

باب في علو الله تعالى
ونقد عقيدة: الله موجود في كل الوجود

CHAPTER:

BEING A DISCUSSION ON THE
ASCENDANCY OF ALLAAH
THE MOST HIGH
AND A CRITIQUE OF
THE BELIEF THAT
HE IS PRESENT
IN ALL THAT EXISTS



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May Allaah have mercy on him

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QUESTIONER: WE HEAR SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT ALLAAH, THE MOST HIGH, IS in all places and we hear [others] say that He is above His Throne, above the Heavens or the Seventh Heaven. Could you give us an answer, may Allaah reward you with good?

AL-ALBAANI: Yes, in reality this is an important question connected to the present day situation of the *ummah*.

Since that which delights the heart is that there is an Islamic awareness, and I do [indeed] believe that there really is an awakening, but it is in its early stages.

Part of it is that, as you see, I'm almost about to reach my eighties, forty years ago I would not hear, 'Allaah said ... the Prophet of Allaah said ...' on the tongues of the preachers and admonishers or those directing the people except for very few indeed.

And when one of them would speak about an *aaayah*, he would not know it's *tafsir* properly because he wouldn't know the principles upon which the noble *aaayah* should be explained. And if he reported a *hadith* from the Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) he would do so without verifying its authenticity.

As for today, then I think that you have all witnessed along with me that many times you will hear, 'This *hadith* is authentic ... and this [*hadith*] is reported by Bukhari ... by Muslim ... that Ibn Jarir at-Tabari explained this *aaayah* to mean such and such and Ibn Kathir the Damascene explained it to mean such and such ...' and so on.

So this, without doubt, is from the signs of an awareness, but as I said just now, we are still in its early stages.

You raised the question of Allaah's Names and Attributes, so is what some of these people talk about [actually] from the Attributes of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic?

Rather, [is] what all of the general masses today, and some of their scholars, amongst them being some who associate themselves with the schools of thought of theological rhetoric or *tawheed*, like the *Ash'aris* or the *Maturidis*, let alone the *Mu'tazilah* who are barely mentioned nowadays apart from a few individuals who have gone astray following their misguidance — [is what some of these people talk about [actually] from the Attributes of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic?]

For part of the creed of the *Ash'aris* and the *Maturidis*, following on from that of the *Mu'tazilah*, is that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is everywhere — so is this from the Attributes of Allaah, the Blessed and Most High?

Is having a place from the Attributes of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic?

We humans have a place, we are now in one of Allaah's houses, we are in a place — but is Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, in a place?

The answer is that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is far removed from being in a place. For even while bearing in mind all of the differences in this issue and others, there is unanimous agreement amongst all of the Muslims that Allaah was and there was nothing with Him. Allaah was and nothing was with Him as occurs in the *hadith* of Imraan ibn Husain in *Sahih Bukhari*.

Thus Allaah was and there was nothing with Him, and there was no universe with Him, i.e., saying that Allaah is everywhere is from major *shirk* which negates the Oneness/Uniqueness [*tawheed*] of Allaah in His Names and Attributes. How so?

Let us look at what Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, has described Himself with.

Did He describe Himself in an *aaayah* or an authentic *hadith* as being everywhere?

I do not say that not only have such statements not been reported in a *hadith*, but rather that this is speech for which Allaah has sent down no authority [whatsoever]. That is because it opposes what Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, described Himself as.

And as for the *ayaahs* in which Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, has described Himself stating that the characteristic of complete and total ascendancy over all of His creation is His, and that He is not in anything from His creation but rather that He is above every [single] thing from it—then [such] *ayaahs* [are so numerous that they] cannot be counted.

Like the *ayaah* ..., ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne [in a manner that suits His Majesty],**’ [Taa Haa 20:5]. ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne [in a manner that suits His Majesty] ...**’

Let us stop here for a short while to remind ourselves of one of the principles of correct *tafsir* which, if a Muslim holds on to, will place him upon guidance from his Lord, and which, if he deviates from, will cause him to go far astray.

Tafsir of the Quraan must be done with the Quraan, this is the first principle: the Quraan is explained by the Quraan, and by the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ) then with the authentic narrations reported from our righteous predecessors.

One must stick to this method when explaining the noble Quraan, especially in those things in it which are connected to the most unseen of the Unseen, i.e., Allaah the Blessed and Most High, connected to worshipping Him or [connected to] any of His Attributes.

So these *ayaahs* have to be explained upon this methodology: the Quraan is explained with the Quraan, then the *Sunnah* then the authentic narrations reported from the righteous predecessors.

I had mentioned to you before in previous sittings that for a Muslim today to be upon guidance from his Lord and to be an upright traveller on the Straight Path it is not enough to [just] say, ‘I take from the Book and the *Sunnah*.’

One has to do this [of course] but on its own this is not enough. There has to be the Book, the *Sunnah* and a third thing: [following] what the righteous predecessors were upon.

I will establish for you through some texts ... and I don't want to repeat the topic but will just remind you of His Saying, the Blessed and Most High, **'And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the Believers, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen and burn him in Hell—and evil it is as a destination.'** [Nisaa 4:115] it would have been enough to say in this noble *ayah*, *'And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him, We shall keep him in the path he has chosen ...'* but Allaah the Mighty and Majestic added another sentence to the one just mentioned, saying, **'... and follows other than the way of the Believers ...'**

This is a very important sentence, because it means that there is no way of understanding the Book and understanding the *Sunnah* except through our righteous predecessors.

Now, and as I said I don't want to repeat what was said before for fear of repetition and boredom, the saying of some of the people of today following on from that of some of the people of theological rhetoric or scholars of theological rhetoric that Allaah is everywhere—do we find these words, this sentence, this belief, in the statements of the pious predecessors?

Allaah forbid!

The statements of the pious predecessors only contain that which complies and is in agreement with the *ayahs* and *hadiths* which affirm Allaah's attribute of ascendancy over all of the creation.

'... and then He rose over the Throne ...' [Al-A'raaf 7:54] **'To Him ascend (all) the goodly words, and the righteous deeds exalt it (the goodly words i.e. the goodly words are not accepted by Allaah unless and until they are followed by good deeds),'**

[Faatir 35:10] **'The angels and the Spirit [Jibreel] ascend to Him ...'** [Al-Ma'aarij 70:4]

'Have mercy on those on earth and the One above the Heavens will have mercy on you,' **'Do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven ...'** [Al-Mulk 67:16]

Many *aayahs* and *hadiths*, let alone sayings of the *Salaf as-Saalib*, which all come together in renouncing this misguidance that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is everywhere, and which affirm that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, does not have a ‘place’ [*makaan*] but rather that He is as He said, ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne [in a manner that suits His Majesty],**’ [Taa Haa 20:5] And they explained, ‘rose over, [*istawaa*]’ to mean, *ista’laa* [ascended/rose over].

As for those people who say that Allaah is everywhere, then they have misinterpreted the *aayah* and dispensed with it in opposition to the [correct] methodology to be employed when explaining the Quraan which I mentioned to you just now, because they said that, ‘rose over, [*istawaa*],’ means, ‘conquered [*istawlaa*].’

Along with the fact that this is a *khalafi* explanation [i.e., not an explanation from the *Salaf* but rather from those who came later and opposed them] not having a basis in any word from the statements of the pious predecessors ... then along with that it also opposes the *tafsir* of the *Salaf as-Saalib*.

This *aayah*, ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne [in a manner that suits His Majesty],**’ [Taa Haa 20:5] was explained by the *Salaf* to mean *ista’laa* [he ascended/rose over].

And the statement of Imaam Maalik, the Imaam of the place of migration [of the Prophet], may Allaah have mercy on him [is well-known]—when that questioner came to him and said, ‘O Maalik, ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne,**’ how did He rise over?’

Imaam Maalik replied, ‘The *istiwaa* [rising over] is known ...’ i.e., it is highness and ascension, ‘... and the ‘how’ ...’ i.e., that which that person was asking about, ‘... is unknown, and asking about it is an innovation. Remove this man for he is an innovator.’

The summary of what can be said in nullifying this misguided saying, ‘Allaah is everywhere,’ [is that] researching this topic is long and in this regard I advise that the book called, *Al-Uluww lil-Aliyyil-Ghaffaar* or *lil-Aliyyil-Adbeem* [‘The Summary of the Ascendancy of the Most High, the Oft-Forgiving’] of Haafidh adh-Dhahabi be read, and it is more appropriate that the summary of this book be read since it deals with the topic more succinctly, being a refinement, written by me, of the original.

In ‘The Summary of the Ascendancy of the Most High, the Oft-Forgiving,’ he [i.e., Imaam adh-Dhahabi] mentioned *ayaahs* which establish that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic has the characteristic of being above all created things, and that He is not in a place, along with many good *hadiths* which are in harmony with the texts of the Quraan [stating] that Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is above all creation. Then [he mentioned] *Salafi* narrations from the Companions and their followers and their followers all the way up until the time of Imaam adh-Dhahabi, to just after the seventh century of the year of the Flight [*Hijrah*].

Tens if not hundreds of scholars who nullified this falsehood that, ‘Allaah is everywhere,’ and who established that Allaah is above all of creation.

From the clearest examples of that is the *hadith* of the servant-girl—the authenticity of which the scholars of *hadith* are united upon—the summary of which is that a man from the Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) whose name was Mu’aawiyah ibn al-Hakam used to have a servant-girl who would tend to his flock of sheep in Uhud. A wolf came and attacked the sheep. As a result her master became angry and slapped her on her cheek—and then regretted what he had done.

So he came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, ‘O Messenger of Allaah! I have to expiate [for that sin] by freeing a slave and I have a servant-girl,’ i.e., he was asking the Prophet (ﷺ) whether freeing this servant-girl would fulfil his penance (*kaffaarab*) of freeing a slave.

He told him to bring her. When she came, the Prophet of Allaah (ﷺ) said, ‘Where is Allaah.’ She replied, ‘Above the Heavens.’ He said, ‘Who am I?’ She said, ‘You are the Messenger of Allaah.’ He said to her master, ‘Free her, for she is a believer.’

The Prophet of Allaah (ﷺ) regarded the testimony of the servant-girl that Allaah was above the Heavens to mean that she doesn’t only testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah but that she also believes that Allaah is One in His Essence, the only One who should be worshipped, One in His Attributes.

So beware of falling in to this misguidance, because we hear it [often]. We'll be in a gathering and it will be as though someone is remembering Allaah saying, 'Allaah is present in all things,' don't you hear this phrase? This is present amongst us [i.e., the Muslims], 'Allaah is present in all things.'

There are two existences. The first is the necessarily existent [*wajibul-wujood*], i.e., Allaah, and there was nothing with Him, as you heard [previously].

The second are the contingent/possible existents, i.e., the creation.

So we have a [type of] existence, and Allaah the Mighty and Majestic has an eternal existence. He has no beginning or end.

So [their incorrect belief that] Allaah is present in all things [would necessitate that He] is present inside our existence which we are in right now. This is the meaning of that misguidance that, 'Allaah is everywhere,' so beware of saying, 'Allaah is everywhere,' or, 'Allaah is present in all that exists.' No, [this is not true].

There is no misguidance greater than this, because it negates that which we have mentioned and which has been reported in the Quraan and the *Sunnah* and the *Salafi* narrations which state that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is above all created things.

Reciprocating this misguidance is another which is even greater: [the claim] that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is not inside the world nor outside it.

The one who says that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is inside the world, i.e., the one who says that Allaah is everywhere or Allaah is present in all things, has affirmed Allaah's existence but he has likened Him to His creation [*tashbeeh*], and *tashbeeh* is false and futile, '**... there is nothing like unto Him ...**' [Shuraa 42:11], for this reason this [belief] is misguidance.

But the one who is even more misguided is the one who says, 'Indeed Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside of it.' Half of this sentence is true: Allaah [indeed] is not inside the universe. This is a correct statement. He is, rather, above all of the creation.

[But] as for following this statement with their saying that, ‘... nor is He outside of the universe ...’ then in the language of the scholars this is called *ta’teel* [neutralisation] of the existence of The Truth [i.e., Allaah], i.e., a denial of the existence of The Truth. Since as we mentioned just now in the *hadith* of Imraan ibn Hussain, Allaah the Mighty and Majestic was and there was nothing with Him.

Allaah was and there was no created thing with Him, but afterwards He created these things as can be seen, it is obligatory to have faith in that, that there are two existences, as we mentioned.

So if Allaah the Mighty and Majestic was not inside the universe—and this is the truth—when someone adds to that saying, ‘... and neither outside it ...’ it means that there is no deity.

It is to belie [His very Existence], a total denial and rejection [of it].

It is a return to the creed of the extremist Sufis, and I don’t say a return to the creed of the Sufis, because the Sufis are of two types. From them are extremists and those less than them.

The extremists are the ones who say that that which is present is one, at the head of these Sufis is Ibn Arabi who said that that which is in existence is one. As for the Muslims then they say, ‘*Laa ilaaha ilallaah.*’

So this *aayah*, ‘**So know that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah ...**’ [Muhammad 47:19] affirms two existences: that of the One who is worshipped, The Truth, and that of the false deities.

As for Ibn Arabi and whoever was misguided by him, then they say that that which is in existence is one, and they have [other] terms through which they make their shirk and misguidance clear.

So for example they say that everything you see with your eye is Allaah, everything that you see with your eye is Allaah, it is Allaah, that which is in existence is one. What do you see, you see a man, a stone, a tree, the sky, the earth—all of this universe is Allaah, this is the creed of the atheists, the creed of communists—there is no god.

This results in the total and utter rejection of the existence of Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic.

So when it is said that Allaah is not inside the universe and nor outside of it then it means that that which is in existence is one, this is, [as we stated], the creed of the extremist Sufis [who say that] everything you see with your eye is Allaah.

When the people of Noah worshipped the idols as is mentioned in the Quraan, **‘And they said, ‘You shall not leave your gods. Nor shall you leave Wadd, nor Suwa, nor Yaghuth, nor Ya’uq nor Nasr.’** [Nooh 71:23] Did they worship other than Allaah?

The answer, according to the extremists from the Sufis, is that when the Magians worshipped the fire, they didn’t worshipping anything other than The One, the Irresistible Subduer.

This is total and utter rejection.

So when it is said that Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside it ... this [incorrect] creed [mentioned above] which today is said to be that of *Ablus-Sunnab wal-Jamaa’ah* has returned. There are people who spread books, commenting on them, comments being an overstatement, stating that this creed, i.e., ‘... that Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside it,’ is that of *Ablus-Sunnab wal-Jamaa’ah*.

[But] Allaah the Mighty and Majestic was and nothing was with Him, so He is now just as He was before—He is in no need [self-sufficient] just as before He was in no need of the entire creation. When He brought those created things into existence He said that He rose above them, ascended, ascended, i.e., rose above.

And to clarify this [point of] creed, a little sound intellect must be used.

After we have established through the texts of the Book and the *Sunnab* that Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is above all created things and not inside them, we must thereafter discuss [this issue] with those people who deny Allaah’s existence totally, even if they say that there is a deity, [and even if they say] *Laa ilaaha ilallaah*—but since they say that Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside it then they have rejected the existence of Allaah—so we say to these people: you are [in agreement] with us that Allaah was and nothing was with him.

So when He created the creation one of three things must [be true]:

- When He created the creation, Allaah must have entered into His creation, and they are in agreement with us that Allaah is not in every single place so thereafter the second remains:
- When He created the creation, Allaah must have placed it above Himself, and this is falsehood, for Allaah is above all things.
- Thereafter only the third option remains, that when Allaah created the creation, He rose over it, [that He] ascended over it— and this is what is becoming of Allaah the Mighty and Majestic.

For this reason [concerning] the saying that Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside it, Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allaah have mercy on him, said describing two groups both of whom are upon misguidance, with one being more misguided than the other, [he said] that the one who likens Allaah to some of His creation [*mushabbih*] worships an idol, he worships something present, but he has likened him to the idols which the polytheists would worship instead of Allaah.

The one who likens Allaah to His creation worships an idol. And the *mu'attil* worships something nonexistent.

Who is the *mu'attil*? It is the one who says that Allaah, ‘... is not inside the universe nor outside it.’

The one who says that He is inside the universe is a *mushabbih* [someone who has likened Allaah to His creation], and such a person is upon misguidance [since], ‘... **there is nothing like unto Him ...**’ [Shuraa 42:11]

And the one who says that, ‘Indeed Allaah the Mighty and Majestic is not inside the universe nor outside it,’ has denied the very existence of Allaah the Blessed and Most High, such a person is more astray than the first.

Now listen to the detailed explanation given by some of them about the statement, ‘Allaah is not inside the universe nor outside it,’ I want to end with this so that you can be upon clear guidance about the fact that everyone who opposes the creed of the Book and the *Sunnah* and the methodology of the pious predecessors is upon manifest misguidance.

Their proponent from the scholars of rhetorical speech says that, ‘Allaah is not described as being above, nor below, nor to the right, or the left, not in front, nor behind, not inside the universe nor outside it, not connected to it nor separate from it.’

Tell me, by your Lord, is this not the description of something nonexistent?

INTERJECTION: Yes.

AL-ALBAANI: If any intellectual person who has been given some understanding, intelligence and eloquence was asked, ‘Describe a nonentity to us, something which is nonexistent, something which is not real.’

It will not be possible for him to describe such a nonentity with more than what these people have described the one they worship with, when they said, ‘He is not above nor below, not to the right nor the left, not in front nor behind, not inside the universe or outside of it, not connected to it nor separate from it.’

As for us then we say, ‘... **there is nothing like unto Him ...**’ [Shuraa 42:11] ‘**The Most Gracious rose over the [Mighty] Throne [in a manner that suits His Majesty],**’ [Taa Haa 20:5]

INTERJECTION: Following on from the first question, what is the explanation of His Saying, ‘... **and He is with you wherever you are ...**’ [Al-Hadeed 57:4] and ‘**Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see?**’ [Taa Haa 20:46]

AL-ALBAANI: Before answering this question, and its answer is short *inshaa Allaah*, I want to remind you of the principle that I mentioned in the previous statement: we must interpret the Quraan with the Quraan, then the *Sunnah*, then the sayings of the *Salaf*.

So whoever wants to find out the meaning of this *aayah*, ‘... and He is with you wherever you are ...’ he should study the *Salafi tafsirs* some of which I cited to you as examples: the *tafsir* of Ibn Jarir at-Tabari, that of Ibn Kathir the Damascene and whoever followed their example.

INTERJECTION: Al-Qurtubi, O Shaikh, he is asking about al-Qurtubi.

AL-ALBANI: I know your question. It is sufficient for me to say whoever followed their example.

Naturally, it is not upon every Muslim to be a scholar, but if he is not a scholar then he must be someone who asks, as is the case now with the previous questions [that were asked in this sitting] and those that followed them and the question we are asking right now.

I want to make mention of the fact that my answer now will be based upon this principle regarding *tafsir*. So without exception the scholars of *tafsir* [in interpreting this *aayah*], ‘... and He is with you wherever you are ...,’ said, ‘i.e., with His knowledge,’ ‘... and He is with you wherever you are ...’ ‘... with His knowledge,’ i.e., nothing whatsoever is hidden from Him in the earth nor in the Heavens. For this reason, Imaam Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak, may Allaah have mercy on him—and he is one of the unique and rare Imaams of the *Salaf*, from the *hadith* scholars and *faqih*s ... said, ‘Allaah the Blessed and Most High is above His Throne *bi dhaatibi* [in His Essence].’

This is a topic whose explanation has preceded in some detail. So he [i.e., Ibn al-Mubaarak] mentioned three matters whose meaning, at the very least, it is obligatory upon every Muslim to be well-grounded in, using his intellect and then his heart with which he believes, [and those three matters are]:

Firstly that, ‘Allaah the Blessed and Most High is above the Throne in His Essence.’

Secondly, ‘That he is separate and distinct from His creation,’ which strikes down the aforementioned fallacy of Him being present in all that exists, no, rather He is, ‘... separate and distinct from His creation,’ i.e., He is free and self-sufficient from all the worlds according to the text of the Noble Quraan, this is the second point.

Let me repeat and say it again: Allaah the Blessed and Most High—and I am not the one saying this, I am quoting what Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak said—so I say that he said, ‘Allaah the Blessed and Most High is above His Throne in His Essence,’ this is the first point. ‘Separate and distinct from His creation,’ i.e., not inside it but rather outside and free from having any need of the creation.

Thirdly, and here is that which establishes the point [we are discussing now], ‘And He is with them in His Knowledge.’ Namely, the [explanation of] the previous question [about the *aaayah*], ‘... **and He is with you wherever you are ...**,’ [is that He is] with them in His Knowledge, not that He is with them everywhere in His Essence, that is falsehood according to the Legislation and the intellect.

Thus it is not fitting that [the idea that Allaah is with them] in His Essence/Himself should rush to the mind of the questioner [when hearing], ‘... **and He is with you wherever you are ...**,’ i.e., this is a meaning which a Muslim is far removed from thinking in his dreams let alone while awake.

Why?

At this moment we are in a house [of Allaah, i.e., a mosque], a place that is from the most excellent of places as occurs in the *Saheeb* [where it is mentioned] that the Prophet of Allaah (ﷺ) was asked about the best and worst of places, so he said that the best places are the mosques and the worst are the marketplaces.

In the marketplace there are places that are even worse than the market [itself], like the lavatories for example, so the marketplace is from the worst of places as you just heard, and even worse than it are the lavatories, in some markets there are bars, pubs, brothels and so on.

Is Allaah the Mighty and Majestic in these places in His Essence [based upon the *aaayah*], ‘... **and He is with you wherever you are?**’

Never!

Rather He is above His Throne as Abdullaah ibn al-Mubaarak said—but He is with you in His Knowledge, no secret is hidden from Him in the earth or the heavens.

So let not the intending meaning of this *aayah* be difficult for anyone to understand: Allaah's [*Dbaat*] Essence, Allaah's [*Dbaat*] Essence is free of all creation, 'Allaah was and nothing was with Him.'

So, '**... and He is with you wherever you are ...**' He is with you wherever you are in His Knowledge.

No person says, 'By Allaah, I'm [here] between the four walls [of this place], so there is a veil between me and my Lord such that He cannot see me,' no, no one says this except an unbeliever who denies the existence of Allaah the Mighty and Majestic.

The same is said about *aayahs* like, '**...Indeed, I am with you both. I hear and I see.**' [Taa Haa 20:46] The last part of this *aayah* explains its first part, and its first part the last, '**...Indeed, I am with you both. I hear and I see.**' This sentence is an explanation of His Saying, the Most High, '**...Indeed, I am with you both ...**' how? '**I hear and I see.**'

So He was with them when He sent them to Pharaoh and ordered them to remind him [of Allaah] and to make him fear [Allaah]. Allaah said to them, '**Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both. I hear and I see.**'

So this sentence, '**... I hear and I see,**' is an explanation of His Saying, the Most High, '**... Indeed, I am with you both,**' He is not there [Himself] as someone who would lead an army would be, or present as the head of an army would be—no, it is not like that—Allaah, the Mighty and Majestic, is free and in no need of the world. He regulates the universe from the heavens to the earth while having ascended and being above The Throne, as He, the Most High, has stated.

Al-Hudaa wan-Noor, 741-742.

