

Shaykh Muḥammad bin Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn on the Ḥadīths Pertaining to the First Creation

Question: How is it possible to reconcile between the following ḥadīths: “*There was Allāh and there was nothing before Him and His Throne was above the water and He wrote everything with His Hand and then He created the Heavens and Earth*”¹ and in the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad from Luqayṭ bin Ṣabrah who said, “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, where was our Lord before He created the creation?’ He said, ‘*He was above clouds...*’” and the ḥadīth, “*When Allāh first created the Pen...*” There is a conflict in [what is] apparent from these ḥadīths regarding which of the creations came first. Likewise what has come [in the reports] that the first creation was Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

The Shaykh (رحمته الله) answered: “These ḥadīths are in agreement and harmony and not at variance (with each other). As for the first of what Allāh created *from the things which are known to us*,² it is the Throne and

¹ In the ḥadīth of ʿImrān bin Ḥusayn related by al-Bukhārī in which the Messenger responded to a question from some people who came from Yemen.

² This is a very important qualification from the Shaykh (رحمته الله) in that the various texts which are used by those holding different views as to what was the first creation **are only in relation to that which has been made known to us from revelation**. They are not in reference to the first creation absolutely, meaning, the very first thing ever created by Allāh. Thus, we can say that the Throne is the first creation from the affairs that have been made known to us. The Pen came after the Throne as Ibn Taymiyyah (رحمته الله) says, “He created this pen when He ordered it with the written decree before the creation of the Heavens and Earth and it is the first of what was created from *this universe* and He created it after the Throne as is indicated by the texts and it is the saying of the majority of the Salaf as is mentioned in the sayings of the Salaf in other than this place - and the intent here is to explain what is indicated by the texts of the Qurʾān and the Sunnah.” *Majmūʿ Fatāwā* (18/213). Ibn Taymiyyah also says about the ḥadīth of ʿImrān bin Ḥusayn in which the people of Yemen asked the Messenger about *the first of this affair*, “If they had asked him about *the first creation absolutely*, they would not have alluded to this by this wording

He ascended over it after the creation of the Heavens as He, the Exalted, said, **'He is the One who created the Heavens and the Earth in six days - and His Throne had been over the water - that He may test you which of you is best in deed.'** (11:7). As for what is in relation to the Pen, there is no evidence in the ḥadīth that the Pen was the first thing

['the first of this affair'] because they had not witnessed [the very first creation], thus they would not have alluded to it through this [wording that they used in this ḥadīth]. Rather, they would not have known it either because such a thing cannot be known except through the report of the Prophets and the Messenger had not informed them of that, and if he had already informed them of it, they would not have asked him. It is known therefore that their question was about this observed universe." *Majmū' Fatāwā* (18/215-216). And later Ibn Taymiyyah says, "And as for the third type which is that his intent was that there was nothing *alongside Him* and after that His Throne was above the water and He wrote everything in the Tablet and then created the Heavens and the Earth, **then there is nothing in this which informs about the very first thing that Allāh created absolutely...** and since the ḥadīth did not explain the very first creation and nor make a mention of when He created the Throne about which he informed that it was above the water in connection with his saying '*There was Allāh and there was nothing alongside Him*' then this indicates that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did not intend to merely inform about Allāh's sole existence before everything and about the commencement of creations after that, since his wording does not indicate that. Rather, he simply intended to inform about the commencement of the creation of the Heavens and the Earth." *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (18/219). From these words of Ibn Taymiyyah and the sum of his speech in his various books refuting the Jahmiyyah and their offshoots, it is clear that that Allāh has never ceased being one who speaks and acts if He wills thereby establishing that His creations did not begin with the Heavens and Earth as is alleged by the Ahl al-Kalām and that there is no beginning nor any end to His speech and action, since they are tied to His will and choice and He speaks and acts as and when He wills. Thus, it is possible (mumkin) that there are other creations of which we have not been informed. In a specific sense, we can only speak about that which we have been informed of. Thus we say that the Throne is the first creation of all of those affairs about which we have been informed through revelation, even if in a general wider sense we affirm that Allāh is eternally one who speaks and acts (and creates) as and when He wills.

created. Rather, the meaning of the ḥadīth is that when He [first] created the Pen, He commanded it to write, and so it wrote the decrees of everything. As for Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) he is like others amongst men [in the sense that] he was created from the fluid of his father, ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and he did not excel over the creation in terms of [how he was] created, just as he said about himself, “*Verily, I am a man, I forget just as you forget.*” So he (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ) becomes hungry, thirsty, cold, is affected by heat, becomes ill and dies. Everything which afflicts mankind in relation to their human nature also afflicts him. However, he is distinguished in that he receives revelation and that he is worthy of messengership, as Allāh, the Exalted, said, ‘**Allāh knows best where He places His message**’. (6:124)”³

Translated by Abū ‘Iyaad
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³ Majmū‘ Fatāwā wa Rasā’il (Dār al-Waṭan, 1st edition, 1413H) 1/62.