dimensions, its material, or its appearance. What it gives is its significance. The Throne is the greatest thing that Allah has created. It is the highest point of creation, the summit of the seen and the unseen, the roof of the universe.

The Prophet's Hadith describes the Throne as the greatest of created things, and the Quran supports this by always mentioning it in superlative terms. The angels who bear it are among the greatest of angels. The distance between the lowest heaven and the Throne is described in the Hadith as a journey of fifty thousand years (70:4). The Throne is vast beyond human comprehension — a vastness that reflects the vastness of the One who sits upon it.

The Throne and Tawhid

The Throne is a statement of tawhid — the oneness of Allah. There is only one Throne because there is only one King. The Quran never mentions thrones of multiple gods because there are no multiple gods. The Throne is one because the sovereignty is one. The authority that emanates from the Throne is one

authority, and the creation that exists beneath the Throne is one creation governed by one will.

The Quran says: "Allah — there is no deity except Him, the Lord of the great Throne" (27:26). The declaration of oneness and the mention of the Throne are connected. To affirm the oneness of Allah is to affirm the oneness of His Throne, and to affirm the oneness of His Throne is to affirm the oneness of His authority over all that exists.

The Throne and the Attribute of Istiwa

One of the most discussed verses in the Quran is: "The Most Merciful rose above (istawa on) the Throne" (20:5). The word istawa has been translated as "rose above," "established," "ascended," and "settled." The Quran uses this expression seven times (7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4), always in the context of Allah completing creation and then ascending the Throne.

The classical approach to this verse is to affirm it as the Quran states it, without interpreting it in a way that would make Allah resemble His creation, and without denying it. The Quran affirms that Allah "rose above the Throne" in a manner that is consistent with His majesty and perfection — a manner that is not like the sitting of a human being on a chair, and not like the resting of a tired creator after work. The how is unknown; the meaning is that Allah is above the Throne in a way that befits His transcendence. This is the position of the early scholars: "The establishment is not unknown, the modality is not comprehensible, believing in it is obligatory, and asking about it is an innovation."

The Throne and Mercy

The Quran connects the Throne with mercy in a remarkable way. The Quran says: "The Most Merciful rose above the Throne" (20:5). The attribute attached to the Throne is rahman — the Most Merciful. The Throne is not merely a symbol of power and authority — it is the throne of the Most Merciful. The sovereignty of Allah is a merciful sovereignty. The power that sits upon the Throne is a merciful power. The dominion that emanates from the Throne is a dominion of compassion.

This is significant because it distinguishes the Throne of Allah from all human thrones. Human thrones are symbols of power, often wielded without mercy. The Throne of Allah is the throne of the One whose name is the Most Merciful. The greatest power in existence is also the greatest mercy. The supreme authority is also the supreme compassion. The Throne does not diminish mercy — it magnifies it.

The Throne in Meccan and Medinan Revelations

The Throne is mentioned in both Meccan and Medanan surahs, but the emphasis differs. In the Meccan surahs, the Throne is mentioned in the context of Allah's creative power — the One who created the heavens and the earth and then rose above the Throne (7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, 57:4). The emphasis is on the greatness of the Creator and the insignificance of the idols that the Meccans worshipped. The Throne is presented as proof that the One who deserves worship is the One who created everything and then established Himself above the Throne — not the idols of stone and wood that the Meccans had set up as rivals to Allah.

In the Medinan surahs, the Throne is mentioned in the context of Allah's authority and intercession (2:255, 9:129, 23:116). The emphasis shifts to the scope of Allah's knowledge, the question of intercession, and the sovereignty of Allah over the affairs of the community. The Medinan verses present the Throne as the seat of legislative authority — the authority from which the laws and rules given to the Muslim community are derived. The Throne is not merely a cosmic reality; it is the source of the moral and legal order that governs the believer's life.

This dual emphasis — creative power in the Meccan verses and legislative authority in the Medinan verses — gives the Throne a comprehensive significance. It is the symbol of Allah's power over creation and His authority over human affairs. The believer who understands the Throne in both dimensions understands that Allah is not merely the Creator who set the universe in motion and then stepped back — He is the active Sovereign who manages creation from the Throne and governs human affairs from the same Throne.

The Throne in the Quranic Recitation

The believer encounters the Throne not only in study but in daily recitation. The Quran mentions the Throne in several passages that are recited regularly by Muslims. Ayat al-Kursi (2:255), which mentions the Chair, is recited after every prayer by many believers. The verse of the Throne-bearers (40:7) is recited in the Quran's regular reading cycle. The mention of the Throne in Surah Al-Mu'min (40:15) — "Possessor of the Throne, the Glorious" — is part of the believer's daily encounter with the Quran.

This regular recitation keeps the Throne in the believer's consciousness. It means that the sovereignty of Allah is not an abstract theological concept but a daily reality that is recited, contemplated, and internalized. The believer who recites Ayat al-Kursi after prayer is affirming, every day, that the Chair of Allah

encompasses the heavens and the earth, that Allah does not tire, that He does not sleep, and that His knowledge covers all things. The Throne is not a distant concept — it is a daily recitation.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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