



Qur'ânic Guidance

WHO is ALLÂH?

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

“He is Allâh, He is the One besides whom there is no other, cannot be and will never be one worthy of worship but He”. (59:22)

"Allâh" is the word used for God in Arabic. The word *Allâh* cognates in many Semitic languages. The corresponding Aramaic form is *Alah* (אלה), but its emphatic state is *Alaha* (אלהא). It is written as ܐܠܗܐ – *Ēlāhā* in Biblical Aramaic and ܐܠܗܐ (Alâhâ) in Syriac and *Ēl* in Canaanite. The name *Allal* (or *Ellil*) is to be found in the Epic of Atrahasis (or Atramhasis) engraved on several tablets dating back to around 1700 BC in Babylon. This shows that a Deity *Allal* was being worshipped since ages (Stephanie Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and others*, Oxford University Press: 1989, Pages: 3-10). Many inscriptions containing the name *Allâh* have been discovered in Northern and Southern Arabia as early as the 15th century BC., including Lihyanitic, Thamûdic and other South Arabian inscriptions (F. V. Winnett, *A Study of the Lihyanite and Thamudic Inscriptions*; Toronto: 1937, Page 30). From Nabataean inscriptions, we know that “Allâh” was regarded as the "High and Main God".

The concepts associated with the term Allâh (as a deity) differ among religious traditions. The pagan Meccans used the name Allâh for the creator, the supreme deity besides other deities. Arab Christians have been using it since pre-Islamic times. In some of the Arabic language Bibles, this name Allâh is still being used. Although some Arab Christians modified it to *Allâh al-Ab* (الله الأب – God the Father) to distinguish their usage from Muslim usage. This expression was also used by some Mizrahi (Eastern) Jews. There are similarities as well as differences between the concept of God as portrayed in the Holy

Qur'ân and the Hebrew Bible. In the Holy Qur'ân Allâh is the name of the Self-Existing and Self-Sufficient (6:133) veiled Reality (*al-Haqîqat al-Ghaybiyya*) and Qur'ân is His Holy speech. He says:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا

“I and I alone am Allâh. There cannot be, is no other and will never be one worthy of worship but I.” (20:14)

Allâh is thus His personal name (*ism al-Dhât* اسم الذات). In the Arabic idiom calling someone who is present, by his personal name shows acknowledgement and respect and denotes his high status.

Allâh الله: **Allâh is a proper name** applied to the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection; and Who is free from all defects and weaknesses. All Divine attributes mentioned in Al-Qur'ân are qualities of the proper name *Allâh*. It is never used as a qualifying word.

The “*al*” being inseparable from it, not derived. *al-ilâh* is a different word, and Allâh is not a contraction of *al-ilâh*. The word “Allâh” is not a construction of *al-ilâh* as some people think, but an independent word. The word Allâh is *jâmid* that means it is neither derived from any other word nor has it any root. The first letters *Al* ا in Allâh are an integral, inseparable part of the word. They do not denote the definite article *al* ال of Arabic, which is equivalent to the English **the**. Renowned scholars of the Arabic language including Sibwaih, the famous grammarian, and Khalîl, the respected linguistic, confirm that *All* ا in the beginning of the word Allâh is inseparable from it. If *All* ا in Allâh were an additional prefix, the common exclamation *Yâ Allâh*, (O Allâh!), would not be permitted according to the rules of Arabic grammar, as the form *Yâ al-ilâh* or *Yâ al-Rahmân*, *Yâ al-Rahîm* would be grammatically incorrect. Moreover, this supposition would mean that there were different gods – *âlihah* (plural of *ilâh*), one of which became gradually known as *al-Ilâh* and was then contracted into Allâh. This supposition is not correct. The word Allâh is a simple substantive, a proper name, not derived from any other word. In contrast, the word deity is applied to any religious object of worship. The word god was originally used to refer to pagan deities of the Nordic nations. It has a plural and both a masculine and feminine form, therefore this word cannot strictly and properly satisfy the monotheistic requirements of a deity.

God is another way of saying “Allâh”. Unlike the word **God**, Allâh has no plural, masculine or feminine form, and is never used for any other object or being (19:65). It is a substantive name, neither attributive nor descriptive. It has no parallel or equivalent in any other language. Jehovah is the latinisation of Tetragrammaton YHWH. Its Aramaic form *Yâ Huwâ*, literally means O That! or O Thou! or O He! This was the permitted expression used

to address the Deity of the Israelites. This Deity's name was not to be pronounced in fear of profaning the "ineffable name". In "Jehovah", the emphasis is on *hova* (- *huwa*), stressing "that Existence" or "that He". Therefore, Jehovah can hardly be a proper name. The name found in other languages for Supreme Being is either attributive or descriptive. Hindus give their senior Deity the name Par-Mâtma (the Super Soul), Par-Barahman (the Super and the Great), *Par-Mishwar* (the Great King or Owner). The Parsis give their supreme God the name of Yazdan (the Spirit of goodness). The Sikh call their great Deity that means the Truth.

The Arabic word for name is *Ism* اسم, which literally means 'attribute' and 'power'. Allâh, the substantive name which combines in itself all perfect attributes and powers. It is the Supreme Name, importing vast powers and blessings. In the idiom of the Holy Qur'ân, Allâh is the name of Whose excellences are the culmination of beauty and beneficence, and Who does not suffer from any shortcoming. The name Allâh alone has been invested with all perfect attributes, thus the name Allâh applies only to the One Who combines in Himself all perfect attributes and no shortcomings.

Allâh is imperceptible, above the reach of reason, beyond of beyond, finer than the finest towards Whom everything turns in true worship. Allâh applies to the God Who suffers from no defect and possesses every excellence. Excellence is of two types, excellence in beauty and excellence in beneficence. Both types of excellence are comprehended in the word Allâh.

Allâh discloses Himself to humankind in many of His beautiful awe-inspiring words

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا
وَلَا يُؤَدُّهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

“Allâh, there is no other, cannot be and will never be One worthy of worship but He, the Ever Living, Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining. Slumber overtakes Him not, nor sleep. Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth belongs to Him. Who is there that will intercede with Him, save by His leave? He knows their future and their past; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge (of the things) except of such (things) as He (Himself) pleases (to tell). His knowledge and suzerainty extends over the heavens and the earth and the care of them both tires Him not. He is the Supreme, the Great.”(2:255)

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقَدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُتَعَبِّدُ الْعَزِيزُ
الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ

الْحَكِيمُ

“He is Allâh, He is the One beside whom there is no other, cannot be and will never be One worthy of worship but He. (He is) the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. He is Allâh, beside whom there is no other, cannot be and will never be One worthy of worship but He, (He is) the Supreme Sovereign, the Holy One, the Most Perfect, Bestower of peaceful Security, the Guardian, the All-Mighty, the Compensator of losses, the Possessor of all greatness. Holy is Allâh, far beyond and above the things they associate with Him. He is Allâh, the Creator of (the matter and the spirit), the Maker, the Bestower of forms (and fashioner of everything suiting to its requirement). All fair attributes belong to Him. All that lies in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” (59:22-24)

لَهُ مَلِكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“The kingdom of the heavens and the earth belong to Him. He gives life and causes death and He is the Possessor of power to do all that He wills (and desires). He is the very First (He is as He always was), and (He is) the Last (when nothing remains He will remain), and He is Manifest [for His Servants] and He is Hidden (from the worlds of bodies; He being the Eternal Being), and He has full knowledge of everything.” (57:1-3)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“It is He Who has created the heavens and the earth in six periods and He is established on the throne (of Power). He knows what goes down to the earth and what comes out of it, and what descends (Divine Revelations) from above and what ascends to it (deeds and actions). He is with you wherever you may be. Allâh is watchful of all what you do.” (57:4)

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسْرُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

“He knows whatever lies in the heavens and the earth and He knows what you conceal in your hearts and what you utter openly. Allâh knows the innermost thoughts of the hearts.” (64:4)

There are a few verses in the Holy Qur‘ân where Allâh calls Himself **Al-Rahmân** الرَّحْمَنَ (the Most Gracious). “The Most Gracious, Who gives without asking,

without efforts, and even without prayer. For example, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the air, and water etc...

“The Day when the Most Gracious (*al-Rahmân*) shall gather those who guard against evil before Him as honoured delegates” (19:85). A closer look at this verse reveals that here the Divine Grace and Mercy are emphasized. *Al-Rahmân* is in its essence very close to the proper name *Allâh* in that this name cannot be shared by any. On the other hand, the servants of *Allâh* can share *Allâh*’s Attributes of similarity, like He sees, He speaks and He hears. *Rahmânîyyat* is a kind of mercy beyond the power of the human mind. To this end, He has combined His two names by saying:

ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

“Call upon (Him by the name of) *Allâh*, or call upon (Him by the name of) *al-Rahmân*. Call upon Him in whatsoever name you like; all beautiful names belong to Him”. (17:110)

The use of the word Father for the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining Deity does not fall into the category of beautiful names. When father is taken to mean one who produces his offspring from a female, then how can we call a Deity the Self-Sufficient when He has to depend on the womb of a woman to produce a son. In this context, this name can be rather disrespectful to Him.

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمَلَكُوتِ وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ وِليٌّ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَكَبِيرُهُ تَكْبِيرًا

“All true and perfect praise belong to *Allâh*, Who has not taken to Himself a son, and Who has no associate partner in His kingdom, nor has He any helper because of weakness, and extol His glory with repeated glorification.” (17:111)

If one goes through the pages of the Holy Qur’ân, the reader soon realizes that this Book is not introducing a new Deity. It is presenting the same Eternal Being Who has always been present in the illuminated human heart, in human conscience (30:8; 30:30), and in many heavens and many earths (6:12), Who is visible in the mirror of the laws of cosmos and is discernible in the book of nature (30:8; 39:5-6; 41:9-12; 65:12). He is the same God Who was worshipped by Noah, Abraham, *Ismâ’îl*, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus and all other Prophets (peace be upon all of them), be they known or unknown to us (4:163-164; 2:132-133,136; 3:84; 40:78; 42:13). All divinely revealed paths lead to the same summit, and that is the religion of the Prophets (3:31).

People have an individual concept of their Lord, and they ascribe a name to Him in which they seek Him. So long as a Deity is presented to them that fits into their fancy and concept, they accept it and affirm it, whereas when the Deity is presented in any other form with another name, they deny it, flee from it and often treat it in an improper manner. When

a worshipper, no matter to what faith he belongs, engages in worship with his sincere heart, devotion, and attention, he begins to experience Allâh's embracing Power and Mercy. He hardly escapes from true monotheist belief, even if in his outward appearance he displayed idolatrous behaviour. He becomes overwhelmed by gratefulness, praise and love for Him, temporarily forgetting his traditional beliefs. God says, *صَوَامِعُ وَبَيْعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا* – *in cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques wherein it is the name Allâh is being mentioned frequently* (22:40). Thus, it is He who is being worshipped in the places of worship according to the upbringing and intellect of the worshipper (22:40; 2:114). Whom you think that they are worshipping besides God, for them they are not besides God. They imagine their God in those objects. They see their outward to be Gods outward and their inward to be His inward. They see in these objects His essence without asking how and why? On the Day of Resurrection, Allâh will present to His worshipper with all His Glories and Lights (50:22), the worshipper will not be able to recognize Him. Then He will present to him in the form He was worshipped by him, the worshipper will recognize Him.

تَبَارَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِي الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ

“Blessed be the Name of your Lord, the Master of Glory and Honour.” (55:78)

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Say, `Surely, my Prayer and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are (all) for the sake of Allâh, the Lord of the worlds. (6:162)

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