

Names of Allah Series

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Seeking The Guide

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'la* (exalted is He) has given Himself Names and attributes (*sifat*) so that we can know Him. What is most amazing and beautiful about Allah's Names is that through them, you can see how your Creator recognizes the needs of His creation.

We all need sustenance; and He is *al-Razzaaq*, The Provider. We all need love; and He is *al-Wadud*, The Most Loving. We all need protection; and Allah is *al-Hafidh*, The Guardian. What we need the most is the very thing of which Allah (swt) has an unlimited supply.

And so sometimes we are put through things to know Allah (swt). Sometimes it is to open your eyes to your own flaws so that you can change. But whatever it is, if you realize that the answer to any problem is through Him, and that He suffices all your needs, then your relief is already at hand.

Recently, I found myself to be very lost. And this was alarming because I used to be a person who had direction. I thought I knew where I was going and what I was doing. But things started to fall

apart, internally. I wasn't sure anymore. And then I realized I had three choices – to continue to do what I was doing without putting in any extra thought, to give up entirely, or to re-assess and re-orient.

And because this feeling persisted for a while, I realized something else. I came to know Allah's attribute of Guidance.

Sometimes this feeling of being lost can bring us closer to Allah (swt).

What is the meaning of this problem? Why are we stuck? We need to feel as though we do not know where we are going, because that is when we start searching. And that is precisely when Allah (swt) shows you that He is The Guide (*al-Haadi*), and how life changes when the Light of God is in it.

Perhaps you started out something with a sense of purpose, but in your journey you were knocked off the path towards the greater goal. You need *al-Haadi*. Maybe you are having some sort of mid-life crisis. You need *al-Haadi*. And we cannot for one moment believe that there is no way out and no right path. Allah (swt) says in a hadith qudsi (record of the words of the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him),

“O My servants, all of you are astray except for those I have guided, so seek guidance of Me and I shall guide you,” (Muslim).

As Allah (swt) gave Himself the attributes of Guidance and Light, how can we ever believe that we will be in darkness for too long?

Say, for example, you are drowning in a pool. Who will you usually call out for? The lifeguard. The lifeguard is already there, watching out for people, and because that is his job, when you call out to him he'll jump in there to save you. Now Allah (swt) is over and

above any analogy, but as Allah (swt) gave Himself the attribute of guidance, telling you that He is THE Guide and He is THE Light of the heavens and the earth, then how can you be lost for too long? Especially if you seek Him. Are we saying that lifeguards do their job better than Allah (swt)?

So what does it mean to go to Allah *al-Haadi*? It means to take the *first* step of realizing that He has this attribute, and having the certainty that Allah (swt) will not turn a seeker away. *Secondly*, it means to ask Him. Make du'a' (supplication), pray istikhara (the prayer for guidance) and talk to Him. *Thirdly*, it means to use the means around us. Re-assess your goals, seek people's advice and take the steps needed to try to find an answer. When we feel an internal instability, these steps may be hard, but Allah (swt) tells us *“And those who strive for Us – We will surely guide them to Our ways [...]*” (Qur'an, [29:69](#)).

And so we have to strive. We have to search. It will be hard. And there will be moments of confusion. But the Prophet ﷺ taught us: *“Know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship,”* (Tirmidhi).

One final action is that we cannot let *Shaytan* (the devil) make us lose hope and make us keep questioning ourselves. There is a point when confusion becomes *wiswaas* (whispers) – a sort of paranoia from the Devil. Only when we realize that Allah (swt) is the ultimate Guide and we are seeking Him in the proper way, will we gain full trust in Him and know that He will not allow us to be led astray.

“So those who believe in Allah and hold fast to Him – He will admit them to mercy from Himself and bounty and guide them to Himself on a straight path.” (Qur'an, [4:175](#))



The Giver of Gifts

Sometimes things happen to us in our lives, and we do not know how to read events. We may suddenly lose all our money, and the first thing that we think of is, “What did I do to deserve this? I was a good Muslim, I tried so hard, why did Allah punish me?” Or perhaps something amazing happens to us, and our reactions range from “*Alhamdulillah!*” (all praise is to God) to “I just got lucky.”

Our reactions say a lot about us and about our knowledge of and relationship with Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He). If our best friend does something, because we know them, we know how to read their actions and their dealings with us. Unfortunately, we do not know nearly as much about Allah (swt), even though He is closer to us than our jugular vein, and even though He invites us to call Him by His Names:

“And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them.”
(Qur’an, [7:180](#))

How can we call Him by His Names if we do not know them and if we do not understand them? And what is the purpose of Allah (swt) revealing to us 99 of His Names and His Attributes? It is in

order for us to know Him, and through knowing Him, we are able to worship Him better and understand the nature of this world. One of the scholars mentioned a saying:

“If one knows the commander, the commands are easy to follow.”

So insha’Allah (God willing) this series will focus on the Names of Allah (swt), and will draw upon research done by Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi, Imam al-Ghazali, and Dr. Amr Khaled.

Al-Wahhab: The Constant Bestower of Gifts

Think of the last time someone gave you a gift—how did you feel? A feeling of joy, love, of being special to the person from whom you received the gift, and sometimes a bit of shame if you feel you didn’t deserve it. Because, in essence, a gift isn’t given in return of anything.

One of Allah’s Beautiful Names is al-Wahhab. The root of this word is *hiba*, which means a gift. And because Allah (swt) is al-Wahhab, it means that He not only gives gifts once or twice, but He constantly does so. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an:

“Or do they have the depositories of the mercy of your Lord, the Exalted in Might, the Bestower?” (Qur’an, [38:9](#))

So how do we know when Allah (swt) has given us a gift? *Rizq* (sustenance) is written for us, but we have to work for it. So if in the course of our efforts, we earn \$1 million, that is *rizq* that Allah (swt) had ordained for us. *Hiba*, on the other hand, is just that—a gift that was not conditioned upon your efforts. When you get a phone call from someone you love, that you felt you missed—that is *hiba*. When without planning, you are fortunate enough to be able to go on ‘umrah (the minor pilgrimage), that is *hiba*. When Allah (swt) brings an amazing person into your life and you are able to improve because of them, that is *hiba*.

The Connection Between Gifts and Love

يا داود ذكر عبادي بإحساني، فإن القلوب جبلت على حبٍّ من أحسن إليها وبغضٍ
 ”من أساء إليها
 [ورد في الأثر]

It is stated in the traditions:

“O Dawud [David], remind people of my favors upon them, because the hearts are inclined to love those that do good to it and detest those that do bad to it.”

Who do you give gifts to? In general, you give gifts to someone you are thinking about and someone that you love. Sometimes we give gifts to endear people to us. So think about what that means when Allah (swt) gives you a gift.

Some of us may be thinking, “But I am so far from Allah. Why would He give me gifts out of love?” *Subhan Allah* (Glory to God)—our Lord is greater than we imagine. He gives us gifts so that we know that we have a God who does not forget about His creation—even when they fall astray. He gives us gifts as a reminder so that we can come close to Him.

Do you want to be a recipient of al-Wahhab?

We are all recipients of the many gifts of Allah (swt). Out of the 6 billion people in this world, He chose you to be of the *umma* (community) of His Prophet saw (peace be upon him). That in itself is a gift that we cannot thank Him enough for. If we all reflect on the many personal blessings in our lives, we cannot help but feel special to Allah (swt). Every little gift and every huge blessing was because *al-Wahhab* wanted to give you, and you specifically, something.

If you want to be a companion of *al-Wahhab*, then remember to acknowledge His gifts, even if they seem to be minute, and to thank Him. Allah (swt) says, “*If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe,*” (Qur’an, 14:7). The more we are conscious of Allah’s gifts to us, the more we are able to increase our love for Him, and recognize how blessed we are.

Moreover, we should use His gifts in His way and in His cause. No one likes for their gifts to be cheapened. If Allah (swt) has given you a gift, do not use it for what He dislikes. If we do that, the gift in question becomes a test that we will be held accountable for.

Finally, be a gift giver yourself. The Prophet saw said, “*Give gifts, for this will increase your mutual love,*” (Muslim).



The Provider

In the last article, we discussed how Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is the constant Giver of gifts. We mentioned how the nature of a gift is that it is not given in exchange for anything, but rather it is out of love and mercy, and a reminder that we have a Lord who is taking care of us.

Alhamdulillah (all praise be to God), many of us recognize these gifts when they are given. Yet we are plagued by worry for our everyday and future sustenance. The job market is down, how will I get a job? How will I support my kids? How can I get married when I don’t make enough money? Endless thoughts of worry fill our minds. And this is where ar-Razzaq comes in.

What is Rizq?

In order to understand Allah’s Name ar-Razzaq, we need to know what *rizq* means. *Rizq* is what has been apportioned for you which benefits you. So Allah (swt) is ar-Razzaq—He is the One who creates your *rizq*, and takes it upon Himself to deliver what He has apportioned to His servants. And because He is ar-Razzaq, and not ar-Raaziq, He provides this sustenance to everyone: Muslim and non-Muslim, woman and man, humans and animals and plants. It

encompasses everything on earth. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"And there is no creature on earth but that upon Allah is its provision [rizq], and He knows its place of dwelling and place of storage. All is in a clear register." (Qur'an, [11:6](#))

This is a statement from Allah (swt). He says that the provision for His creatures is upon Him. And in case we had doubt, Allah (swt) takes an oath by the heavens and earth. He says:

"And in the heaven is your provision and whatever you are promised. Then by the Lord of the heaven and earth, indeed, it is truth – just as [sure as] it is that you are speaking." (Qur'an, [51:22-23](#))

The Prophet saw (peace be upon him) said that a soul will not die until it gets all of the provision that has been apportioned for it (Ibn Hibban). Just looking at the heavens and the earth, and the way that rain falls and plants grow should be enough proof for us. We take it for granted, that this is the natural course of things. But Allah (swt) determined the course that nature will take. So if He created the system in which the rizq of all of the creatures is made, how will He not provide for you when He has said of human beings, *"We have certainly honored the children of Adam,"* (Qur'an [17:70](#)). So even if you feel that your provision is slow in coming for you, remember that whatever is written for you will come. What rests on you is how strive for it.

So what specifically can be counted as rizq?

When we refer to rizq, many people assume it is just money. But rizq is what benefits you. So it can be money and any material thing in this world. It can also be something emotional. And it can be spiritual rizq. The person who takes it upon himself to attend talks, surround himself with good people and increase in the good that he does is taking the steps to feed his soul. And Allah (swt)

will raise his station because of that.

Striving: A Condition of Rizq

This is the crux of our lesson today: the lesson of striving. Your rizq will not come to you if you do not work for it. That is the essential difference between *hiba*—a gift—and *rizq*. Your rizq is written for you but in order for you to unlock the door, you need to work as if your rizq depended on how hard you try, but in your heart, you know that nothing will come to you except what Allah (swt) has written for you.

And this is why if we truly believe in ar-Razzaq, we will never ever seek *haraam* (prohibited) means of living. If we truly believe that what has been written will come to us, then we know that we do not need to seek unethical ways of making a living. We work in whatever way that we can, in a manner that befits us as Muslims, knowing that it is Allah (swt) Who will provide for us. Even if everyone around you is engaging in corruption.

The example of Hajar *alayha as-salam* (peace be upon her) perfectly shows this. In the midst of the desert, she is stuck. Her infant is crying because he is hungry, and her food supplies have run out. She runs up and down Safa and Marwa 7 times, searching for something, anything. And Allah (swt) rewards that striving with the well of Zamzam that we still benefit from today. When we go on *Umrah or Hajj* (pilgrimage), we perform the "sa'y", which means striving, emulating the footsteps of Hajar (as), so we never forget the lesson of working hard with the means around us.

And the way that this perfectly illustrates the concept of rizq is that it came from where she did not imagine. She fulfilled her part—and Allah (swt) gave her what He apportioned for her. This is especially a lesson for those of us who say there is nothing for us to do—but there is always something to do. Even working to

seek the means to be productive is something we will be rewarded for because it shows we are serious in our striving. And Allah (swt) may give it to you through the channels that you sought or through something completely different. It is simply to show you that your *rizq* is in His Hands.

I knew someone who really needed a job but didn't want to 'sell-out' by applying to something just for the money. This friend applied everywhere that seemed to be ethical and in line with his interests. But it was one rejection after another. This continued for months, but *masha'Allah* (what God wills), this friend never lost hope. And out of nowhere, an organization contacted him even though he had not applied. One could take the lesson that he didn't even need to apply to all the other places, but he did. Because that showed he was serious. And Allah (swt) brought down his *rizq* in the form of a job offer he did not apply for, just to show that *rizq* comes from Him.

So knowing that *rizq* is guaranteed is not an excuse to be lazy. No one knew ar-Razzaq better than the Prophet ﷺ, but there is not one moment in his *seerah* (life) where we see a defeatist attitude. His example is the best example, because he shows us what it means to have full trust that he will receive what Allah (swt) has written for him, and yet work in a way that shows he planned, thought deeply and sought people's opinions.

What about people who don't seem to get their rizq? Why are people starving?

It may be easy for someone to believe that Allah (swt) does not provide. We see pictures of children freezing in Afghanistan and starving in Somalia. "Where is their *rizq*?" someone might ask. Yet we need to understand that there are consequences for our actions. Allah (swt) reminds us that if we do not rule with justice then there will be corruption on earth. Overusing resources, abus-

ing human beings and hoarding wealth are things that are despised in our religion and Allah (swt) warns us severely against them. We cannot blame Allah (swt) when we have created a system which goes precisely against the way Allah (swt) has ordered us to live. So their test is this hardship in this life, though ar-Razzaq may manifest Himself in ways that we cannot imagine, and our test is failing to help them out of it.

One of the things that prevents our *rizq* from reaching us is our sins. But some may say that many seemingly sinful people appear to receive *rizq*, so is there even a correlation? Yet if that is all we see then we are being superficial. They may have received their material *rizq*, but Allah (swt) may deny them their spiritual *rizq*. And this is far worse. This is especially so when the bounty we have been given is used in illegitimate ways.

Now that we know ar-Razzaq, how can we live the meaning of this attribute?

We alluded to two things that we should do in order to receive our provision. We should not seek *haram* means, as that also prevents our *du`a'* (supplication) from being responded to by Allah (swt). The second is the key, which is to work hard. But there is a third component that is equally crucial. And that is the internal action: *redha*. *Redha* is contentment with what Allah (swt) has given us. We talked about this previously in the series on how to achieve tranquility of the heart. The basic gist of it is that we should not harbor any resentment or bitterness towards Allah (swt) for what we have been given. If we work hard and find that there seem to be no fruits to our striving, there is no anger in our hearts towards Allah (swt). We are content with what He has written for us—and what we have is more than enough. The Prophet ﷺ reminds us of why we should be content when he says, "*Whoever wakes up safely in his home and is healthy in his body and has provisions for his day, would have acquired all the worldly possessions he is in need*

of,” (Tirmidhi). We should avoid being of the people whom Allah (swt) describes:

“And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.” (Qur’an, [22:11](#))

How to Increase Rizq

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi lists a number of ways in which we can increase our provision. I have summarized them below:

Taqwa (God-consciousness): *“And whoever has taqwa of Allah – He will make for him a way out. And will provide for him from where he does not expect.”* (Qur’an, [65:2-3](#))

Tawakul (reliance on God): *“And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.”* (Qur’an, [65:3](#))

Keeping good relations with family: The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Whoever would like his rizq (provision) to be increased and his life to be extended, should uphold the ties of kinship.’ (Bukhari)

Thankfulness: *“And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.’”* (Qur’an, [14:7](#))

Asking forgiveness and tawba (repentance): *“And said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and*

provide for you rivers.” (Qur’an, [71:10-12](#))

Charity: *“Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over?”* (Qur’an, [2:245](#))

Reciting Qur’an: The Prophet ﷺ said: *“The house in which Qur’an is recited is increased in good, and the house in which Qur’an is not recited is decreased in good.”* (al-Bazzar)

Migrating for the sake of Allah: *“And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance.”* (Qur’an, [4:100](#))

May Allah (swt) make us of those who know Him, who work hard for His sake, and who taste the paradise of contentment on earth.



Al-Haleem

How do you feel when are caught doing something wrong, but the person who catches you lets it go and doesn't punish or embarrass you? There is a mixture of embarrassment, relief and gratitude. If you love the person you disobeyed, in general many would vow never to do the same and never to take advantage of their kindness and forbearance.

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is far above any analogy, but this is our state with our Lord every single day. We constantly look at, listen to and do things we know we shouldn't. But Allah (swt) knows our state. And in most instances, He lets it go. He is *al-Haleem*.

Al-Ghazali defines Allah's Name *al-Haleem* as the One "who observes the disobedience of the rebellious and notices the opposition to the command, yet anger does not incite Him nor wrath seize Him, nor do haste and recklessness move Him to rush to take vengeance, although He is utterly capable of doing that."

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an: "And if Allah were to impose blame on the people for what they have earned, He would not leave upon the earth any creature. But He defers them for a specified term. And when

their time comes, then indeed Allah has ever been, of His servants, Seeing.” (Qur’an, [35:45](#))

In this scenario there is a specific action done and blame to be earned for that action. But Allah (swt) defers it—so a logical question would be, why does Allah defer it? A person could defer punishment because he is weak, because he is unable to act. But Allah (swt) is al-Qawiyy: He is the Most Powerful and can do as He wills. So why does He defer punishment?

As humans, we appreciate forbearance. We appreciate being given chances to rectify ourselves before seeing the consequences of our actions. If there was a rule that you would be sent to detention for not doing your homework, wouldn’t you be grateful that your teacher let it slide? How about the second time she does so, or the third? What about when a police officer catches you speeding, but doesn’t give you a ticket? Many of us would feel relief and then check ourselves to ensure we don’t do the same thing again. So Allah’s forbearance is for us to return. And we should be grateful for this attribute, just like we would be grateful to anyone who overlooks our faults and mistakes.

And imagine being punished for every wrong deed that you did. How many punishments in a day? What is beautiful about this Name is that it does not only pertain to punishments, but even simply the writing down of the wrong things that we do. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) tells us: *“The Scribe on the left delays registering the sin of a Muslim for six hours. If he repents (within these six hours), and seeks Allah’s forgiveness, they drop if off. If he doesn’t, they write it down as a single sin.”* (Tabarani)

And we sometimes take for granted that we do not see the consequences of our actions. Perhaps we assume that what we are doing is not a big deal—that Allah (swt) does not mind, even though we have clear commandments telling us to do something or to avoid

something. So sometimes we need to be woken up. Even if we are punished in this world, this shouldn’t cause us to lose heart. Firstly because Allah is Just, but also because even in His punishment is a mercy.

Allah (swt) tells us in Surat al-Qalam the story of the people of the garden. There were three sons of a man who would allow his garden to be used by the poor. When he passed away, “they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning” so they could have it all and give none to the poor. So what happened? *“So there came upon the garden an affliction from your Lord while they were asleep. And it became as though reaped.”* (Qur’an, [68:19-20](#))

SubhanAllah (glory to God), but what was the result? When they finally reached the garden to do what they had set out to do, they found it burned to the ground. But they realized the lesson—*“They said, ‘O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors. Perhaps our Lord will substitute for us [one] better than it. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous,’”* (Qur’an, [68:31-32](#)). And Allah (swt) says *“Such is the punishment [of this world]. And the punishment of the Hereafter is greater, if they only knew,”* (Qur’an, [68:33](#)).

This punishment woke them up. They realized the error of their ways. If Allah (swt) had allowed them to do what they wanted, then they would have to face a reckoning greater than it. The point is to bring us back. So Allah is al-Haleem for us to return to Him, but when we take advantage of that Hilm, of that forbearance, we need to be woken up and made aware. And all of this is from Allah’s Mercy.

Having the Characteristic of Hilm

There are some Names of Allah (swt) that are reserved for Him alone, such as *al-Khaaliq* (the Creator). But other Names can be used to describe human beings, such as *Raheem* (Merciful), as Allah

(swt) describes the Prophet ﷺ in the Qur'an using this term. Al-Haleem is also one of these attributes. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an about Ibrahim *`alayhi assalaam* (peace be upon him):

“Indeed was Abraham compassionate and Haleem.” (Qur'an, [9:114](#))

The Prophet ﷺ said that forbearance is the best characteristic. If we want Allah (swt) to overlook our mistakes, we need to be able to overlook the mistakes of others. And this especially pertains to what we allow to fester in the heart. We may think we are being forbearing by not reacting to something, but the fact that we keep it in and then explode the next time is not forbearance. Being forbearing would be letting go once, twice and even three times depending on the situation. But if this allows abuse to continue, then that is where we stop and put the person in check—but for the sake of Allah (swt). Meaning that we put the person in check so that they return, so that they are made aware, so that they understand that actions have consequences.

May Allah make us of those who have forbearance, and of those who recognize Allah's forbearance towards us, and to make that realization a means for us to return to Him. Ameen.

Allah's Beautiful Name: As-Siteer

In order to develop a close relationship with someone, one has to know him or her very well. Many of us feel distant from Allah (swt) at times, and fail to see, in every situation, the manifestations of His Names and Attributes. Sheikh Muhammad Ratib an-Nabulsi, a Syrian scholar, has done extensive research on Allah's Names, from their linguistic meaning to examples of how these Names are relevant to us and our everyday lives.

I have translated excerpts from his research on Allah's Name *As-Siteer*. This name appears in the *hadith* (narration) of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him): *“Verily, Allah the All-Mighty and Majestic is Forbearing, Modest and Concealing (Sitteer); and He loves modesty and concealment. Therefore, when any of you bathe, let him conceal himself (i.e. from the sight of people).”*¹

Linguistically, *As-Sitteer* (derived from the root word *sitr*) is one who conceals something. However, being a hyperbolic form of its root, it means the one who veils a million scandals, as well as the greatest scandals. When a name is in hyperbolic form, it aggrandizes the word qualitatively and quantitatively. A similar example would be Allah's Name *Al-Ghaffar*, which indicates that He forgives the greatest of sins and an infinite number of sins.

As-Sitteer has another meaning: the one who prevents and keeps something away. `Aisha radiallahu `anha (may Allah be pleased with her) says in an authentic hadith:

'A lady approached me along with her two daughters asking (for charity), but she found nothing with me except a date. I gave it to her and she divided it between her two daughters, not eating anything herself. Then, she stood up and left. When the Prophet ﷺ came in, I informed him of what happened. He said, "Whoever is entrusted with these daughters and treats them with benevolence, they will act as a shield (sitr) for him from Hell-Fire.' [Agreed upon]

Thus, whoever raises two daughters (and in some narrations it is sufficient to raise one daughter), and takes care of her, teaches her the mannerisms of Islam, ensures that she wears hijab, and chooses for her a believing husband, it is enough for him to enter Paradise.

Therefore, *sitr* also means to keep something away, and raising a righteous daughter keeps one away from Hellfire.

A Story on Sitr

I am not in the habit of telling stories based on dreams, but this story, in particular, is striking. About five years ago, one of the *khutaba'* (sing. *khateeb*; one who delivers sermons) of Damascus saw the Prophet ﷺ in a dream. He was very affected by this vision, as Abu Hurayra (ra) said "I heard the Prophet ﷺ say, *"Whoever sees me in a dream will see me when he is awake because Shaytan cannot take my form."*

In his dream, the Prophet ﷺ told him, "Tell your neighbor so-and-so near the mosque that he will be my companion in Paradise." The *khateeb* was deeply pained, [thinking]: 'Was this glad tidings for me or him?' So he went to his neighbor, who was a humble

vendor from among the laymen, and knocked on his door. He entered his house, greeted him, and said, "I have glad tidings for you from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, but I won't tell you until you tell me what you've done for your Lord." The man refused, and the *khateeb* persisted, saying, "By Allah, I will not relay the message unless you tell me what you've done for your Lord." The man finally relented and told his story:

"I had proposed to a lady and then married her. In [what was supposedly] her fifth month of pregnancy, she was nine months pregnant. This clearly meant it was not my child. I could have exposed her, divorced her, destroyed her, but I wanted her to repent to Allah (swt) through me. I brought home a midwife, and she gave birth in the darkness of the night. I took the child that was not mine, hid him under my cloak, and entered a mosque in Sanjaq Dar..."

He entered after the imam began praying fajr, put the newborn behind the door, and joined the prayer. No one noticed him. When the prayer was finished, people surrounded the child, all in shock. He came over, as if he didn't know of the situation, and asked, "What is going on?!" They replied, "Come look." He said, "I will look after this child. Give him to me." So he took the child in front of everyone as if he was an abandoned child. He took on his rearing, and returned him to his mother, and indeed she repented to Allah [for her sin].

Allah, the Exalted, says:

"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct [...]" (Qur'an, [16:90](#))

Justice [in this case] could have been to divorce her, but Allah (swt) has ordered us to treat others with benevolence. When this man did so, he saved her from humiliation and from going astray. Not every situation is resolved through justice, and more often than not, benevolence is a better alternative.

Allah, the Exalted, is *Sitteer*, and He loves those who conceal

the faults of others. This is why the Prophet ﷺ described the believing woman as *sitteera*, and a woman who sits and complains about her husband to others as scandalous. Allah (swt) does not look at a woman who constantly complains about her husband, but Allah loves a woman who is *sitteera*. A woman who is *sitteera* is a believing woman.³

Allah (swt) says:

“And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them [...]”
(Qur’an, [7:180](#))

No doubt, we must pause at the words “*so invoke Him by them,*” because one of its meanings is to grow closer to Allah (swt) by embodying His Divine attributes. Thus, you can grow closer to the Most Merciful by becoming merciful yourself, and you can grow closer to the Just by becoming fair, and you can grow closer to As-Sitteer by concealing the faults of others.

1. Reported by Abu Dawud, An-Nasa’i, al-Baihaqi, Ahmed, and graded as authentic.
2. Reported by Ahmad, Bukhari, and Tirmidhi.
3. Complaining here does not mean seeking legitimate help from others if the situation calls for it, but is meant in the context of backbiting and revealing secrets and bad habits of one’s spouse.

الْمُجِيبُ

The One Who Responds

Some attributes of Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) are mentioned only a few times in the Qur’an, while others are mentioned in numerous places, especially focusing on the ways they manifest. Concepts are repeated so that when we forget, we do not forget for too long. One of these Names that we seem to forget is *al-Mujeeb*: the One who Responds; and Allah (swt) shows us throughout the Qur’an the manifestation of this Name with those who ask Him.

We live in a world of means. And the Qur’an tells us to utilize our means, as those means were made available to us by Allah (swt). But we sometimes forget that *du’a*, calling on Allah (swt) sincerely, is one of those means. Sometimes it is the only means, and at other times it is one of many means that is required to reach an end goal. We do not simply download a job application without filling it in and then expect to get the job. So just like certain steps are required to achieve an end goal, *du’a* is also one of those steps.

Al-Mujeeb is the Answerer of prayers. According to al-Ghazali, this means that it is He who responds to the requests of those who ask by assisting them, to the call of those who call upon Him by answering them, and responds to the plight of the poor with all

they need.

When you ask Allah (swt), it means you know Him. Knowing He responds means knowing that He is All-Seeing (*As-Baseer*), All-Knowing (*Al-'Aleem*), All-Hearing (*Al-Samee'*), that He is the Most-Affectionate (*al-Wadud*), that He gives us even if we don't deserve it (*al-Wahhab*), that He is not in need of anyone or anything but we are in need of Him (*al-Ghaniyy*). If we don't ask, then we truly do not know Him, and we are missing out on an amazing act of worship.

There are two reasons why we do not ask: we do not believe that Allah (swt) can or will answer us, or we believe we can do it without His help.

The second reason is a form of arrogance. Allah (swt) says what can be translated as, *"And your Lord says, 'Call upon Me; I will respond to you.' Indeed, those who disdain My worship will enter Hell [rendered] contemptible,"* (Qur'an, [40:60](#)). Allah (swt) likens those who do not call on Him as disdaining His worship.

But here we will be expounding on the first reason. Allah (swt) tells us He is *al-Mujeeb*, so we should have utter confidence that He will respond to our *du'a'*. Look at what the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) says:

"Verily your Lord is Generous and Shy. If His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication) He becomes shy to return them empty." (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi)

Allah (swt) loves for you to go to Him. Sometimes Allah (swt) will not give you something unless and until you ask, even though He can give it to you whenever He wills. And it is so you know your Lord, so you experience that certainty in His attribute. The Prophet ﷺ tells us to ask Allah (swt) with certainty that He will

respond (Tirmidhi).

In order to build our certainty in *al-Mujeeb*, He tells us stories of how He manifests this Name in the Qur'an.

"And [mention] Job, when he called to his Lord, 'Indeed, adversity has touched me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' So We responded to him and removed what afflicted him of adversity. And We gave him [back] his family and the like thereof with them as mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers [of Allah]." (Qur'an, [21:83-84](#))

The Prophet Ayub (Job) *'alayhi sallatu wa sallam* (may God send His peace and blessings on him) was afflicted with a disease for 18 years, and never once did he complain. Before the disease, he was blessed with abundant wealth for 50 years and was always grateful to Allah (swt). He never once blamed Allah (swt) when he lost everything, and if we look at his *du'a'*, he called on Allah (swt) by His Majestic Names, and recognized that truly it is only Allah (swt) who could help him. And when Allah (swt) responded to him, He did not just remove the affliction, but gave him more.

We should always think the best of Allah (swt) and recognize that even as He is the One who responds, He is also the Most-Generous. And the most hopeful part? That Allah (swt) says: it is *"a mercy from Us, and a reminder to the worshippers"*—a reminder that when we are afflicted, we need to turn back to Allah (swt). Allah (swt) makes after hardship ease and can cure our afflictions when we turn to Him, but we should also be patient as Ayoub (as) was patient, and certain as Ayoub (as) was certain that he had a Merciful God even as he was being tried. So whenever harm afflicts you, remember this *du'a'*!

Allah (swt) then tells us about Yunus (as) (Jonah):

“And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him. And he called out within the darknesses, ‘There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.’ So We responded to him and saved him from the distress. And thus do We save the believers.” (Qur’an, [21:87-88](#))

The Prophet Yunus (as) was sent to a people who initially disbelieved. He did not wait for the sign from Allah (swt) telling him what to do next and left them in anger because of their disbelief. So Allah (swt) made a huge whale swallow him, and he remained there in the fish’s belly, saying the *du`a`* above:

“There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.”

What is so special about this *du`a`*? That Prophet Yunus (as) recognized his wrongdoing, and that with Allah (swt) lay all power. He remained saying this *du`a`* until Allah (swt) responded. Sometimes, when we do something wrong, we feel too ashamed to turn to Allah (swt) and ask for His help. But this was not the way of the Prophets. Knowing you can turn to Him despite your wrongs signifies your firm belief in His Name. Allah (swt) has said in another surah (chapter):

“If not that a favor from his Lord overtook him, he would have been thrown onto the naked shore while he was censured.” (Qur’an, [68:49](#))

Allah (swt) responded to him and delivered him from his distress, and when he returned to his people they had all believed because they witnessed the signs that occurred. Allah (swt), in His infinite Mercy, reminds us at the end: “And thus do We save the believers.” When you are distressed and under great difficulty, before asking for something, say this *du`a`* and recognize your wrongs to Allah (swt), He will *insh’Allah* (God willing) forgive you and respond.

Then Allah (swt) proceeds to tell us about the Prophet Zechariah:

“And [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, ‘My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the Best of Inheritors.’ So We responded to him, and We gave to him John, and amended for him his wife. Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.” (Qur’an, [21:89-90](#))

Zechariah’s wife could not have children, but as we see here, Zechariah (as) implored only Allah (swt), and called him by His attribute (*the Best of Inheritors*). Thereafter, Allah (swt) made Zechariah’s (as) wife fertile again. Then Allah (swt) tells us of the good they used to do, that “they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive. *They would constantly do good deeds, always be calling on Allah (swt) with fear and hope, and they were not arrogant, but humble.* These are of the qualities that we should adorn ourselves with and learn from, and they will *insh’Allah* make us closer to Allah (swt) and hopefully of those whom Allah (swt) responds to.

Allah (swt) gives us these 3 examples: the example of one who had everything and was afflicted with loss; the example of one who had wronged himself; and the example of one who desired something that he didn’t have. All of them called to Allah (swt), and Allah (swt) responded not because they were prophets, but because they turned to Him. In every verse Allah (swt) reminds us that this is the way Allah (swt) will treat the believers.

So what happens when we feel that there is no answer?

Some may say that it is hard to have true certainty in this Name when we sometimes feel that there has not been an answer to our *du`a`s*. But there is always an answer. One thing that may block your *du`a`* from being responded to is earning money from illegit-

imate means. The reason is when someone earns money from illegitimate means, it ceases to be a private matter, but it is something that harms others (e.g. interest). We cannot be taking advantage of others for a living and then expect that Allah (swt) will give us what we ask for.

Another thing is that sometimes we are hasty. We leave *du`a`* because we assume that because Allah (swt) has not responded yet, He will not. The Prophet ﷺ says, *“The du`a` of any worshipper will continue to be responded to, as long as he does not ask for a sin or breaking the ties of kinship, and as long as he is not hasty.”*

It was asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, and what does it mean to be hasty? He responded, ‘A worshipper says, ‘I have prayed and prayed, and I don’t see that it will be accepted,’ so he gives up hope of being answered and leaves du`a’.’ (Muslim)

This is an important point. We do not put a time-limit on when Allah (swt) can respond. While He is *al-Mujeeb*, He is also *al-Hakeem* (the wise). Perhaps you hate a thing and Allah (swt) puts good in it, and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad. One might ask, so what is the point of asking if I don’t get what I ask for, or when I ask for it? You will get more than what you ask for, because Allah (swt) will give you what you need and what is best. Allah (swt) gave Ayub (as) more. Allah (swt) gave the mother of Mary (as) something different than what she wanted, but Allah (swt) gave her what was best for her. Remember to entrust your affairs to the One who takes care of your affairs with all of His attributes, and gives you what you need. Ibn Hajar stated, *“Every single person that makes du`a` will be responded to, but the actual responses are different. Sometimes the exact matter that was prayed for is given, and sometimes, something equivalent to it is given.”*

Imam al-Ghazali gives some advice on how be with Allah *al-Mujeeb*. He states that we first should be responsive to Allah (swt) in His commandments. We all sin and make mistakes, but the point

is to strive to do the best we can. Secondly, it is important to respond to the servants of God, by assisting people if we are able, and by being kind if we are not able.

Finally, Aisha radi allahu `anha (may God have mercy on her) relates from the Prophet ﷺ that 3 things happen with our *du`a`*s: They are either responded to, deferred, or they prevent something bad from happening. Don’t ever stop asking—Allah (swt) will either send upon you His rain of Mercy or save the rainbow for you in Jannah (Paradise). A *du`a`* is never ever lost. You are accumulating wealth in ways you could never imagine. So remember to ask based on who Allah (swt) is, and not based on who you are.



At-Tawwab: Part I

Before moving on to this week's Name, I wanted to make a request: I'd like you to read over and reflect on the other Names that we went through so far. Our purpose is to know Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He); when we know Allah (swt) this life is easier to understand and Islam is more beautiful to live by. We then realize how Allah (swt) is truly with us, every step of the way, even when we are unaware of Him.

Today's Name is *at-Tawwab*. *Taaba* in Arabic means to return. And *at-Tawwab* is the One who accepts all those who return to Him. And how many of us need to return to Him?

"And it is He who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do." [Qur'an, [42:25](#)]

Despite knowing all that we do, He accepts our turning back to Him. Human beings, even our own parents sometimes, get tired of us. When we've ignored them for a while or have done something they dislike, they may reject us. But Allah (swt) reminds us:

"Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from His servants and receives charities and that it is Allah who is the Accept-

ing of repentance, the Merciful?” [Qur’an, [9:104](#)]

That is why He has named Himself *at-Tawwab*: so we know that whatever level we are at, He will accept us if we return to Him sincerely. Allah (swt) makes it clear who He has addressed to return to Him:

“[...] And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.” [Qur’an, [24:31](#)]

As the verse tells us, *tawba* (repentance) is for everyone because we all need to return. It does not simply have to be from a hideous sin. It can be because we are far, so we need to return. It can be because we have slipped here and there, so we need to return. It can be because we want to take that step to get closer to Allah (swt), so we need to return. That is the essence of *tawba*.

Dr. Ratib an-Nabulsi states that in order to understand *tawba*, we need to understand Allah’s Mercy. His (swt) being *at-Tawwab* is because He is the Most-Merciful towards us. He invites us to return to Him. In a beautiful *hadith* (narration) of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him), we are told:

“Indeed, Allah extends His Hand in the night to forgive the one who sins in the day, and He extends His Hand in the day to forgive the one who sins at night, and this continues until the sun rises from the west.” [Muslim]

Allah (swt) also gives us signs that push us to return to Him. Al-Ghazali states:

“Al-Tawwab makes reference to facilitating the causes of repentance in His servants time and again by making manifest some of His signs, conveying His counsel to them, and disclosing His deterrents and warnings to them.”

Whatever causes you return to Him—whether it is an *ayah* (verse) in the Qur’an, an article, a friend who reminds you, or even the realization of a sin you committed—is only because He wants to accept your repentance. Then you come within the realm of *at-Tawwabeen*: those who constantly return.



At-Tawwab: Part 2

Tawba (Repentance) does not need much. It does need for you to think that you are at a level in which you can face Him. He tells us in the Qur'an:

“Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.” (Qur'an, [2:222](#))

Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He) loves those who always return to Him. Imagine being beloved to Allah (swt) because you always go back to Him. Nothing deters you—not your sins, nor your heedlessness. You go because you know you have a Lord who accepts you turning back to Him.

Sometimes what prevents us from returning is the feeling of “I’m not good enough.” Or even that we feel we cannot become better. But Ibn Ata'illah says:

“When a person commits a sin, this is accompanied by darkness. Indeed, disobedience is like a fire, and darkness is its smoke. It is like someone kindling a fire in a room for seventy-years. Do you not think that the roof of that room will be blackened? In the same way the heart is blackened by disobedience. And nothing

wipes it clean except repentance to God. Humiliation, darkness, and being veiled from God are thus natural accompaniments of disobedience. But when you repent to God, the effects of these sins disappear.”¹

The key to relieving ourselves of these burdens is precisely to return—because the act of returning erases all of that. When you return to Allah (swt), it should not be something heavy. It should actually be a liberating act. If you come home and find that your clothes are dirty, you would remove them. You would take a shower. And what happens afterwards? You feel good. You feel clean. You may get dirty again tomorrow. You will avoid getting dirty, but it may happen. And then you shower again when you get home. We don’t avoid taking a shower because we are sick of getting dirty. The feeling of being cleansed again is much too great, much too invigorating.

And Allah is so Generous, so Merciful, so accepting of our return to Him, that the following things happen:

- **Forgiveness of the sin:** Allah (swt) says, “*The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Knowing. The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance [...]*” (Qur’an, [40:2-3](#)). When He forgives you, Allah (swt) protects you from the effect of your sin on the Day of Judgment.
- **Erasure of the sin:** Allah (swt) tells us about Himself, “*And He pardons much,*” (Qur’an, [42:34](#)). This means the sin is as though you never did it.
- **Replacement of the sin with good deeds:** Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an, “*Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful,*” (Qur’an, [25:70](#)). This is the highest level of acceptance of your tawba. Allah (swt) will change the ghafla (heedlessness), the mistakes, and the sins into good deeds. You may see mountains of good deeds

on the Day of Judgment and think to yourself, “When did I do that?” and you will be told that Allah (swt) accepted your tawba and turned all the bad into good.

And this is just with regards to sin. Sometimes our return to Allah (swt) is when we decide we want to do more, that we want to become better. When you return to Allah (swt) in this way, or by leaving sins, the greater thing that happens is that you become one of the people that Allah (swt) loves. And if Allah (swt) loves you, He will show it in His affection because He is *al-Wadud*. So why then do we not return to the One who accepts our turning back to Him?

The conditions of repentance from sin are the following, as stated by some scholars:

1. You regret what you did; you recognize that it is wrong: This does not mean that you hate yourself. If you hate yourself, then you don’t want good for yourself. However, you see the act that you did or the state that you are in as something that is not good, and which should change.
2. Stop the sin at that moment: Sometimes we don’t stop the sin because we think we will not be able to continue in desisting, that we will slip back into it. It’s ok. Just stop it at the moment. Don’t sabotage yourself with negative thinking. It’s like saying, “I’ll cut myself now because I will probably cut myself tomorrow.” That’s silly.
3. Intend never to do the sin again: In Huda’s article about [well-formed goals](#), she gives us ways to help achieve our goals. Only use positive language and use the present tense. Tell yourself that you are doing good now. And ask Allah (swt) to help you. But what if you fall into it again? Remember: hate the sin, not yourself. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an that He will tell the people of *Jannah* (Paradise), “*Indeed, this is for you a reward, and your effort has been appreciated,*” (Qur’an,

[76:22](#)). It is your striving that is rewarded.

4. If your sin has to do with the rights of another person, you should return the rights of those you have violated if you can. If you cannot, then make *du`a'* (supplication) for them.

Someone may ask, so what do I do afterwards? I was a person in *ghafla*. I didn't do that much bad nor was I striving for closeness to Allah (swt). Or I lived my life in complete disobedience, and I don't know how to turn that around. The answer is to take it step by step. Your return to Allah (swt) was the first step, a beautiful step. The next step is to work on yourself and work on your surroundings. Pick something that you need to work on, and something that you need to stop doing. Work on them for a while until they become habit, or are easier to do. Then add. Don't be discouraged if you feel that your development is slow and you didn't suddenly turn into "Super-Muslim." Remember that the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said:

"The most beloved of actions to Allah are the most consistent ones even if little in amount." [Bukhari]

Start with what is obligatory, because that is what brings us close to Allah (swt). Then add the extra. You can do them simultaneously of course, but don't prioritize the extra over the foundation. Many of us are familiar with Allah's saying:

"Nothing endears My servant to Me more than doing of what I have made obligatory upon him to do. And My servant continues to draw nearer to Me with the supererogatory (nawafil) so that I shall love him." [Bukhari]

And what is crucial is to get aid from a good friend, your spouse, your mentor. Even if you don't have that now, keep seeking it—Allah is the Guide, and He is ar-Razzaq (the Provider), and He will provide. But let us take the first step in returning.



The Generous

Kareem comes from the three-letter root ka-ra-ma. According to *Lisan al-Arab*, it encompasses all kinds of good, honor and virtues. As we will see, the concept of *karam* is more expansive than a superficial understanding of generosity.

For example, the Qur'an is described as Qur'an Kareem. This means that the Qur'an is full of benefit and virtues. Sh. Ratib an-Nabulsi uses the following ayah (verse) to illustrate, where the Queen of Sheba speaks of the letter than was given to her:

"She said, 'O eminent ones, indeed, to me has been delivered a kareem letter.'" (Qur'an [27:29](#))

Imam al-Ghazali, in his explanation of Allah's Names, stated that *al-Kareem* is "one who forgives if he has the power, follows through when he promises, and exceeds the limits one could hope for when he gives; nor is he concerned with how much he gives or to whom."

Another meaning is also alluded to in *Maqayees al-lugha*, that *karam* can refer to something that intrinsically has honor in and of and itself. This meaning is important. Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala*

(exalted is He) says:

“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.” (Qur’an [17:70](#))

The word used for honored is *karram-na*, from the same root *karam*. Allah (swt) has given the human being a sense of honor and dignity in being human. He has preferred the human over other creation. Iblis (Satan) even recognizes this, saying:

“Do You see this one whom You have honored [karram-ta] above me? If You delay me until the Day of Resurrection, I will surely destroy his descendants, except for a few.” (Qur’an [17:62](#))

How does Iblis do this? By distracting us and causing us to stray from the path. When we follow him, we are putting ourselves in a lower state than we are supposed to be.

How is Allah al-Kareem?

What does it mean for Allah to be *al-Kareem*? Allah (swt) in His essence is *Kareem* because of His perfection, His Oneness and His uniqueness.

He is also *Kareem* in His dealings with His creation. As al-Ghazali’s definition shows, Allah (swt) always goes over and beyond what is needed, when He does not have to. He forgives, He follows through and He gives. Why? Because He is ultimately *al-Kareem*.

We can illustrate with a few examples, but I am sure you can think of more:

Prayers

Prayers are fascinating. We were created to worship. We all know that worship includes many different acts, but at the very basic level, we all must pray. It is a compulsory act, and it would suffice that it is a command from Allah (swt). Yet Allah (swt) provides so many spiritual cures in prayers, and He makes it something that is beloved in the heart of the believers. When we pray, the veil between us and Allah (swt) is lifted, as the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) tells us:

“Allah faces the servant during prayer as long as he does not turn away.” (Abu Dawud)

Moreover, we are forgiven for sins, as we are told:

“When a slave stands and prays, all his sins are brought and placed on his head and shoulders. Every time he bows or prostrates, some of them fall from him.” (Bayhaqi, Saheeh al-Jami’)

And we are rewarded! We are rewarded even when we are waiting for prayer, as the Prophet ﷺ said:

“A person is considered in prayer as long as he is waiting for the prayer.” (Bukhari, Muslim)

And finally we are given the gift of *du`a`* (supplication) when we are closest to Allah (swt), in *sujood* (prostration). The Prophet ﷺ tells us:

“The closest that a servant is to his Lord is when he is in prostration.” (Muslim)

All of this to exemplify this attribute of Allah (swt)—He gives and gives, for such a simple act in order to bring us closer.

Food

We need certain nutrients. Our food could be bland and tasteless, and simply fulfill its function of helping us survive. But food is also a pleasure (sometimes too much of a pleasure for people, and this is also from the generosity of Allah (swt)).

Forgiveness

Even in Allah's forgiveness of our sins, His Generosity is manifest. When we spoke about Allah *at-Tawwaab*, we recounted how Allah (swt) not only cancels your sin, but that sin may even be turned into a good deed in your books. Yet Allah's generosity knows no bounds. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi, in explaining Allah's Name *al-Kareem*, quotes the following:

"If a believer returns to Allah with true sincere repentance, Allah makes him, the angels and the whole world, forget his sins and misdeeds."

Paradise

Paradise is the ultimate manifestation of Allah's generosity. Fairness may be in giving us a good life for whatever good we did (which is ultimately from His bounty!). But Paradise removes even the memory of whatever we were afflicted with. Paradise is a place that we cannot even imagine—where everyone will have what he wishes, and everyday is more fascinating than the previous. Take a minute to just imagine.

Recognize al-Kareem

Firstly, recognize the worth that Allah (swt) has given you in being a human being, with intellect and a capacity to choose. This dignity was given by God; and as people, we must act in ways that

are dignified. We dishonor ourselves by lying, cheating, being rude, and ignoring injustice.

Secondly, recognize Allah's generosity in His dealings with you, and that everything good we have is a result of Allah's generosity. Reflect upon how Allah's generosity exceeds all expectations. It is important to contemplate over what we have, and realize that what we have is truly over and above our basic needs. All that is from the generosity of *al-Kareem*.

Thirdly, be generous to people, knowing that Allah (swt) compensates His servants because He is the ultimate in Generosity. Not simply in money, but in time and simple generosity in attitude. The Prophet ﷺ would never say "no" when he was asked for something [Agreed upon]. The Prophet ﷺ also said: *"The generous one is close to Allah, close to people, far from the fire; a stingy person is far from Allah, far from people, far from Paradise; and the generous ignorant person is more beloved to Allah than a stingy worshipper."* (Tirmidhi)

Share the ways in which you have witnessed Allah's Generosity!

اللطيف

Al-Lateef

Sometimes there is that one moment when someone says something that you need to hear. Perhaps you are sad, and your friend texts you randomly saying, “You know, I really wish you the best,” for no apparent reason. Or you are going through a difficulty and attend a talk, and the *sheikh* says something that particularly resonates with you—“Sometimes Allah tests you so you will call on Him.” How did these people know to say these things, to remind you of Allah subhanahu wa ta’ala (may He be glorified and exalted), when they had no idea what you were feeling or going through?

That is Allah *al-Lateef*—He who is Benevolent, Gentle and Subtle with His servants. In Arabic, the word *lateef* comes from *lutf* or the three-letter root l-t-f. Al-Ghazali says about this Name of Allah:

“*Al-Lateef*, the Benevolent. One is deserving of this name if one knows the subtleties of those things which are beneficial, as well as their hidden aspects, along with what is subtle about them and what is benevolent.”

In the dictionary, it is frequently defined as gentleness and also as something that is too tiny or too subtle to feel.

So when we say that Allah (swt) is *lateef* with His slaves, it means that while He is always with us, and knows everything that goes on within us from thoughts and emotions, His protection and His presence with us are subtle. As Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi says, “His being with us is not heavy.” Combine this meaning of *lateef* with its other meaning of being Gentle and Kind, and you have the Lord who knows what is going on in your heart, and sends you what you need out of His Mercy and Kindness in the most subtle way.

You may believe it is your friend that is comforting you, but in reality, it is Allah (swt) who sent you that friend. Perhaps that one word was what you needed to uplift you. Perhaps your friend told you a joke that helped to get your mind off things. Perhaps that person who you met seemingly out of nowhere and recommended a certain class for you was what brought you closer to Allah (swt).

The subtleties and kindness are not simply to do with our emotions and worries, but also in Allah’s (swt) dealings with the universe. Look at Allah *al-Jameel*, the Most Beautiful and the Source of Beauty, as He beautifies the universe with stars and breezes and sunsets—a subtlety and a kindness we take for granted, but are nevertheless there for us, and scientifically proven to lift our spirits.

When we see the way *Al-Lateef* treats us with benevolence and gentleness, we cannot but try to be a source of gentleness for others, as a way of being grateful to God for His kindness to us. As the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said:

“Show gentleness, for if gentleness is found in anything, it beautifies it and when it is taken out from anything it damages it.” (Abu Dawud)

القَابِضُ الْبَاسِطُ

Al-Qaabid, Al-Baasit

We all go through periods of constriction. Our chests feel tight, we may feel angry with people and we find no pleasure in acts of worship. On the other hand, during the good times there is a feeling of great expansion in the heart, a lightness and a joy.

Both of these are from Allah, *al-Qaabid al-Baasit*, He who contracts and He who expands. The manifestations of *qabd* and *bast* are many, and we will explain the other meanings before reflecting on the state of the heart.

Rizq (Provision), Life and Death

The concept of *qabd* and *bast* have a lot to do with *rizq* (provision). It is God who ultimately provides for us—at time He withholds and at other times He gives. The name *al-Razzaq* explains this further.

Another aspect of *qabd* and *bast* shows us the true power of God. Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) seizes the souls and causes them to die, or releases them. Allah tells us:

“Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent -[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving –“ (Qur’an, [67:1-2](#))

When we sleep, it is described as a small death, in which our souls are returned to God. Allah (swt) returns many of them, and withholds others.

The Constriction and Expansion of the Heart

Most relevant to us is the state of our hearts, which we struggle with daily. We sometimes feel constricted, but the constriction is for a reason. Sometimes it is this constriction that brings us back to God. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi states that these two Names are inseparable, because “if you say that Allah is ‘*Al-Qabid*’ (the Withholder), it would mean that you describe Allah as being niggardly or miserly; and Allah, All Mighty, is far above such evil qualities. However, when you say that Allah is ‘*Qabid, Bassit*’ (Withholder, Extender), you describe Him as being Powerful and Wise.” He withholds when it is good and He gives when it is good.

The person who is in a state of constriction can look forward to the expansion and the lightness. The Prophet Yusuf *alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) had to be thrown in a well before coming into the care of the Minister. He had to be put in prison before he was given power and reunited with his family. But he understood that it was from Allah (swt) and was able to make the best of his situation. He knew that the relief was coming.

We too need to understand the concept of *qabd*—contraction. The feeling of *qabd* is sometimes due to our own priorities. We may desire approval, control and security from other than Allah (swt), and when they fail us the natural feeling of contraction occurs¹. It hurts. And some of us decide to keep it there. We let the feeling

of *qabd* push us farther away from Allah (swt), because we do not understand why it is there. But Allah (swt) is *al-Qaabid*, and just like a headache tells us we have not slept well or a stomachache tells us the food we have eaten is bad, this *qabd* tells us to reflect on its causes. There is a root cause, and the only way to get rid of the discomfort of the contraction is to deal with its source. And just like Allah (swt) is *al-Qaabid*, He is *al-Baasit* who can remove even the traces of any constriction we may have felt.

The key is to know that after every hardship is ease, as promised in the Qur’an. And the state of the believer is that when he is in a state of ease and feeling at rest in his heart, he is grateful. Sheikh Omar AbdelKafy stated that the heart is like a home. At the times when we are able, it is important to build around the house, so that if a thief decides to rob us, he has to get past so much more just to be able to get to the front door.

Be a Source of Expansion for Others

As people, we need to be of those who offer relief to other people. Al-Ghazali states that we should expand the hearts of men by reminding them of the blessings of God and His consolation, and if need be remind them also of His majesty so that that form of constriction also brings us back to Allah (swt).

1. For more on this, please see Ustadh AbdelRahman Mussa's iPersonalEnrichment program.

الْخَافِضُ الرَّافِعُ

The Abaser, the Exalter

Al-Khaafidh (the Abaser) comes from the root kh-f-dh. It was used to refer to the camel when he lowers his head. When referring to Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), Ibn Atheer said, “It is He who lowers the oppressors and humiliates them.”

When we look around, the signs of Allah (swt) are apparent. Look at Hitler who was unbelievably powerful at his time, who, despite all odds, was able to make his country a world power. But his power was based on oppression. He was humiliated, brought down, and debased—he ended up committing suicide. And we have more recent examples. The Arab Spring in Egypt saw Mubarak—who had a hold on power for 30 years and profited from his position while the people lived in poverty—removed from his place. There is a beautiful verse in the Qur'an:

“And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people so that Allah may make evident those who believe and [may] take to Himself from among you martyrs – and Allah does not like the wrongdoers.” [Qur'an, [3:140](#)]

This is the sunnah (path) of life. At times we see tyrants with so much power, but slowly they are toppled down. And this is not just

for rulers who are oppressive. When Iblees said:

“I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay.” [Qur’an, [38:76](#)]

Allah (swt) expelled him from Paradise.

When Pharaoh said, “I am your most exalted lord.” [Qur’an, [79:24](#)]

He was drowned.

And this should scare us. We may not have the worldly status of Pharaoh, but how many of us have a little Pharaoh in us, or a little Iblees, justifying our arrogance? So the lesson for us is to be humble before Allah (swt) lowers us. As the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) told us:

“Whoever humbles himself to God, Allah will raise him.” (Muslim)

And this brings us to Allah ar-Raafi`—He who raises and exalts. Allah (swt) says to the Prophet ﷺ in the Qur’an:

“And We raised high (rafa`na) for you your repute.” [Qur’an, [94:4](#)]

He says that He has exalted the Prophet ﷺ. And this is important for us to remember during these times when vicious lies are being spread about the Prophet ﷺ. It is not so different to what was being said about him when he started inviting people to Islam. However, Allah (swt) said that He raised high his repute; so no matter how many cartoons or films are made about him, Allah (swt) has raised him and no one can humiliate him. While some people will do disrespectful things out of ignorance, some people use it as an opportunity to spread light. The 1 Billion Salawat initiative was launched on November 4th in which Muslims all over the world pledged to send prayers upon the Prophet ﷺ. As of today, the

pledge count is 80 million—*subhan Allah* (glory be to God). More than 1400 years after his death, people are still exalting his remembrance.

And when it comes to us, we must remember that there is a never a moment when we are obeying Allah (swt) except that we are elevated, and this should comfort us when we encounter opposition from other people. However, sometimes people act in a contradictory way. Their obedience to Allah (swt) causes them to be arrogant—is this a person that Allah (swt) raises? Remember that we are told that a person will not enter Paradise if he has an atom’s worth of arrogance in his heart. So even our obedience to God should come with humility and a feeling of gratefulness. This is perfectly illustrated in the words of the people of Paradise:

“Praise to Allah, who has guided us to this; and we would never have been guided if Allah had not guided us.” [Qur’an, [7:43](#)]

So understanding that Allah’s Names, *al-Khaafidh ar-Raafi`*, relate to us greatly is crucial. By humbling ourselves before Allah (swt) and striving to serve Him and help His creation, we are elevated to the rank of the Angels. Al-Ghazaali states:

“Whoever elevates his vision above tangible and imagined things, and his intention above blameworthy desires, God has raised him to the horizon of the angels close to Him [muqarrabun]; while whoever restricts his vision to tangible things and his aspiration to the passions the beasts share with him, God will reduce him to the lowest of ranks. None but God most high does this, for He is the Abaser and the Exalter.”

May Allah make us of those whom He loves and elevates!

Our Internal States

Allah's Names *al-Khaafidh ar-Raafi`* also have to do with our internal state. When we do something wrong, we sometimes feel debased, uncomfortable, and down. But when we do good, we feel uplifted. And that is Allah (swt) raising our spirits. So we should even understand these feelings as signs from Allah (swt), and we should turn to Him as a cure.

Relationship to Other Names

Another pair of Allah's Names has a very similar meaning—*Al-Mu'izz al-Muthil*, the Honorer, He who humbles. While I will not be expanding on these Names too much here, I will say that they are related to dominion; He is the One who gives dominion to whomever He wills and removes it from whomever He wills. These Names are also related to dignity—that it is Allah (swt) who honors and dignifies, and it is He who humbles and shames. As al-Ghazali states, “true dominion consists in deliverance from the shame of need, the dominance of passion, and the disgrace of ignorance.” May we all be of those whom Allah elevates.

السلام

Peace

“O Allah, you are the Source of Peace, and from You is peace, blessed are You O Possessor of Glory and Honor.” [Muslim]

We all seek peace in some way. We work so that we do not have to worry about where our next meal will come from. We take breaks to rest and give ourselves some calm. We go out for long drives just to get to a place of quiet and tranquility.

Something in us constantly desires serenity. We were created in this way. And the reason why we desire peace so much is because Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is the Source of Peace; He is *as-Salaam*. And because He is the Source of Peace, only He can truly bestow peace. We are told in the Qur'an:

“Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.” (Qur'an, [13:28](#))

Yet we sometimes act in contradictory ways. We look for an illusion of peace in the material, sometimes in other people, and in a certain way of life. But the reason why we sometimes see people who don't seem to have much yet are filled with the light of contentment, and others who appear to have it all but are never

satisfied, is precisely because peace comes from *as-Salaam*, and not from this world. If peace is sought through Him, then peace is achieved by Him. As He tells us:

“And Allah invites to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path.” (Qur’an, [10:25](#))

As-Salaam: the Flawless Source of Peace

We all understand *“salaam”* to be peace, but this word has a number of dimensions, and they all relate to Allah’s Name *as-Salaam*. The root s-l-m also means to be free from defect. *Salaama* means safety. So how are these meanings interrelated and how does that manifest in Allah’s Beautiful Name?

Allah’s actions are free from fault or blemish; He is flawless. As human beings, we try to seek and create what is flawless because we have a natural affinity towards it. And precisely what disturbs us and prevents a peaceful existence is when we put all of our hopes in the imperfect. We depend on other human beings as we should depend on God, and when we are disappointed in them, we are broken. We may get angry or frustrated when things don’t work out the seemingly perfect way we wanted. But that is because people and things are not perfect. And when we let go of that, and understand that we all have faults, we are in a better position to work in our environment and try to make it better. The lack of perfection does not cause us to despair. We understand that it is only Allah who is Flawless.

This should not be interpreted as we should not strive for perfection in our deeds. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said, *“When one of you does something, Allah loves that you do it with excellence,”* [Tabarani]. But what is meant is that, internally, our hope should not rest on the imperfect. I recently missed a flight because of signal failures on the Heathrow Express. I deliberately

took that train because it is supposed to get you to the airport in 12 minutes. But *subhanAllah* (glory to God), it was not meant to be, and I missed my flight. I wasn’t angry or upset. I took the lesson that I should have left even earlier and to plan for such unexpected occurrences, and that it was not written for me to take that flight this time. But the point is, we strive for excellence and for good because we are servants of the Perfect One, and realize that all and any good comes from Him.

As-Salaam and Our Hearts

Al-Ghazali makes the connection beautifully to the state of our hearts. He says,

“Every servant whose heart is free from deceit, hatred, envy and evil intent; and whose limbs are unblemished by sins and forbidden actions, and whose attributes are not affected by inversion and reversal, will be one who comes to God the most high with a flawless heart.”

Most of the things that cause real disturbances in our hearts and our lives are tied to what we allow into our hearts. When we allow ourselves to envy and to hate, we are naturally far from being in a state of peace, because our hearts are far from the Flawless Source of Peace. How can a person who is far from a well expect to quench his thirst?

We seek peace from the Flawless Source of Peace by attempting to remove the blemishes from our heart, and we are then granted peace *insha’Allah* (God willing). We free ourselves from the shackles of resentment, self-righteousness and rage. We start to do this by humbling ourselves to Allah (swt) and realizing that everything comes from Him. The anger in our hearts only harms us and shows discontent with the divine decree. We need to let go. As the Prophet ﷺ said: *“Know that what has passed you by was*

not going to befall you; and that what has befallen you was not going to pass you by,” [Tirmidhi]. We are told in the Qur’an of “the Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart” (Qur’an, [26:88-89](#)). The sound heart is “**qalb saleem**”, from the same root of Allah’s Name as-Salaam. We are also given an example of the one who had such a heart: “And indeed, among his kind was Abraham, when he came to his Lord with a sound heart.” (Qur’an, [37:83-84](#))

How did Ibrahim have such a heart? Because it was attached to Allah, as-Salaam. He had complete trust in Allah (swt), so much so that he was in a state of complete calm when he was to be catapulted into a raging fire. His heart was in such a state that when his father said he would stone him if he did not desist from his message, Ibrahim `alayhi assalaam (peace be upon him) told him that he would pray for him. And Allah (swt) bestowed upon Him peace, and upon all those who are attached to Him. In Surat As-Saffat, Allah tells us about some of the other Prophets upon whom He bestowed peace:

“Peace be upon Noah in all the worlds,” ([37:79](#)). “Peace be upon Abraham,” ([37:109](#)). “Peace be upon Moses and Aaron,” ([37:120](#)). “Peace be upon Elias,” ([37:130](#)). “Peace be upon the Messengers,” ([37:181](#)).

May Allah make us of those upon whom Allah bestows His peace!

The Weight of Sins

Sins also weigh heavily on our hearts. Sometimes we do not want to think of this. But just as eating a little poison every day will make us sick and eventually kill us, sins do that to our hearts. So it is very important in realizing Allah’s Name as-Salaam to critically reflect on ourselves and our states, and strive to become better. If

it is difficult, then the key is turning to Allah (swt) and asking for His help, for He constantly accepts those who return to Him. Even stopping one little thing that is displeasing to God is good, because it is a step taken closer to the Source of Peace.

All the Prophets had peace from Allah (swt). And ultimately, that is what we all desire. But we must always remember to seek it through the source, not the illusions. So what are the practical ways to achieve a peaceful life?

1. Remember Allah

Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned that remembering Allah is literally any action that is done with Allah (swt) in mind, so this includes prayer, specific forms of *dhikr* (remembrance), *du`a* (supplication), and doing things with the intention to please Allah (swt). Allah tells us in the Qur’an that the salah (prayer) is for His remembrance. And He tells us that hearts find rest in remembrance.

2. Ask for forgiveness

The Prophet ﷺ tells us that “The one who (regularly) says *istighfaar* [seeking forgiveness], Allah will relieve him of every burden, and make from every discomfort an outlet, and He will provide for him from (sources) he never could imagine.” (Abu Dawud)

3. Remind yourself that only Allah is Flawless

We all have flaws and we all make mistakes. So we should not despair when this happens, but rather work hard to become better. We cannot place burdens on people that they cannot bear by expecting them to be perfect either.

4. Seek the reward from Allah, not from people

We are rewarded for our striving. When we put our hope in results and not in Allah (swt), maintaining good works and

activism can be hard. But when we realize that the point is the striving and in maintaining it and seeking ways to improve, we are not deterred by what may seem a failure.

And the ultimate peace comes in the Hereafter, in the Abode of Peace, where there is no fear or sadness. May Allah make us of its inhabitants.



The All Knowing, The Most Wise

When learning Allah's Names, it is important to understand that Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is not just one attribute at a time. Just like if we describe our friend as firm and kind, it doesn't mean that she is sometimes firm and sometimes kind. She is both at the same time. One attribute does not cancel out the other; rather they work in harmony. So it is important not to compartmentalize Allah's Names and attributes in that way, but rather to understand Him in a holistic sense.

Today's two Names are important in that regard, because we can truly better our relationship with Allah (swt) when we understand how these Names relate to His other Names.

The first Name is *Al-`aleem*— the All-Knowing: what is and what could be, what was and what could have been. Al-Ghazali says, "Its perfection lies in comprehending everything by knowledge— manifest and hidden, small and large, first and last, inception and outcome."

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi teaches that the difference between Allah's knowledge and human knowledge is that we must necessarily acquire our knowledge by what we see and experience around

us. On the other hand, Allah's knowledge has no beginning or end, and is not based on trial and error. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur'an:

"And with Him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him. And He knows what is on the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but that He knows it. And no grain is there within the darknesses of the earth and no moist or dry [thing] but that it is [written] in a clear record," (Qur'an, [6:59](#))

The all-Knower even knows every leaf that falls. He knows what our souls whisper to us and He is closer to us "than the jugular vein". So He knows what you are going through, what you are feeling. Your Lord does not forget either; so do not think that anything you have done has gone to waste. He knows when you prevented yourself from doing bad for His sake, so just because you didn't see the result of your choice immediately, don't think that it went unnoticed. But some things need patience, and Allah (swt) teaches us with time. Allah (swt) tells us:

"But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not." (Qur'an, [2:216](#))

The second Name is *al-Hakeem* which is related to *hakam*, to judge. According to al-Ghazali, *al-Hakeem* is "the One who possesses wisdom, and wisdom consists of the knowledge of the most excellent things gathered through the instrumentality of the most excellent branch of knowledge." Similarly in order to judge, you need to have the knowledge with which to do so.

One is knowing, and the other is acting with this knowledge. Allah (swt) is both the All-Knowing and the Most-Wise—He possesses all the knowledge, and as an-Nabulsi states, He "does the proper thing in the proper way in the proper place and the proper time."

So crucially, we talk about Allah being *al-Mujeeb* (the One who responds), *al-Wakeel* (the Trustee) and *al-Fattah* (the Supreme Opener). So sometimes we work hard and have absolute certainty that the Possessor of these attributes will help us. Then, the result is not as we wanted. So some of us may come away with our faith shaken, others may feel betrayed or abandoned. But that is because we missed out on something—He is the Most-Wise, and He is the all-Knowing. He didn't give it to you because He knows what is best for your dunya (this life) and your akhira (the here-after). We sometimes think we know, but we do not possess all of the knowledge. And understanding that He knows what the best result should be is true tawakul (total trust in God).

Can we imagine being in the position of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him), when he seeks protection from the people of Ta'if? He must have thought, "Surely, Allah will respond." And he goes to Ta'if, yet is rejected in a brutal, demeaning way. But he never doubts Allah (swt), not for a second. His *du`a'* (supplication) consists of saying to Allah, "If you are not angry with me, then I do not care." So he never doubts. He continues working. And it is because Medina was better for him—and the lesson for us is no matter what the people do to us, if we are on the path to truth, Allah (swt) is always with us.

So whenever things do not go our way or as we assumed they would, we need to put our trust in the One who truly knows what is best. I once prayed *istikhara* (prayer for guidance) for a job I really didn't want to take, and everything was pushing me to take it. It was not a job I would want to do in the long term, but at that time it was the only thing available and all the signs seemed to be pointing for me to take it. I was not too happy, but tried to be content. *Subhan'Allah* (glory to God), it was through that job that the doors to what I actually wanted to do opened up—and I learned that truly Allah knows, and I do not. I'm sure that many of us have gone through this!

Coming Alive with Allah's Names

The first lesson is that understanding these Names should increase our faith in Allah, and especially in His other Names and attributes. They are all related, and once we truly understand them and try to live by them, our faith in Allah (swt) should increase as we see the manifestations of His Name in our lives.

The second lesson is one of humility. When Abu Bakr *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) was praised, he would pray:

“O Allah! You know me more than I know myself; and I know myself more than they know me. O Allah! Make me better than they say, forgive me what they do not know about me, and do not take me to account for that which they say about me.” (Ibn Atheer)

We all know our faults better than others, and there are some faults that we do not notice that Allah (swt) knows. It is important to keep ourselves grounded, that no matter how good we become, Allah is All-Knowing and we can always improve. The *du`a* of the Angels in the Qur'an is beautiful in this regard:

“They said, “Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise.” (Qur'an, [2:32](#))

It is important to always attribute the good to Allah (swt), because truly all good is from Him. And as we know, whoever is grateful, Allah (swt) increases them in favor.

Finally, the best knowledge is knowledge of Allah (swt). Al-Ghazali, says, “He who knows all things but fails to know Allah is not called ‘a wise person.’” We are encouraged to increase in knowledge, as Allah (swt) instructs us in the Qur'an:

“... and say, ‘My Lord, increase me in knowledge.’” (Qur'an, [20:114](#))

Moreover, knowledge is praised. Allah (swt) also tells us:

“... whoever is given wisdom is given a great good,” (Qur'an, [2:269](#))

So it is important to keep learning in general in order to better ourselves in this dunya, but it is equally if not more important to keep up our religious knowledge and knowledge of Allah (swt), because that also helps us to put this dunya into context.

We ask Allah to increase us in beneficial knowledge and in iman (faith).



Light

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things.” [Qur’an, [24:35](#)]

Light is one of those words that we use to describe a multitude of things, from rays of the sun to a person having ‘light’. It is abstract, it is intangible, but instinctively we know what it means. Light is good—it illuminates.

So I wanted to know Allah’s Name, *Al-Nur* (Light). I could only imagine it to be beautiful and deep. And it is. Al-Ghazali said about Allah’s Name: “*Al-Nur* is the visible One by whom everything is made visible, for what is visible in itself and makes others visible is called ‘light’.” It is related to *Al-Dhaahir*—the Manifest.

In the dictionary it is described as illumination, or rays or anything that gives off a light. Ibn al-Atheer said about Allah’s Name *al-Nur*: He is the One whom the blind see by His light, and the

astray are guided by His guidance.

Abu al-Mansoor said in his *tafseer* (exegesis) of the abovementioned verse that the example of His Light of guidance in the heart of a believer is like a niche within which is a lamp. The light of Allah *subahanhu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is the lamp that illuminates the heart of the believer.

We all know what light is, and we recognize it when we see it. But the meaning of Allah's Name *al-Nur* becomes more apparent when we understand that light, as al-Ghazali said, is making the invisible, visible.

Read that again—what is invisible, is made visible.

This is why light is related to guidance. When a person is astray, he is within darkness—meaning he is lost, he does not know where to go, he is uncertain about everything. But with light, and specifically the Light of Allah, everything becomes clear. It is all visible now. There is understanding. There is clarity. And with that comes certainty. Ibn 'Abbas radi Allahu 'anhu (may God be pleased with him) said: "*Light is Allah, the Guide, Who guides with His Divine Guidance whomsoever He wills by showing him the truth and inspiring him to follow it.*"

In the Qur'an Allah says:
"There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book." [Qur'an, [5:15](#)]

The light in this verse is the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and he is sent from Allah (swt). This is why reading the *seerah* (story) and understanding the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet ﷺ is so important—because everything is made clear by it. We have the best example in him, and through him, Allah (swt) makes many things clear for us.

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi, in describing this Name, said, "Allah, All Mighty, is Light, so if you get connected with Him, you derive from His Divine Spiritual Light spiritual comfort and peacefulness, your vision of things and matters is rightly guided."

This can help us understand the hadith (sayings of the Prophet ﷺ) when Allah (swt) describes what happens when He loves a servant:

"When I love him, I shall be his hearing with which he shall hear, his sight with which he shall see, his hands with which he shall hold, and his feet with which he shall walk. And if he asks (something) of Me, I shall surely give it to him, and if he takes refuge in Me, I shall certainly grant him it." (Bukhari)

Another aspect to the meaning of this Name is described by an-Nabulsi: "A person may sometimes face a problem that seems to be unsolvable. In this case, the person is, as it were, in darkness in regards to such problem. But then all of a sudden, an idea flashes in his mind and enables him to solve the problem." This is a spiritual light.

There are two beautiful du'a's (supplications) in this regard, one from the Qur'an and one from the sunnah:

يقولون ربنا ائهم لنا نورنا واغفر لنا انك على كل شيء قدير

"They will say: 'Our Lord, perfect for us our light and forgive us. Indeed, You are over all things competent.'" [Qur'an, [66:8](#)]

And:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ فِي قَلْبِي نُورًا وَفِي بَصَرِي نُورًا وَفِي سَمْعِي نُورًا وَفِي لِسَانِي نُورًا وَعَنْ
يَمِينِي نُورًا وَعَنْ يَسَارِي نُورًا، اللَّهُمَّ واجْعَلْ مِنْ فَوْقِي نُورًا وَمِنْ تَحْتِي نُورًا واجْعَلْ
أَمَامِي نُورًا وَمِنْ خَلْفِي نُورًا
اللَّهُمَّ وَأَعْظِمْ لِي نُورًا

“O Allah! Make for me Light in my heart, Light in my vision, Light in my hearing, Light on my right, Light on my left, Light above me, Light under me, Light in front of me, Light behind me, Light in my hair, Light in my skin, Light in my flesh, Light in my blood, and Light in my bones. O Allah Grant me Light!” [Tirmidhi]

May we truly seek the Light of Allah and may our path be illuminated by none other than His Light. Ameen.

الْجَامِعُ

The Uniter

Allah’s *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) attributes are awe-inspiring. What we have described in the previous articles are simply glimpses of His Names and their manifestations in our lives. After understanding some ways that Allah’s Names manifest, we gain greater clarity into our own lives and we realize that Allah is always with us—He is always giving us peace and tranquility (*as-Salaam*), mending our broken hearts (*al-Jabbar*), responding to our *du’a*’s (*al-Mujeeb*), giving us subtle and gentle signs (*al-Lateef*), opening up doors we never knew existed (*al-Fat-tah*) and in many other ways.

Bringing Things Together

If we open our senses, we cannot help but be amazed at the way that Allah (swt) has brought things together: the way our bodies contain blood, water, and other substances and how perfectly they work together; the way that Allah has also brought opposites together, such as hot and cold in one being (we can be feeling cold on the outside but our insides are warm); and how things that are similar yet dissimilar are brought together on this earth, such as different kinds of trees, animals and landscapes. Allah illustrates this when He says:

“And indeed, for you in grazing livestock is a lesson. We give you drink from what is in their bellies – between excretion and blood – pure milk, palatable to drinkers.” [Qur’an, [16:66](#)]

This is one of the ways that Allah *al-Jaami`* manifests His Name to us.

Linguistically, *jam`* (the root of *al-Jaami`*) means to bring something together, as opposed to dividing or taking something apart: *yajma`uh* (he brings it together), *jam`an* (a congregation), *jam-ma`ah* (he collected them together) and so on. So Friday, for example, is *yوم al-jumu`ah*: the day that brings people together or the day that people come together on. When we talk about scholarly consensus in Islam, the word for that is *i`jmaa`*.

So in what ways can we see that Allah is *al-Jaami`*? Al-Ghazali stated that one of the meanings of *al-Jaami`* is the One “who combines similar things, dissimilar things, and opposites.” In addition to this, Allah brings together people on the Day of Judgment, and He also brings together the hearts.

The Day of Judgment

Allah (swt) mentions His attribute of *jam`* (bringing together) many times in the Qur’an, most frequently with the Day of Judgment. When we think of bringing things together, what we have mentioned previously can be seen or felt or experienced. We can see the different trees, flowers and plants in this world—so this affirms Allah’s attribute in a tangible sense. Yet what we do not see is how Allah can bring everyone, from the beginning of time until the end of time, together in one place at one time. This is one of the reasons why this Name is so great, and this is why His **‘bringing together’** is divine and different to any way that we bring things together. A human being can claim to bring together different things (although these things have been provided by Allah),

yet no one can claim to bring together everyone in the manner that we will be brought together on the Day of Judgment. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an:

“This is the Day of Judgment; We will have assembled you (jama`-naakum) and the former peoples.” [Qur’an, [77:38](#)]

He also says:

“Allah – there is no deity except Him. He will surely assemble [laya-jma`annakum] you for [account on] the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. And who is more truthful than Allah in statement.” [Qur’an, [4:87](#)]

This should inspire in us some serious reflection. We are going to be brought together after we are dead, after our bones have disintegrated and after the world has forgotten us. So who do we want to be brought together with? The Pharaohs of the past, present and future, or the righteous and beloved to Allah (swt)?

Bringing the Hearts Together

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together [jamee`an] and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you – when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.” [Qur’an, [3:103](#)]

In the verse above, Allah (swt) tells the Muslims to support one another, and hence Allah tells the Muslims to hold firmly to the rope of Allah **“all together”** [jamee`an]. This way the hearts are strengthened. Sometimes trying to improve ourselves is a lonely and difficult process. Just like a predator can more easily attack the lone sheep, Satan can make things seem a lot more difficult than they are if we are simply trying to rely on ourselves. But

when Muslims support each other and hold onto the rope of Allah together, the hearts are more easily able to be firm. Even if we have our differences, we can still hold each other up.

Another way Allah (swt) brings together on a spiritual, internal level is by bringing the hearts together. A different word is used: *allafa*. *Allafa* connotes a gentleness and love. When the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) migrated to Madina, the two main tribes at the time, al-Aws and al-Khazraj, were enemies. Their history was one of blood and vendettas, and Allah brought their hearts together. Those two tribes, from absolutely hating each other, became brothers. Allah (swt) tells us in another verse:

“And brought together their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is Exalted in Might and Wise.” [Qur’an, [8:63](#)]

And Allah reminds the Prophet ﷺ and us that, were we to spend everything on earth, we would not have been able to bring their hearts together. Yet Allah united them upon guidance. There were, at times, instances full of tensions, but those instances teach us patience and perseverance – and the end result is unity.

When we feel that our hearts are divided sometimes, we should know that Allah is *al-Jaami`*. Just like He brought the hearts of the companions together, Allah can bring our hearts together too if we truly work at being sincere. So, for example, if we feel that there is tension between us and a family member, we should ask Allah to soften our hearts and unite us. At the very least, we should consciously work to minimize any external divisions.

Coming Alive with Allah’s Name

Reflect on how Allah brings everything together in this world, and reflect how He will bring us all together in the next.

On the one hand, reflecting on how Allah (swt) brings things together should inspire in us a sense of awe. Reflecting is a process of taking it in slowly, opening our senses and really contemplating the world around us.

On the other hand, the biggest **‘bringing together’** is on the Day of Judgment. It is real, and we need to be prepared. When Allah will bring all the human beings in one place, where do we want to be? We are told in the Qur’an:

“Our Lord, surely You will gather (innaka jaami`) the people for a Day about which there is no doubt. Indeed, Allah does not fail in His promise.” [Qur’an, [3:9](#)]

Allah (swt) tells us that on this day, there are 7 categories of people who are given shade under His shade when there is no shade but His shade:

“... a just ruler; a youth who grew up in the worship of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic; a person whose heart is attached to the mosques; two people who love each other for Allah’s sake, meeting for that and parting upon that; a man who is called by a woman of beauty and position [for illegal intercourse], but he says: ‘I fear Allah’, a person who gives in charity and hides it, such that his left hand does not know what his right hand gives in charity; and a person who remembered Allah in private and so his eyes shed tears.” [Bukhari]

This is a reminder—have certainty that you will be brought together with everyone else, and therefore think of which group you want to be a part of. Who do we want to be brought together with?

Those whom Allah shades or those outside of His shade?

Be a person that brings together what is in his heart and what is on his limbs.

Following on from whom we want to be resurrected with, one way of being resurrected and brought together with the righteous is by uniting our hearts and limbs. Al-Ghazali states, “among men the one who unites is one who integrates the external behavior of his limbs with the inner realities of his heart”. Be a person who prays at night and also has mercy with people. Be a person who polishes his heart from the diseases and is also active with the community. Be a person who avoids suspicion and negative assumptions in his heart and also speaks well and brings benefit with his words.

Be a person that brings people together.

The Prophet ﷺ tells us “Allah’s Hand is with the jama`a (congregation)” [Tirmidhi], meaning that Allah’s care and protection is with people who stick together or are united. Sometimes it can be tempting to constantly want to be alone and away from others, yet Allah’s blessing comes with the bringing together of people. There is more reward in praying in congregation. Mending between two people who are in conflict is better than praying voluntary prayers and giving extra charity. Allah loves the congregation, and as we have seen, He hates division and discord. To clarify, unity does not mean that there are no differences. For the most part, the companions *radi Allahu `anhum* (may Allah be pleased with them) were united in their hearts even though they sometimes differed in strategy, opinion and manner.

So the lessons for us are two-fold: first, bring people together. Whether it is for prayers, support, or even a family gathering, be a person that brings people together for good. Secondly, do not be a person of petty arguments and discord. You may disagree with

someone, but there is no need to get nasty. You can still maintain love and respect, even if a person tests your patience.

As Allah says:

“And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” [Qur’an [8:46](#)]

Finally, ***don’t lose hope***. When we say that Allah is *al-Jaami`*, it implies that things were divided or scattered, and so Allah is bringing together what was separate and divided to begin with, and uniting it. When you lose something, remember that it is Allah who can bring it back and unite you with it. As Allah says,

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“And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them.” [Qur’an, [7:180](#)]

الرَّقِيبُ

He Who Observes All

“Tell me about ihsan.”

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) replied: “*It is to worship Allah as though you see Him, and though you do not see Him, you know that He sees you*” (Bukhari).

Many of the Names that we discussed previously seem to be situation-specific; if you are worried about sustenance, know He is *al-Razzaq* (The Provider). When you feel lost, know He is *al-Hadi* (The Guide). Yet Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is with us always, in the good and bad, as well as the mundane and ordinary. So how can we engage with Allah on an everyday level?

By knowing that Allah is *ar-Raqeeb* (the all-Observant).

Linguistically, ra-qa-ba (the three letter root of *Raqeeb*) means to be erect in order to care for something. A *marqab* is a high place that the watcher stands on to observe what is beneath him. And from this comes *ar-raqaba*, which is the neck, because it is erect, and one must be upright when he is observing.

And from this root comes *ar-Raqeeb*. Al-Ghazali states that the

All-Observant “is one who knows and protects. For whoever cares for something to the point of never forgetting it, and observes it with a constant and persistent gaze.”

So Allah (swt) is watching over us, all the time, out of His care for us. And this should have a profound effect on the way we live. Allah tells us,

“Does he not know that Allah sees?” (Qur’an, [96:14](#))

One could say, ‘Of course we know Allah watches over everything. That’s the most obvious thing.’ Yet, there is a huge difference between knowing Allah is *Ar-Raqeeb*, and living with the effect of that knowledge. In a lecture on this name, Amr Khaled said that ‘Umar bin al-Khattab *radi allahu ‘anhu* (may God be pleased with him) admired those who knew Allah is *ar-Raqeeb*, and told two stories from the life of ‘Umar.

There is a well-known story of the milk seller. While ‘Umar (ra) was walking at night as he usually did to check on the people, he heard a mother ordering her daughter to dilute the milk they were going to sell with water. The daughter replied, “Do you not know that ‘Umar the commander of the believers has forbidden that?” The mother said, “Well, ‘Umar does not see us now.” She replied, “If ‘Umar does not see us, his Lord sees us.”

‘Umar (ra) was so impressed by this young woman and her certainty that Allah is All-Observant, that his son ‘Asem married her. ‘Umar Ibn Abdul-Azeez, the well-known and just ruler who is also regarded as one of the rightly guided caliphs, is descended from this woman.

There is another incident that concerns ‘Umar (ra). He wanted to check up on his people. So he found a shepherd taking care of some sheep, and asked if the boy would sell him one. The boy re-

plied that it was not his. ‘Umar wanted to see how the boy would react if he was presented with an offer. He said to him “If your master asks you, tell him that the sheep was eaten by a wolf.” He looked at him and said, “And what would I say to Him (i.e. Allah)?” ‘Umar cried and said, “By Allah, you are right. What would you say to Him?”

The milk-seller and the shepherd were regular people. They were people who were presented with a temptation, but their faith that Allah is All-Observant, meaning He both sees and cares for His servants, prevented them from being blinded. They were mindful that Allah (swt) is All-Observant, and thus they were observant over their own selves.

Knowing Allah is the All-Observant

You are never alone

One of things that should warm our hearts when we know Allah is *ar-Raqeeb* is that we are never, ever alone. When we are up late at night working on an essay, or awake in the early hours of the morning getting ready for work, Allah is with us.

Watch yourself

Al-Ghazali states, “The attribute of watchfulness is only praiseworthy in man if his watchfulness is directed to his Lord and his heart”. Just like the milk-seller and the shepherd, we should also be watchful over ourselves.

Desire to impress

This Name should also make us want to impress Allah (swt). When we know our parents or someone we love is watching us, we try to do better—so we should be like that when we know Ar-

Raqeeb. The All-Observant does not only see our bad deeds, but also our good deeds. Let's give more charity because we know He is watching; let's be good to people despite the fact that we may not be feeling it at the moment, all for Allah because we know He sees all.



The Most Appreciative

“Whosoever relieves from a believer some grief pertaining to this world, Allah will relieve from him some grief pertaining to the Hereafter. Whosoever alleviates the difficulties of a needy person who cannot pay his debt, Allah will alleviate his difficulties in both this world and the Hereafter. Whosoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother.” [Muslim]

Reading this *hadith* (saying of the Prophet ﷺ) always humbles me. We are given so much for doing things that we should be doing anyway, at the very least out of thanks because of all that we have been given. When we think of the concept of appreciation, what should immediately come to mind is that we should be appreciative and grateful for the blessings that Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He) has bestowed upon us—everything from the material, to our friends and family, to the spiritual.

But do we realize that Allah has given Himself the Name *ash-Shakoor*?

Shukr is defined as recognizing and appreciating when good is

done. *Shakoor* in Arabic is also used to describe an animal that is given little food but gives back much. So it revolves around receiving something, even if small, and giving back much because of it.

Allah is *ash-Shakoor*, which we will translate here as the Most Appreciative. Al-Ghazali tells us that *ash-Shakoor* is “the one who rewards the practice of a few pious deeds many-fold, and in response to the action of a few days, gives limitless happiness in the life to come. The one who rewards a good deed many-fold is said to be grateful for that deed, while whoever commends the one who does a good deed is also said to be grateful. Yet if you consider the multiplication factor in reward, only God—great and glorious—is absolutely grateful because His multiplication of the reward is unrestricted and unlimited; for there is no end to the happiness of Paradise.”

Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“That He may give them in full their rewards and increase for them of His bounty. Indeed, He is Forgiving and Appreciative.” (Qur’an, [35:30](#))

We might think—what does Allah have to be appreciative for? Everything we have is from Him anyway! But that is why He, the Most High, is *ash-Shakoor*: The Most-Appreciative. In this form, it means He appreciates the smallest of deeds, He appreciates the deeds all the time, and His appreciation is unlimited.

“...And whoever commits a good deed — We will increase for him good therein. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Appreciative.” (Qur’an, [42:23](#))

The Prophet ﷺ urged us to do good deeds no matter how small, as he said that we should protect ourselves from the Fire by giving even half of a date in charity [Bukhari]. Now imagine if you give even more?

This is why the Prophet ﷺ reminds us, *“Do not belittle any good deed, even meeting your brother with a cheerful face,”* [Muslim].

Allah appreciates the deeds that are done to all creatures, not simply humans. The Prophet ﷺ narrates to us a story of a man who was extremely thirsty, and found a well, which he climbed down to fetch water to quench his thirst. He then saw a dog which was panting out of thirst. Recognizing that the dog felt the exact same thing he was a few minutes ago, he climbed back down the well in order to give the dog some water. Allah appreciated his action (*fashakara Allahu lahu*) and forgave his sins [Bukhari and Muslim].

Simple acts like glorifying Allah (saying *subhan’Allah* – glory be to God) 100 times grants you 1000 good deeds.

Allah (swt) even appreciates our intention. The Prophet ﷺ describes two men: one man whom Allah has bestowed upon wealth and knowledge, and he acts upon that knowledge and gives from his wealth; and another man whom Allah has given knowledge but no wealth, and that man says, “If I had the wealth he had, I would do the same”. The Prophet ﷺ said “And they are rewarded the same”. [Ibn Majah]

Go out of your way to help someone, not expecting anything in return, and someone along the road will do that for you as a reward from Allah (swt). I remember someone telling my father and me about a time he was severely in debt. Only halfway through the month he was counting the little money that he had, not sure how he would feed his family for the next few weeks. He told us that as he was thinking about what he should do, a man who had borrowed money from him 10 years ago when he was a student called him and said he had the money to pay him back. Nothing we ever do is lost. Allah (swt) kept that money for him for when he needed it the most. And this man, may Allah bless him, had a habit of never asking for money back when he loaned it to people. It worked to

his detriment sometimes, but Allah (swt) appreciated his selfless deed and returned the money to him when it was worth so much more. The Prophet ﷺ exemplified this and always gave people, so much that a Bedouin exclaimed, “O my people! Embrace Islam, for Muhammad gives away like the one who does not fear poverty.” [Muslim]

Other names of Allah relating to Ash-Shakoor

The Qur’an is a book full of virtues and benefits. At the end of certain ayat (verses), Allah pairs two of His Names together – “*Al-’aleem al-Hakeem* (the All-knowing, the Wise),” for example. This is not random or by accident. Allah shows us the relationship between the two attributes. With *ash-Shakoor* this is particularly amazing. Amr Khaled explained the relationship between *ash-Shakoor* and the other Names it is paired with in the Qur’an:

When it comes to doing good, some of us are hesitant. ‘I am such a sinner!’ We may think, ‘Will Allah really appreciate the pathetic deeds that I do when I commit such horribly bad deeds?’ Allah (swt) says, “*Surely our Lord is indeed Ever-Forgiving, Appreciative*” (Qur’an, [35:34](#)), and “*He is most forgiving, most appreciative.*” (Qur’an, [35:30](#)). This gives us the reassurance that even if we commit sinful deeds, we can return to Allah and He will, *insha’Allah* (God willing) forgive us, while rewarding us for the good.

Secondly, many of us crave recognition. We do good in secret and a part of us wishes that the person we have done good for knows. Or at other times, we may intend to do something good but everything goes wrong—and no one knew that your intention was to do good. To this effect, Allah (swt) tells us, “*And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing,*” (Qur’an, [4:147](#)). Allah (swt) rewards and appreciates the things that people may overlook.

Remember that with Allah (swt) the cycle is never ending. When

we deal with human beings, you could give them a gift and they respond with a thanks or a gift in return, but it ends there. With Allah (swt), He tells us that when we thank, He gives us more. So it is a cycle of increase and encouragement for you to be grateful and constantly doing good.

Being aware of ash-Shakoor

Awareness of *ash-Shakoor* should inspire in us the following things:

1. Give as much as you can, be there for people and help where you can. Treat people as you like Allah (swt) to treat you. The Prophet ﷺ said: “*Walking with a brother in order to fulfill his needs is better for me than fasting and remaining in devotional seclusion in my mosque for a whole month.*” [Tabarani] Allah rewards for the tiniest things we do, so imagine if we start doing great things?
2. Worship Allah (swt) in the best way that you can. Try to improve the devotion in your prayers, reflect over the Qur’an, fast voluntarily if you can—you will see the effect both in this life and the next insha’Allah! Also, adding a small amount that is continuous is better than doing so much and then burning out, so remember to do what you can bear.
3. Sometimes Allah (swt) postpones the signs of His appreciation – and this is to build sincerity. Are you going to give up because you don’t see the immediate fruits? Do it for Allah (swt), because you know He is ash-Shakoor in this life and the next, and ask Him to grant you beautiful patience. Remember that the Prophet ﷺ was kind and forbearing and was not treated with the same in Makkah, but Allah (swt) gave him great companions and finally refuge in Madina.
4. Appreciate people. The Prophet ﷺ taught us that “*The one*

who does not thank people had not thanked God.”[Abu Dawud]

5. Finally, be grateful for what you have been given by Allah (swt). Al-Ghazali states, “The best way of manifesting thankfulness for the blessings of God Most High is to make use of these blessings in obeying, and not disobeying, Him.”

Allah (swt) says:

“Is the reward for good [anything] but good?

[Qur’an, [55:60](#)]

May Allah enable us to be thankful and appreciative servants of the Most-Appreciative.



The Eternal Refuge

Sometimes we just don’t know where to turn. We have needs and we also have aspirations, wants and hopes. We get confused. Sometimes we just need someone to talk to. Sometimes we need shelter from the storm. And this is why Allah is *as-Samad* (the Eternal).

Some Names of Allah contain meanings that acknowledge His other attributes. For example, when we say Allah is *al-Mujeeb* (the One who responds), it is implicit that He is *as-Samee`* (the all-Hearing), *al-Baseer* (the all-Seeing) and *al-Qawiyy* (the Strong). Other Names seem to be very similar in meaning, but the context reveals the nuances. For example, *al-Ghafur* (the Forgiving) and *at-Tawwab* (the One who accepts repentance): They both have to do with repentance. *Al-Ghafur* refers to Allah covering up our sin and forgiving the sin, whereas *at-Tawwab* is more. He is the One that accepts the servant when he turns back. He listens to our excuses and reasons and still accepts us.

Today’s Name is similar in that regard. *As-Samad* has many meanings but what it is important is how we relate to Him. Al-Ghazali states that *as-Samad* is “*the One to whom one turns to in need and the One who one is intended in our desires, for ultimate dominion*

culminates in Him.”

In the dictionary *Samad* is defined as the eternal; to remain unaffected or unchanged; to intend or turn to; something that is solid, with no holes or emptiness inside; and the ultimate Master who is obeyed. We say sumood (from the same root s-m-d), which is to remain firm and steadfast. Ali bin Abi Talib radi allahu `anhu (may God be please with him) said:

فصمدا صمدا حتى يَتَجَلَى لَكُمْ عَمُودُ الْحَقِّ

“So stay firm, stay firm (samdan samdan) so that you may reach the pillars of truth.”

Thus Allah is the One who we turn to for both our needs and desires and who is our ultimate goal, because fundamentally He is the Master, the Eternal, the One who remains firm and unchanged – so who else can we turn to?

This Name has been mentioned in the Qur’an once, in Surat al-Ikhlās:

Say, “He is Allah, [who is] One,

Allah, the Eternal Refuge.

He neither begets nor is born,

Nor is there to Him any equivalent.”

Surat al-Ikhlās was revealed when the people of Mecca asked the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) to describe to them His Lord. This Surah answers their question and tells them (and us) about Allah. So when the people of Mecca were being told who Allah was, His being *as-Samad* was mentioned. Why would this be men-

tioned out of all His attributes? Because essentially what you need to know is that Allah is One and Unique (Ahad), and also that He is *as-Samad*, the Eternal Refuge, that One who is our means and our end. We go to Him for our desires but we should also ultimately desire Him—this is sincerity (ikhlas). The Prophet ﷺ told us that Surat al-Ikhlās is equal to the a third of the Qur’an (Muslim). And the reason is that if you want to know Allah, Surat al-Ikhlās summarizes His attributes. Thus knowing that He is *as-Samad* is crucial.

We all have hopes—marriage, sustenance, good kids, peace of mind. And we ask Allah for them. We turn to Him in good and bad, for needs and for desires. And don’t think that the One who has named himself *as-Samad* will let you down. At Ta’if, when the Prophet ﷺ went to seek refuge with the people, they pelted him with rocks in return. So he turned to Allah *as-Samad* for his needs—even if it was just for Allah to provide him with some peace at that moment. “If you are not angry with me, I do not care,” he ﷺ said, “only that Your favor is a more expansive relief to me.” When the Prophet ﷺ migrated to Medina with the companions, they were not used to the conditions there. Many companions (ra) fell ill. Bilal (ra) even recited poetry about returning to valley of Mecca. And the Prophet ﷺ turned to Allah for that need, and indeed Medina became as beloved as Mecca, if not more.

When we think of *du`a`* (supplication), we tend to think of material or physical things that we need or want. “I want a house, I want a car, I want a job, I want to be healthy...” and so we ask *al-Mujeeb*, the One who responds to His servants. But *as-Samad* is slightly different because you turn to Him with all the needs of your heart, body and soul. And you can, because *as-Samad* is unshakeable. You can be confident and assured, because the One you are turning to is the Master, unaffected by the changes around us. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi gives an example for this. In *fiqh* (jurisprudence), the child of a wealthy person is not eligible for zakaat.

While he may be technically in need and poor in that he does not possess anything himself, his parents are wealthy and so he is regarded as being wealthy because he is taken care of by them. Now switch this to our relationship with Allah. We may be in need, but in actual fact, because we have Allah to turn to for our needs, we are not really in need at all (in terms of in this dunya). Rest assured because you have *as-Samad*.

There are many sayings of the Prophet ﷺ that encourage us to turn to Allah for all of our needs. The Prophet ﷺ said: “*You should ask Allah for all of your needs, even if the strap of your sandal breaks,*” [Tirmidhi, Ibn Hibban]. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi says that implicit in this is that Allah wants you to turn to Him for your needs. He quotes al-Ghazali who said that Allah has chosen this Name so that His servants would turn to Him, because they know that He is the One who does not waver and is there for His servants to turn to, for ALL of their needs. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ said that “*Allah descends during the last third of the night asking: ‘Is there a person asking, or a person turning back, or a person seeking forgiveness from sin?’ And this continues until the sun rises.*” [Muslim]

A beautiful verse of poetry reads:

Do not ask the son of Adam for your needs

But ask the One whose doors do not close

Allah is angry when you do not ask

And the son of Adam, if asked, is angry

We need both dunya (this life) and akhirah (the hereafter), so we shouldn't be ashamed when we feel we have worldly needs. The Prophet ﷺ makes a beautiful *du`a`* where he asks for both dunya and akhirah:

اللَّهُمَّ أَصْلَحْ لِي دِينِي الَّذِي هُوَ عِصْمَةُ أَمْرِي ، وَأَصْلَحْ لِي دُنْيَايَ الَّتِي فِيهَا مَعَاشِي ،
وَأَصْلَحْ لِي آخِرَتِي الَّتِي فِيهَا مَعَادِي
وَأَجْعَلِ الْحَيَاةَ زِيَادَةً لِي فِي كُلِّ خَيْرٍ وَاجْعَلِ الْمَوْتَ رَاحَةً لِي مِنْ كُلِّ شَرٍّ

“O God, set right for me my religion which is the safeguard of my affairs. And set right for me the affairs of my world wherein is my living. And set right for me my Hereafter to which is my return. And make the life for me (a source) of abundance for every good and make my death a source of comfort for me protecting me against every evil.” [Muslim]

So we need to ask, what is our relationship to *as-Samad*? Do we really turn to Him for all of our needs?

A final point with regards to *as-Samad*—some may ask whether turning to Allah with all our needs negates striving and using the physical means around us. This is obviously not true because Allah commands us to strive. But turning to *as-Samad* is recognizing where all these physical means come from, and that they can only work with the help of God. When Musa *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) felt that he couldn't go to Pharaoh because he wasn't as eloquent as his brother Harun (as), he went to Allah first and said, “*And appoint for me a minister from my family—Aaron, my brother. Increase through him my strength and let him share my task,*” [Qur'an, [30:29-32](#)]. So he asked Allah for his need to have someone with him, and ultimately he was reliant on Allah, not his brother.

Being with As-Samad

First, go to Allah with every need. Rely on Him only. Don't ever think that a need or a want is too small or too great to go to Allah with. As the Prophet ﷺ said, go to Him even if the strap of your sandal breaks.

Secondly, be there for people. Allow people to turn to you and offer them your help. The Prophet ﷺ told us that “*The best of people are those that bring most benefit to the rest of mankind,*” [Tabarani]; and “*If Allah wants good for a person then He uses him,*” [Ahmad].

Al-Ghazali says: “The one whom God has appointed to be a model for His servants in fulfilling their worldly and religious duties, and who secures the needs of His creatures by his word and action—to that one God bestows a share in His attribute. But the absolutely eternal is the One to whom one turns to in every need, and He is God—may He be praised and exalted.”

May we always turn to *as-Samad* for all of our needs.



He Who Opens All Things

Ramadan is upon us. It's the most amazing time of the year where Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) makes it so easy for us to get infinite blessings. It's a time when it's easier to work on our *nafs* (self), create good habits, and put intense effort into du'a's (supplications). Allah is the Most-Merciful all year round, and Ramadan simply opens us up to more mercy.

So what better time to get acquainted with Allah (swt) and another one of His Names?

The Meanings

Allah is *al-Fattah*. We need to know *al-Fattah* when we feel that things are impossible or too difficult because Allah (swt) necessarily invites you to know Him by this Name in those circumstances. *Al-Fattah* comes from the 3-letter root f-t-h (ف-ت-ح). Some words are known by their opposites, and the opposite of fath is for something to be closed. Thus *fath* is to open. Al-Ghazali tells us about *al-Fattah*, “He is the One by Whose concern everything that is closed is opened.” If I tell you to open the door, it must mean that the door is closed. If it is already open you would probably give me a funny look. So what does this mean? Allah *al-Fattah*

opens the things that are closed. Those things that seem impossible, those things that you cannot understand how they even work. A door has to be closed in order for someone to open it. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Whatever mercy Allah opens for mankind, then none can be holding it back; and whatever He holds back, then none can be sending it forth after Him; And He is The Ever-Mighty, The Ever-Wise" (Qur'an, [35:2](#))

The second related meaning is to understand that Allah is *al-Fattah* when you embark on something new and the journey is unknown to you. What is unknown to you is 'closed' in that sense. So when you are embarking on a new journey, ask Allah (swt) to open the doors for you so that you do not encounter unanticipated difficulties. This could be with marriage, a new job, or even the start of Ramadan.

These two meanings relate to Ramadan. If you feel that you haven't been too great concerning your relationship with Allah (swt), then Ramadan is the time to rectify that. Ramadan is the month of openings. Ask Allah to open your heart to Him. Take steps towards Him. Allah has opened hearts that are harder than yours. If there is something that you feel is too difficult, Ramadan is the month Allah answers *du`a*'s most. He responds and He opens that which is closed. So ask Allah during this month to open those doors that you felt were closed to you.

Finally, *al-Fattah* also relates to justice. In the Qur'an, we see that those who are accused unjustly make this *du`a*:

"Our Lord, decide between us and our people in truth, and You are the best of those who give decision." [Qur'an: [7:89](#)]

'*Iftah*' has been translated as decide, because Allah's just decision

is also an opening.

How to open the doors?

We have to remember that knowing Allah is *al-Fattah* means working hard to achieve the result that we want. Allah decides when to open those doors, and He may delay the solutions to test our sincerity and trust, so we should never lose hope. Imagine if the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) had given up after being attacked with stones at Ta'if? No matter how many times you knock on Allah's door, it will eventually open, so don't give up. Umar bin Abdel Azeez knew that Allah is the ultimate opener. He said, "I have an aspiring soul. Whenever it is given something in this world, it aspires to that which is better. My soul aspired to marry my cousin Fatima bint AbdelMalik, and I married her. My soul then aspired to be the Amir, and I was the Amir. Then my soul aspired the Caliphate, and I was given it. And now my soul longed for what is better, meaning Paradise, and I hope to be from its inhabitants." This is a person that knows nothing is really impossible because Allah is *al-Fattah*.

Also, *Al-Fattah* sends solutions when we least expect it. Some matters may seem like dilemmas at first. Yusuf *`alayhi sallatu wa sallam* (may Allah send His peace and blessings on him) was imprisoned. But it was through the imprisonment that he was shown to be innocent to everyone, and then he was given the guardianship over the food rations. Remember that the Prophet ﷺ was not allowed to make *`umrah* (the lesser pilgrimage) even though he embarked to do so, and instead signed a treaty at Hudaibiya. This verse was then revealed, "*Surely We have given you an evident conquest*," (Qur'an, [48:1](#)). Umar *radi Allahu `anhu* (may Allah be pleased with him) was astounded. How could the treaty's terms be a victory or an opening? They were disadvantageous to the Muslims and they were not allowed to go on *`umrah* that year! However, the number of people who embraced Islam shortly after the

treaty of Hudaybiya was great, and the following year gave them the conquest of Makkah. So remember that openings can come through things that look like problems to begin with.

Remember that Allah's attributes are holistic, so He is *al-Fattah* and He is also the All-Knowing and the Most Wise. His opening for you will be one that is best for you, even if to you it does not seem like an opening.

Amr Khaled mentions that the simplest of things could lead to solutions, such as a simple word, a tear or even an *ayah* (verse). We sometimes recite an *ayah* we've read a hundred times in the Qur'an, and one day we hear or read that *ayah* from a totally different perspective and that becomes an opening or a solution.

Finally, when Allah sends us a solution, He gives us that which exceeds our expectations. When Hajar (as) was running between Safa and Marwa, all she hoped for was some nourishment for her baby, or to see people who could help. And she didn't give up, going back and forth 7 times. So Allah did not just give her nourishment for the day or week or month – He gave her the well of zamzam, which we still drink from today. Zamzam brought people to settle in the area. That is an opening from Allah!

Living with this Name

1. Have great hope in Allah's victory, and in the fact that there will be opening.
2. Work towards that opening if you can.
3. Be a source of good for others. Help to open the doors for other people so that Allah (swt) will open the doors for you.

This article is largely based on a lecture by Amr Khaled.

الخالق، الباري، المصور

The Creator, The Producer, The Fashioner

“He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belongs the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” [Qur'an, [59:24](#)]

I hope that this article will be short in words, but longer in reflection. In order to truly understand these names of Allah, we have to contemplate and think about the universe and ourselves.

Al-Khaaliq, al-Baari', al-Musawwir

Allah is the Creator, the Producer and the Fashioner. These Names might seem synonymous but al-Ghazali explains the difference:

“God – may He be praised and exalted- is creator [khaaliq] inasmuch as He is the planner [muqaddir], producer [baari'] in as much as He initiates existence, and fashioner [musawwir] in as much as He arranges the forms of things invented in the finest way.”

Perhaps the most pertinent way to experience this is the gift of life itself. It is important to just take a few moments to think of our existence and how Allah brought us into this world. Allah says:

“Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?” [Qur’an, [76:1](#)]

At one point there was nothing, but now there are extraordinary, complex beings. Allah told the Angels:

“I am going to create a human being from clay.” [Qur’an, [38:71](#)]

After that we were produced from nothing, and then we were fashioned—all of us with our physical differences, our unique fingerprints, and our characters and personalities. And this is simply on a human realm. Think of all of the animals, the plants and the microcosms that exist. As al-Ghazali points out: “He is Creator by virtue of planning these things, Fashioner by virtue of originating according to the planning, and Producer by virtue of sheer origination and invention from nothing into existence. For sheer origination is one thing, and origination according to planning is another.”

I’ve always found these verses in Surat al-Qiyaama incredible:

“I swear by the Day of Resurrection

And I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection].

Does man think that We will not assemble his bones?

Yes. [We are] Able [even] to proportion his fingertips.”

[Quran, [75:1-4](#)]

This verse is amazing because Allah says that on the Day of Judgment, He will bring us back as we were even to the extent of our *banaan*. *Banaan* are the tips of the fingers. And it was only in the past couple of hundred years that it was recognized that every human being has his own unique fingerprint. *Subhan’Allah* (glory be

to God), the Creator, Producer and Fashioner!

Look at this short 1-minute video on how the face develops in the womb, it’s brilliant:

[Face Development in the Womb - Inside the Human Body](#)

The Importance of Reflection

In order to truly understand these Names of Allah, reading about them is not enough. They require reflection. It is the act of pondering deeply—*tafakkur*—that brings about certainty in Allah, *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He). And this is because you truly witness His dominion.

Um Ad-Dardaa, the wife of the companion Abu Ad-Dardaa (may Allah be pleased with them), was asked what the greatest act of worship was that her husband used to do. She replied, “*At-tafakkur*,” meaning reflecting deeply. The great scholar, al-Hasan al-Basri said: “An hour’s contemplation is better than a year of *qiyaam* (the night prayer),” and one of the *tabi’een* (the generations following the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him) said: “Reflection is the light of worship.” If we do not reflect, we take things for granted. Even praying without reflecting and devotion becomes monotonous.

When the Prophet ﷺ used to go to the Cave of Hiraa, he used to reflect. He would reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. He would reflect on his own creation and his purpose. As Allah says:

“Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers.” [Qur’an, [30:8](#)]

And:

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.’” [Qur’an, [3:190-191](#)]

So the practical exercise to understand these Names is to take some time and truly reflect on the beauty and creation of this world. One way is by stepping outside and simply seeing. And the second way is to understand how things work. I’ve posted a link to one video, but there are many more:

Inside a cell: [The Inner Life of the Cell](#)

Finally, since He is The Creator, The Inventor, and The Fashioner, then He also knows best how we work. He created things in a beautiful order. Scientists still discover more and more about how the world works and one can only say *Subhan Allah*. He created us, and thus He knows us. When the Prophet ﷺ says, for example, “No human ever filled a vessel worse than the stomach. Sufficient for any son of Adam are some morsels to keep his back straight. But if it must be, then one third for his food, one third for his drink and one third for his breath,” [Ahmad] it is because he knows what is good for us. The Prophet ﷺ does not speak out of his own desires.

So another point of reflection is the advice that is given to us in the Qur’an and by the Prophet ﷺ. Allah wants good for us, so we should reflect on the wisdom of His commandments.



Who has your trust?

Who do you trust? Who is that one person that gives you an internal tranquility, no matter what you entrust them with? For some of us it might be our mother or father, perhaps a best friend or our spouse. That trust gives us confidence, conviction and peace.

In reality though, we do not trust them in a fully comprehensive sense. We might trust them to be there for us, or trust them not to judge us harshly when we make a mistake. But would we trust our best friend to be our lawyer in court if she is a fashion designer and is not particularly eloquent? So our trust is in regards to certain things. What elements would have to be there in order for someone to have our trust 100%?

There are three main elements:

1. The person is an expert in what they do: you might not trust your fashion designer best friend to be your lawyer, but you would trust the Harvard-educated lawyer who is known never to have lost a case (let’s call him “Adam”).

2. The person is a moral person: Even if Adam is an amazing lawyer, if you weren't sure about his moral character, you still wouldn't be completely at ease. You might be afraid that he would cheat you out of your money for example. But if Adam is also an amazingly upright human being, you would be happier to give him a power-of-attorney.
3. The person cares about you specifically: now imagine if Adam happens to be your close uncle who always treated you as his own child. Doesn't that increase the trust, confidence and certainty? You absolutely know that Uncle Adam will you get you through it all.

While Allah is far above any analogy, the above example just breaks down the concept of trust for us. While I can simply introduce Allah as *al-Wakeel*, or the Trustee, many of us don't know what truly trusting in Him means—or what it means when He tells us that He is the Ultimate Trustee. Al-Ghazali explains that *al-Wakeel* “is the one to whom the matters have been entrusted. But one who has received such a trust may be either one to whom some matters have been entrusted—that one is deficient, or one to whom all matters have been entrusted—and that pertains only to God Most High.”

Trusting someone in that complete sense in all circumstances can be hard. We can't even trust ourselves that much. But that's why Allah puts us at ease. He says:

“And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.” [Qur'an, [4:132](#)]

Allah is telling us that everything in this world is His. He is reminding us of that fact. He also says:

“And rely upon the Ever-Living who does not die, and exalt [Allah] with His praise.” [Qur'an, [25:58](#)]

As well as:

“[He is] the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as Disposer of [your] affairs.” [Qur'an, [73:9](#)]

In these verses, Allah is reminding us of His Power. To Allah belongs everything, and moreover, He doesn't die. Even the human being you trust the most could pass away. Allah does not. So when you trust in Him, don't worry, *“And rely upon Allah; and sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.”* [Qur'an, [33:3](#)]

In practical terms, this means two things. Firstly, that we work as hard as we can with the means given to us. This might seem like a reoccurring theme, and it is. Allah is teaching us through His Names and attributes that we need to work. But being intimately acquainted with Allah means that conviction, confidence and internal tranquility as we strive, because we have already surrendered to Allah. And this is the second element. While we work for a particular result through the avenues available to us, we have absolutely no doubt that Allah will get us through to whatever is best, because indeed He is the Trustee. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) says:

“If you were to rely on Allah as He should be relied on, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds. They go out in the morning hungry and return in the evening full.” [Tirmidhi]

The bird does its part. It flies out in the morning in search for food. Now the bird has no reason to believe that she will find any food. She wakes up without any food at all. But still she leaves her nest. And Allah provides. Most of us stop ourselves from doing the right thing because we are afraid that we won't be able to follow

through, or that something is too difficult. But Allah is telling us to strive and have trust. The result is on Him.

Hajar, the wife of the Prophet Ibrahim *`alayhi sallatu wa sallam* (may God send his peace and blessings on him), is truly an epitome of what it means to have trust. When Ibrahim left her and their infant son in the desert, she was baffled. But then she asked him, “did Allah command you to do this?” and he (as) responded in the affirmative. So she accepted the decree. She knew God would not leave her or her son. She was a person who knew Allah. This didn’t stop her from striving. When baby Isma’el started crying, she ran back and forth between the mounts of Safa and Marwa seven times. Never once do we hear her bitter or resentful. She continued to search. Because she knew Allah would not leave them. And Allah rewarded that trust with the well of Zamzam, which we still drink from today. And Allah does not want us to forget that lesson, which is why when we go on Hajj [great pilgrimage] or Umrah [lesser pilgrimage], we follow in the steps of Hajar, going seven times between the mounts of Safa and Marwa. It is called the “sa’y”, which means “the striving”.

A question that may be on people’s minds is that what if we work, but after the striving we are in a worse off position—does that mean that Allah has not fulfilled His trust? To answer this question, let’s go back to the example of our seasoned lawyer Uncle Adam. If Uncle Adam tells you to enter into a plea bargain instead of fight, wouldn’t you trust his advice? It might seem like a temporary failure and it definitely isn’t what you want, but in actual fact, that is actually the best way to get you to your goal. Of course, with Uncle Adam it could just be that he can’t help you, and the plea bargain is the best he can do. But you still trust that he knows what he’s doing. With Allah the concept of impossibility does not exist. So our trust in Him should be infinitely greater, because whatever happens is out of His wisdom and has nothing to do with His ability.

Look at the example of the Prophet Yusuf (as). He went to jail for years. ‘Where was Allah?’ Some may ask. Allah was there all along. Allah brought to Yusuf (as) the two prisoners. It was through the prison that he then interpreted the dream of the king, everyone knew he was innocent, and then he was reunited with his family. While from the outside it seems like a punishment, it is simply one of the stops on the road. The journey hasn’t ended. Having *tawakkul* (trust in God) is the difference between despairing in those moments and pushing through with a tranquil soul and hopefulness.

Moreover, sometimes we make mistakes in our striving. Uncle Adam can still win the case, but we also have to deal with the consequences of our mistakes and learn from them. So if we miscalculated in our striving, it does not mean that Allah will leave us. When some of the Muslims disobeyed the Prophet ﷺ in the Battle of Uhud and as a result suffered severe losses, that wasn’t the end for them. It was a setback. But they learned. So don’t let your own mistakes make you lose hope—but don’t ignore the fact that you made a mistake either. Learn from it, move on, and have trust.

The Signs of Tawakkul

Amr Khaled mentions some of the signs of tawakkul:

1. *The remembrance of Allah, even in difficult circumstances.*

A person who has tawakkul is a person who is connected to His Lord. The remembrance of Allah is a constant, whether that person is in situations of ease or hardship. Look at the Prophet Ibrahim (as). He was sixteen years old when his people were going to throw him in the fire. Ibrahim (as) was calm; he simply said, “*Allah is sufficient for me, and He is the Best Trustee.*” *He was always with Allah. So Allah said “O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham”* [Surat al-Anbiya, [21:69](#)]. This wouldn’t have

been possible if Ibrahim (as) was not a person who remembered Allah.

2. *Your hope does not decrease when your means do.*

Sometimes our hope is dependent to our means. If we see that we have few means, then we do not strive. We lose hope. But *tawakkul* means that the conviction in our hearts does not falter even when our means do. Imagine someone who was so hopeful in Egypt after the January 25th revolution, yet is now faced with another military government. *Tawakkul* means this person is still hopeful, despite the odds. When Allah took Khadija *radi Allahu `anha* (may Allah be pleased with her) and his uncle Abu Talib from the Prophet ﷺ, he didn't give up. He went to Ta'if to seek shelter. Even after he was kicked out, he sought help from the tribes during the Hajj season. The means had to change, there was a period of waiting, but in his heart, the Prophet ﷺ still had complete trust in Allah. Ten years after having to leave Makkah, he returned to it victorious and merciful.

3. *You do not use sin as your means.*

Your income has to be halaal (from permissible means). If you pursue haraam livelihood (i.e. by the forbidden means), you don't truly have trust in Allah because you do not believe that He can provide for you from halaal means. The only exception is in circumstances of dire need (a technical term that has its own conditions in Islamic jurisprudence).

4. *You are not excessive in your fear of the future.*

All of us worry a little, and that is natural. But some people are paralyzed by that fear, constantly in a state of worry about their future, whether it is fear for their livelihoods, children and so on. That is not healthy for us. Worry will not help us in any

practical sense. If we do have a problem with our livelihoods, for instance, being in a state of agitation simply adds another problem. Why have two problems instead of one? Allah reminds that “Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured.” [Qur'an, [13:28](#)]

5. *Striving with the limbs, submitting with the heart.*

The Prophet ﷺ planned and worked hard. He put Ali (ra) in his bed as decoy when he was going to migrate to Madina. He waited until the evening so that they could leave discreetly. They covered their tracks. This is the external effort that is required of all of us when we undertake a task. At the same time, he knew that only Allah could save them. This is where the internal component comes in. Allah shows us what happened when they were in the cave as they were hiding from Qur'ish, and Abu Bakr (ra) was worried that they would see them:

“Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, ‘Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us.’ And Allah sent down his tranquility upon him and supported him with angels you did not see...” [Qur'an, [9:40](#)]

See which of these five signs you can tick off, and work on strengthening them and adding to them. The result will be a content heart and wise actions, insha'Allah.

Some Du`a' (Supplications)

The Prophet ﷺ trains us to have this trust in some supplications that he used to make:

The Prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever says, when he leaves his house,

بسم الله توكلنا على الله و لا حول و لا قوة الا بالله

Bismillah tawakalna `ala Allah wa la hawla wala quwwata ila billah

‘In the name of Allah. I have relied on Allah and there is no power nor strength except by Allah’

will be told, ‘You have been guided, spared and protected,’ and Shaytan will be kept far from him.” [Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa’i and others]

The Prophet ﷺ said whoever says:

حسبي الله لا اله الا هو عليه توكلت وهو رب العرش العظيم

Hasby Allah, la ilaha ila huwa, ‘alayhi tawakalt wa huwa Rabb al-‘arsh al-‘adheem

Sufficient is Allah for me, in Him I put my trust and He is the Lord of the formidable throne

seven times in the morning and evening, Allah will spare him what worries him. [Abu Dawud]

Make Allah make us of those who embody true trust in him, like Muhammad ﷺ, Ibrahim (as), and Hajar (as).



The Absolute Truth

Allah is *al-Haqq*, the Absolute Truth. Al-Ghazali says:

“Al-Haqq—the Truth—is the one who is the antithesis of falsehood, as things may become evident by their opposites...

“Therefore, ‘true’ applies to existence in individuals, to existence in the intellect, which is knowledge; and to existence in speech, which is utterance. The thing which most deserves to be [called] true is the one whose existence is established by virtue of its own essence, forever and eternally, and its knowledge as well as the witness to its truth forever and eternally. So all that pertains to the essence of the truly existing One, and to nothing else.”

If Allah is the Truth, then His Words are the truth; His Promise is the truth; His Threat is the truth; and His Acts are the truth.

Thus if we are the creation of the Ultimate Truth, and we worship Allah the Truth, then we have to live this life by the principles of truth. As Allah tells us in the Qur’an:

“For that is Allah, your Lord, the Truth. And what can be beyond truth except error? So how are you averted?” [Qur’an, [10:32](#)]

If we truly love Allah and His attributes, then we need to be sincere lovers of truth over all else—even over our own selves and interests. Some may wonder what the difference is between truth and justice. Justice is the implementation of the truth. Truth is a value, and justice is its implementation.

Be a Truthful Person

So what are the practical effects of this Name? Allah says in the Qur'an:

“And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it].” [Qur'an, [2:42](#)]

As we know, the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) was known as *as-Sadiq al-Ameen*; the truthful and the trustworthy. He had a deep conviction in his principles, and revelation only made him stronger in them. When he wanted to publicly announce the message of Islam, he called out to the people. He said to them, “If I were to tell you that there is an army behind this mountain ready to attack, would you believe me?” and their answer was, “We never heard you tell a lie before.”

Being truthful means being truthful in our speech and in our actions. So we are not dishonest in our interactions because we know truth is something to be lived, and not simply spoken. We strive for justice in all our actions because that is true living in accordance with the principles of truth. Being truthful in words means saying the truth but also being wise with it. Remember that the Prophet ﷺ taught us to “*show gentleness, for if gentleness is found in anything, it beautifies it and when it is taken out from anything it damages it.*” (Abu Dawud) There are truths that have to do with justice, and these must be said in a manner that is in the spirit of the way of the Prophet ﷺ.

A man once came to the Prophet ﷺ and asked him, “*When is the Hour?*” He said “*Wait for the Hour when trust will be destroyed.*” One of the signs of the ends of time is that these principles are lost.

Understanding the Truths We are Taught

We believe that Allah is the Truth, and we believe that His Words are true. Therefore, what He has promised us is also true. So what truth does the Qur'an teach us? The truth of purpose, of accountability, of return to our Lord, of benefitting humanity, of cooperating with others for good, of standing up for the oppressed, and of the fact that Allah is with us and protecting us when we stand for truth, no matter what Pharoah is standing before us.

If we truly believe in the truth of the Qur'an, then we need to understand the purpose of our lives. We must work for something greater. We must take comfort in Allah's promise when things are difficult for us.

Recognize Small Truths

The beauty of Islam is that it recognizes small truths. The Prophet ﷺ tells us, “*The statement of wisdom is the lost property of the believer, so wherever he finds it then he has a right to it.*” (Tirmidhi) So we shouldn't dismiss something because it does not seem to be, in our view, as emanating from Islam. It is actually our duty to seek the truth as an affirmation of Allah's Truth.

Be a Seeker of Truth

Try to seek truth in all its forms. As al-Ghazali says, realizing this Name means that a person “is so absorbed in the Truth that he has no room for anything else.” Imagine if all you ever wanted from your dealings is to ascertain the truth. It doesn't matter if the truth is for or against you, whether revealing the truth means your

co-worker would get the promotion and not you. What is important to you is that you are a follower of the truth.

Salman al-Farisi, one of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, was a sincere seeker of truth. He came from a wealthy Persian family. He was even entrusted with keeping the fire that they worshipped. But one day, he heard some Christians speak about their faith. And he was astounded. He wanted to convert to their religion, so his father put him under house arrest. When he finally escaped, he accompanied a seemingly pious Christian leader. But that man turned out to be corrupt, taking people's charity meant for the poor for himself. At that point, Salman *radi allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) could have turned away. He could have said "What a hypocrite! What a religion! I don't want anything to do with this!" But he didn't. He knew that the Truth had nothing to do with the evil actions of men. He left the corrupt man, and continued seeking.

He finally found a pious Christian monk. He accompanied him and learned much from him, until that man was about to die. Salman asked him for advice concerning what he should do and whose company he should seek. So the monk told him of some of the signs of a prophet who was coming: a man who did not take charity but would accept gifts, in a place between two mountains, who had a seal on his back. So Salman (ra) set out to go to Arabia. He met some Arabs and told them he would give them money if they would take him to Arabia. But they took his money and kidnapped him in order to sell him as a slave! A Jewish man bought him, and eventually he was taken to Madina to serve one of the men from the Banu Nadheer tribe, one of the Jewish tribes of Madina. This was before the Prophet ﷺ arrived.

Imagine how you would have felt at that point. What do you think was going through his mind? 'O God! I did all this for you, to seek the truth, and then you turn me into a slave?? I used to be a no-

bleman!' But again, Salman wasn't concerned with his hardships. He was concerned with seeking the truth. When the Prophet ﷺ arrived, Salman (ra) heard that a man who people believed to be a prophet had come. So Salman tested the Prophet ﷺ, looking for the signs he was told about. And they were all there. So Salman (ra) wept, and kissed the hands of the Prophet ﷺ, and told him his story. The Prophet ﷺ collected money from all the companions in order to buy Salman's freedom.

For this reason, all the companions wanted to claim him. The *Muhajireen* (immigrants from Makkah) and the *Ansar* (the supporters in Madina) both said that Salman was from them. When the Prophet ﷺ heard them, he said "No. Salman is from us, the people of the house," i.e. the family of the Prophet ﷺ. Imagine arriving at such a station, by being a seeker of the truth.

A Beautiful Du`a' (Supplication)

اللهم أرنا الحق حقاً، وارزقنا اتباعه، وأرنا الباطل باطلاً، وارزقنا اجتنابه

Allahumma arina al-haqqa haqqan warzuqna ittiba'ah, wa arina al-batila batilan warzuqna ijtinabah

O Allah! Show us Truth as Truth and give us ability to follow it and show us Falsehood as Falsehood and give us the ability to avoid it.

May Allah make us seekers of The Truth.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ الرَّؤُوفُ

The Entirely Merciful, The Especially
Merciful, The Most Kind

All-Encompassing Mercy

Her heart felt like it was being ripped apart. She looked around her and could not find him. She started breathing more heavily. Her eyes scanned her surroundings desperately, where she could see soldiers and captives, until suddenly, she caught a glimpse of his tiny body. She bolted towards and scooped him up as she wept, and then nursed him. Her whole body sighed in relief. Her baby was safe.

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) describes this scene in a famous hadith (narration) to give us a glimpse into God's mercy. After witnessing this scene, the Prophet ﷺ asked the Companions, *"Do you think that this woman would throw her child in the fire?"* And they said, *"No, by Allah she would not, if she is able not to."* He ﷺ then said, *"Allah the Exalted is more merciful with His slave than this woman with her child."* (Bukhari)

This is a universal example, one that most people can understand—the mercy of a mother towards her child. And not just any mother, but a mother faced with that situation. Allah is more merciful to His creation than that mother.

Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem

The first words that begin the journey through the Qur'an are: *"In the Name of God, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful (ar-Rahman, ar-Raheem),"* (Quran, [1:1](#)). We begin the journey of knowing God through His Mercy. This is the way in which God introduces Himself to us—not with the names that indicate majesty and strength. So in this journey of understanding Allah's Names, it is only fitting that we speak of His all-encompassing mercy.

Rahman and Raheem both come from the same root of ra-haa-meem (رَحِمَ), which means *"ar-riqqa wal-ta'atuf"*—a combination of tenderness and compassion.

Ar-Rahman is the Entirely Merciful whose "All-inclusive mercy gives to both the worthy and unworthy. The mercy of God is perfect and all-inclusive. It is perfect in the sense that He not only wills the satisfaction of the needs of the needy but actually satisfies them. It is all-inclusive in that it includes the worthy and the unworthy, this life and that which is to come and encompasses the essentials, needs and advantages which go beyond them. Thus He is in truth the Compassionate absolutely," (al-Ghazali).

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) says in the Qur'an, *"He who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days and then established Himself above the Throne – the Most Merciful (ar-Rahman), so ask about Him one well informed."* (Qur'an, [25:59](#))

We are all recipients of Allah's Mercy every single day. The plants, animals and humans. Men and women. Young and old. Muslim and non-Muslim. These mercies come in the form of all of the blessings in our lives, from the earth itself to our loved ones. Allah tells us, *"And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and*

[that] perhaps you will be grateful," (Qur'an, [28:73](#)). These are the things that we don't even realize, but we all benefit from. A cool breeze on a warm day. Rain after drought. The trees that purify the air for us. We are all recipients of this mercy.

Ar-Raheem is a more specific mercy towards the believers. For example, the mercy that descends during Ramadan is one only Muslims who believe in Ramadan can enjoy. And Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur'an, *"It is He who confers blessing upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darknesses into the light. And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful (Raheema)"* (Qur'an, [33:43](#)).

In order to understand this amazing mercy in the grand scheme of things, the Prophet ﷺ informs us that, *"Allah has divided mercy into 100 parts, and He retained with Him 99 parts, and sent down to earth one part. Through this one part creatures deal with one another with compassion, so much so that an animal lifts its hoof over its young lest it should hurt it,"* (Al-Bukhari).

When your mom shows affection towards you, or when your spouse covers you with a blanket lest you feel cold, remember that this is only a fraction of the one mercy that Allah (swt) sent down to earth. So imagine the mercy He has saved for the Day of Judgment!

Ar-Ra'uf

Ar-Ra'uf is "the One who has pity (on others), and pity is the intensification of mercy. Therefore it has the same meaning as *ar-rahim* though in an intensified form, and the discussion of *ar-rahim* has already been presented," (al-Ghazali).

So if *Ra'uf* is simply a more intensified form of mercy, what is the difference between *Rahma* and *Ra'fa*? Scholars have said that if a

calamity hits you, one who is Merciful—*Raheem*—has mercy on you after that calamity. But *Ra'uf* is one who is so merciful, that his mercy extends before the calamity hits, and involves him taking care of you and warning you so that a calamity does not hit. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi gives an example of a father who is protective of his children, and especially during the winter when he dresses them in warm clothes so that they do not suffer from the cold. That is *ra'fa*. Whereas a father whose heart aches because his child has become sick, and does everything to get the medicine to ease his child's pain, is merciful—*raheem*. Imam al-Qushayri states that *ra'fa* is the highest form of mercy, where Allah protects His servants by warning them of the deeds the necessitate punishment.

It's almost like Allah does not want us to have an ounce of doubt about His mercy towards us. His mercy is not only all-encompassing, with a special kind reserved for the believers, but He is telling us that His warnings to us, and His withholding from us is from an intense mercy. He does not want us to go through the hurt and pain had He not warned us.

But I face so many difficulties in my life...

I have explored the issue of calamities in these two articles: Why am I tested? And Will you turn away? So I will be brief here.

The culmination of Allah's mercy is in the Paradise that He created, which the Prophet ﷺ described as a place *"no eye has seen and no ear has heard and neither has the thought occurred in any person's heart"* (Bukhari). It is this place that we strive to be, where we understand that this is what our struggle was for. Yet Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, *"But you prefer the worldly life, While the Hereafter is better and more enduring,"* (Qur'an, [87:16-17](#)).

We will face difficulties, and this does not contradict Allah's mercy. Some difficulties are simply challenges we need to overcome.

Others seem to have no explanation.

As to the first kind, these challenges are there to strengthen us. There are some lessons we would not have learned without them. An Olympic champion only reaches that level by being pushed by his trainer. A child might wonder why a mother forces him to go to school everyday. But it is only so we can become the best that we can be. There is light at the end of the tunnel. These challenges bring us closer to Allah (swt) because we then realize that He is the only One who can help us. And at the end of it all, we are not tested with more than we can bear.

As to the second kind, Allah's *ra'fa* is in His instructing us on what is the best way to be in this world. When we are faced with things we cannot explain, or suffering that seems too great, it is our responsibility to act. And Allah tells us how to act as His vicegerents on this earth. Every suffering will have its end, as *"Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease"* (Qur'an, [65:7](#)). We will only be asked about what we did in the face of it.

And in all cases of difficulty, remember that the Prophet ﷺ said, *"No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that,"* (Bukhari).

Living with this Name

Have Mercy on Others

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *"Those who show mercy to their fellow beings will be shown mercy by the Merciful Lord. So, show mercy to those on the earth, and He Who is in the heavens will show mercy to you,"* (Tirmidhi). Be merciful in your interactions with people, and do not be harsh.

Learn the Things that Bring About Allah's Mercy

There are some ahadeeth (sayings of the Prophet ﷺ) where the Prophet ﷺ tells us what brings about Allah's mercy:

"May Allah have mercy on a man who is kind when he buys, when he sells, and when he makes a demand," (Bukhari) and, "May Allah have mercy on the man who gets up at night to pray and wakes up his wife to pray, and if she refuses, he sprinkles water in her face. And may Allah have mercy on the woman who gets up at night to pray, and wakes her husband up to pray, and if he refuses, she sprinkles water in his face," (Abu Dawud).

Do Things that Increase the Mercy in Your Heart

Sometimes we can become numb to the suffering around us. We get so caught up in our lives that we lose the connection to other people, and therefore cannot empathize with their struggle. So, volunteer at a soup kitchen. Get involved with an organization that provides housing for the homeless. Give some of your time, energy and money to stand with people.

Follow the One who was Sent as a Mercy to the Worlds ﷺ

The best way to become a manifestation of Allah's *rahma* is to study the life of the Prophet ﷺ and follow his example. The battle of Uhud was the most difficult battle for the Muslims. It was the battle in which they thought that they lost the Prophet ﷺ. In their panic and desperation, the companions asked the bleeding Prophet ﷺ to supplicate against their enemy. But he refused and said, "O Allah! Guide my people for they do not know!" These are lessons that we need to learn from.

Look at the Manifestations of Allah's Mercy in your life, in Times When He has Given, and in Times When He has Withheld

Reflection is considered one of the greatest acts of worship. We are the benefactors of so many mercies, every day of our lives. Moreover, there are many times when something that is perceived as 'bad' turns out to be something good for us. So take the time to reflect on Allah's mercy in your life—the times He protected you, the times He gave to you, and even the times He withheld from you.



Don't Say I Have a Big Problem—Say I Have a Big God

I was in high school reviewing for exams when I received a text message from my aunt. The text message read, “When you have a problem, don’t ever say ‘O God, I have a big problem.’ Rather say, ‘HEY problem! I have a big God!’ and everything will be ok.” And what immediately came to mind was, “*Allahu ak-bar*” (Allah is greater).

Allah’s Name *al-Kabeer* (the Most Great) is a Name that we all need to get acquainted with. Not only do we refer to this attribute everyday, but, when truly understood, it is a Name that brings tranquility and confidence to every person who is overwhelmed. It is a Name that reminds us of our priorities, of where true greatness lies and who is ultimately in control.

“*Kabeer*” in regular parlance is used to describe something that is great or big physically. You would say “*al-baytu kabeer*” (the house is big). But when it comes to Allah, *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He), as Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi states, His greatness is in the fact that He “is far Exalted above being confined by a certain place, space or volume; but He is All-Great from the perspective of mental conception.” Al-Kabeer was mentioned in the Qur’an 3 times, with His Name *al-Aliyy* (the Most-High). Allah says in the Qur’an:

“That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon other than Him is falsehood, and because Allah is the Most High, the Grand (*al-Kabeer*)” (Qur’an [22:62](#)).

Another Name from the same root is *al-Akbar* (the One who is Greater). *Al-Akbar* simply calls us to understand that Allah is greater than whatever we can imagine. So it is no coincidence that the words used to call us to prayer are “*Allahu akbar*”—basically telling us to drop whatever it is we are doing because God is greater. We are told to come to what really gives us success (*hayya ala al-falaah*). *Allahu akbar*. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) tells us that one of the most beloved deeds to God is to pray on time.

Because we are prioritizing: God is greater.

We also start the prayer with those very words: God is bigger. He is greater. So leave the *dunya* (physical universe) behind. Pour your heart out to Him. Let Him know your worries. God is indeed greater. Every time you get distracted, then know that God is Greater than what you are thinking about. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi also says that the reason why we say *Allahu akbar* between every change in prayer is because every time we contemplate on the greatness of God, we have to remember: He is greater even than what we imagine.

Al-Kabeer, *al-Akbar* and *al-Mutakabbir* (all from the same root) teach us where to look. We sometimes see things as huge, and impossible to surmount. We feel broken by our worries. We might be oppressed, and viewing our oppressor as great and strong. But we remind ourselves: Anything that seems big or great, *Allahu Akbar*. He is greater. This should fill us with strength and calm. It should remove any fear we have. The companion Abdullah bin Hathafa truly internalized this. He was captured by the Romans and enticed by the emperor with wealth and power to leave Islam. But he knew that God was greater than the emperor, and what God has is

greater than anything anyone could offer him. So he refused. Then the emperor threatened to kill him. And his response? With the utmost calm, he responded that the king could do what he wanted. This is the confidence in the face of pressure that comes with an understanding of *al-Kabeer*.

So what does it mean to truly live with *al-Kabeer*?

1. *Humble yourself*

Allah is *al-Mutakabbir*. He is the only One who possesses rights and attributes that are above anyone else’s. That’s why this Name is exclusive to Allah (swt), and if used for a human, it has the negative connotation of arrogance. An arrogant person is one who sees that they have rights or attributes above other people, and so they disdain others because of that. If ever you find yourself looking down on others because of your achievements, luck or even things you were born with, remember the ultimate source of those things. And remember that the only One who is above us all is Allah.

Umar bin Al-Khattab *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) was carrying a heavy water container on his back when he was the caliph. One of the companions saw him and exclaimed that he shouldn’t be carrying that because he was the Caliph. But Umar (ra) replied that a delegation had visited Madina and of course, dealt with him with the respect and subservience that is given to leaders. Because of that, he felt some pride enter his heart, and he wanted to destroy it.

2. *Be strong*

I always feel a sense of calm when I hear or say “*Allahu akbar*”. That’s because nothing is too great for God. Nothing is too difficult. He is greater than our circumstances. Work hard, because

Allah is greater than the obstacles. Be strong, because with *al-Kabeer* with you, you can do many, many things.

3. Prioritize

Knowing that Allah is *al-Kabeer* and that He is Greater should teach us to prioritize. If I have two things to choose from, I remember that God is greater. So I choose that with which He would be pleased. If I am messing around on the laptop and I hear the *athan* (call to prayer), reminding me that Allah (swt) is greater, then I get up and pray.

4. Be devoted in your prayers

Because we pray five times a day, everyday, we sometimes treat it as a chore. But we start the prayer with “*Allahu akbar*”, remembering that what we are doing now is greater. We should be focused on this now.



So We Strengthened Them with a Third

Today's Name is one that has been expressed over 95 times in the Qur'an. It is a Name that gives us strength. Today's Name is *al-'Azeez*.

To be truthful, I had difficulty writing an article on this Name. It's one of these Names that has to be felt rather than explained. Of course this is true for all of Allah's Names, and this is the purpose of the series- to understand, feel and live by these Names. But because this Name denotes power, dignity and uniqueness, I felt that I could explain it best through stories. I pray that everyone who reads this article truly internalizes the meaning of this Name, and may Allah forgive me for my mistakes and shortcomings in getting the meanings across.

The Meanings

الْعَزِيزُ: من صفات الله عز وجل وأسمائه الحسنی؛ قال الزجاج: هو الممتنع فلا يغلبه شيء، وقال غيره: هو القوي الغالب كل شيء، وقيل: هو الذي ليس كمثله شيء.
ومن أسمائه عز وجل الْمُعِزُّ، وهو الذي يَهَبُ الْعِزَّ لمن يشاء من عباده والعِزُّ: خلاف الدُّل.

In Lisaan al-Arab, *al-Azeez* is defined as: From the attributes of Allah and His Glorious Names; al-Zajaaj said: He is the Invincible that no one can overpower, and others said: He is the All-Powerful who is able to overpower everything, and it is also said: There is nothing like Him. And of His Names are *al-Mu'izz*, meaning He gives 'izza to whomever He wishes. And 'izz is the opposite of humiliation.

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi states that because Allah is *al-Azeez*, He gives honor, dignity and strength to whomever He wills.

The Servants of al'-Azeez

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) taught us the concept of 'izza. He said:

اطلبوا الحوائج بعزة الأنفس فإن الأمور تجري بالمقادير

“Seek the things you need with self-respect and dignity (*bi 'izzati anfus*), for all matters run according to Divine Ordainment.”¹

The true servants of *al-Azeez* are those who derive their dignity from Him, and thus respect themselves and have an inner strength. One such person was Asmaa bint Abu Bakr.

When Asmaa *radi Allahu anha* (may God be pleased with her) was young, she protected the Prophet ﷺ and her father when they had escaped to go to Madina. As they hid in the cave from Quriesh, who wanted the Prophet ﷺ killed, she took food to them. Abu Jahl, who was so angered and frustrated that they had not caught them, asked Asmaa where her father and the Prophet ﷺ were. She did not tell him. He then slapped her so hard that she bled, but still she did not tell him. Abu Sufyan even came later to her to apologize. She carried this trait with her even when she was old. Her son, Abdullah bin az-Zubayr (ra), was being besieged in

Makkah by al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf. So Abdullah (ra) said to his mother “I am afraid that they will mutilate my body after I die”, to which she responded, “And what difference does it make to a sheep that its skin is taken off after it is killed?” And Abdullah bin az-Zubayr (ra) was indeed martyred. Al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf went to Asmaa bin Abu Bakr after her son's death and said sneeringly “Did you see what I did to your son?” And she replied, “Yes. I see that you ruined for him his *dunya* (the physical universe), but he ruined for you your *akhira* (Hereafter).”

Another example is the scholar al-'Izz bin 'Abdelsalaam. He said to the ruler of Cairo, “Fear Allah with regards to your flock and rule them with justice,” to which he responded “Yes O 'Izz, we will do that”. Later, the daughter of al-'Izz said to him “Weren't you afraid when you said that to him?” and he said, “When I thought of the might of God he seemed like a kitten to me.”

Allah is *al-Azeez*, and so He gives 'izza to His righteous servants. In the Qur'an, we are told of the two Prophets who were sent to a people in Surat Yaseen:

“When We sent to them two but they denied them, so We strengthened them with a third, and they said, “Indeed, we are messengers to you” (Qur'an, [36:14](#)).

The word for strengthened that is used is “*azazna*”, from the same root of Allah's Name *al-Azeez*. When you do something for Allah, and you behave with dignity and strength, then Allah strengthens you. He gives you 'izza, because only He can. He is the Invincible. During the Battle of Badr, when the Muslims were a mere 313 against 1000 of their enemies, Allah recounts to us how He helped the Muslims:

“And already had Allah given you victory at [the battle of] Badr while you were few in number. Then fear Allah ; perhaps you will be grateful.

[Remember] when you said to the believers, “Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down? Yes, if you remain patient and conscious of Allah and the enemy come upon you [attacking] in rage, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels having marks [of distinction]. And Allah made it not except as [a sign of] good tidings for you and to reassure your hearts thereby. And victory is not except from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise” (Qur’an, [3:123-126](#)).

The verse ends by telling us that Allah is the One Exalted in Might (*al-Azeez*) and the Wise (*al-Hakeem*). *Al-Azeez* always comes with either Allah’s Names *al-Hakeem* (the Wise) or *ar-Raheem* (the Merciful), because some people might interpret ‘*izza* to simply be defiance- whether justified or not. But ‘*izza* is always tempered by wisdom and mercy. And thus when we attempt to be servants of *al-Azeez*, we must remember that it is Allah who gives strength, and that can be internal or external. For us to have ‘*izza*, it should not turn into arrogance or harshness, rather it should be accompanied by wisdom and mercy.

Amr Khaled gives some points on how to live by Allah’s Name *al-Azeez*:

1. Strengthen people:

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever a believer is humiliated before him and he does not help him when he is able to do so, Allah will humiliate him before the creation on the day of judgment” (Reported by Ahmad).

2. Go to Allah with humility:

Because He is *al-Azeez* and true ‘*izza* belongs to Him. A man was once walking around the *ka’ba* saying “O Allah, my clothes are simple as you can see. My daughter is weak as you can see.

My wife is poor as you can see. O You who sees what is in us and cannot be seen!” A scholar heard this and tried to give the man money. The man was surprised and said, “No no, I am wealthy, I own this and that, I come from so-and –so place.” So the scholar asked, “So why do you say what you say?” And he replied, “O Imam, God loves those who go to Him in humility”.

3. Be dignified and give something for Islam

Anyone who truly feels this Name will want to give something for Islam, because he is confident in Himself and in his Lord. As humans, we sometimes derive our strength and dignity from material things such as wealth, status or even ethnicity/nationality. But if we do that, those are the things that we will pursue, and without them, we will feel a sense of inferiority. Yet Allah is the One who strengthens. True dignity comes in servitude to Him. When our pursuits become in the Name of Him, we will feel an empowerment that cannot come when our sense of worth comes from solely from worldly things. And that is when we will surprise even ourselves, because we do not hold back based on a limited perception of the difficulties around us.

Remember that the Prophet ﷺ said with confidence to Surqa bin Malik – as he was being hunted down by him!- “What about a day when you will be wearing the bracelets of Kisra?”² At that point when, from the outside, he could be seen that he was at his lowest point- he was, after all, being chased by a bounty hunter and wanted by an entire city- he had absolutely no doubt in what was to come from God. ‘Umar bin al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) sums this up in this oft-quoted statement, “We were indeed a very lowly people. Allah raised us to honor and greatness through Islam. If we forget who we are and wish other than Islam, which elevated us, the One who raised us surely will debase us.” So our role is to strive, with dignity, and Allah will give us the strength needed.

4. Fear only Allah, and derive your strength from Him

Allah cannot be overpowered. We sometimes fear people because of what we perceive to be their strength over us. But Allah is *al-'Azeez*, and we should always remember this when we are faced with tyrants. When the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr were hiding in the cave of Thawr, and all that the disbelievers had to do was look down and they would see them, Allah sent down His tranquility upon them:

“If you do not aid the Prophet – Allah has already aided him when those who disbelieved had driven him out [of Makkah] as one of two, when they were in the cave and he said to his companion, “Do not grieve; indeed Allah is with us.” And Allah sent down his tranquility upon him and supported him with angels you did not see and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the word of Allah – that is the highest. And Allah is Exalted in Might (al-'Azeez) and Wise (al-Hakeem).” (Qur'an, [9:40](#))

We do not necessarily need to be afraid in order to recognize danger. Just like the Prophet ﷺ knew that the disbelievers would be able to see them if they looked down- that was a real danger- he also knew that *al-'Azeez* was with them.

May Allah make us true servants of *al-'Azeez*.

1. Collected by Ibn `Asakir and related by `Abdullah bin Bisr. The chain has been censured by al-Suyuti
2. Kisra was the ruler of the powerful Persian empire at the time.



Love Is In Giving

When was the last time you felt truly loved? Close your eyes and think about it. You can probably think of certain people, as well as specific scenarios. And if someone were to ask you how you know that you are loved, you would list the things the person does to express their love for you. If we find it hard to interpret acts of love, we usually doubt our relationship. When you are able to point out behavior that shows love, this kind of love is not called *hubb* in Arabic, because *hubb* is simply having a feeling of love. This kind of love – one that is apparent and shown – is called *wud*.

Wud means love and an expression of love through the act of giving. And Allah has Named Himself *al-Wadud*: The Affectionate. This word was specifically chosen to show that Allah not only loves you, but that He shows you He loves you. And if we have been in the dark about this, it's time to take notice how Allah manifests His love for us – for you, for me specifically – everyday. Your heart will melt.

When Allah loves a servant

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) shows us some ways that Al-

lah shows His love:

“When Allah loves someone he calls to Jibreel ‘alayhi salatu wassalam (pay Allah be pleased with him) saying, ‘O Jibreel, I love such and such a person, so love him.’ Then Jibreel will call to the angels of the heavens, ‘Allah loves such and such a person so love him.’ And the angels will love [that person]. And then Allah will place acceptance on earth for that believer.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

It would have been enough for Allah to say that He loves a person, for what more could someone want? But because Allah is *Al-Wadud* (the Affectionate) and *Al-Kareem* (the Most-Generous), He declares this love to the Angels, which does not stay in the heavens but descends to the earth because Allah puts acceptance of this person in the hearts of people. What else does Allah tell us about His love?

The Prophet ﷺ said, *“Allah, the Exalted, has said: ‘I will declare war against him who treats with hostility a pious worshipper of Mine. And the most beloved thing with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (voluntary prayers or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) until I love him, (so much so that) I become his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me something, I will surely give him, and if he seeks My Protection (refuge), I will surely protect him’.* [Bukhari]

Sometimes it is difficult to separate between Allah being affectionate, and Allah being merciful, and Allah being forgiving. Aren't they all the same? Al-Ghazali states that “Its meaning [*al-Wadud*] is close to ‘the Merciful’, but mercy is linked with one who receives mercy, and the one who receives mercy is needy and poor. So the actions of the Merciful presuppose there being one who is weak to receive mercy, while the actions of the Loving-Kind [*al-*

Wadud] do not require that. Rather, bestowing favors from the outset results from a loving-kindness.”

Look at Allah's love for the Prophet ﷺ: in Makkah, after the revelation of a few surahs of the Qur'an, revelation stopped. The tribe of Qureish made fun of the Prophet, saying “The Lord of Muhammad has left him.” So Allah revealed the verses, *“By the morning brightness, And [by] the night when it covers with darkness, Your Lord has not taken leave of you, [O Muhammad], nor has He detested [you].”* [Qur'an, [93:1-3](#)] Allah comforts the Prophet ﷺ with these words. And we too should take comfort – when you are on the right path, Allah will not leave you. He is with you, and He will comfort you.

You

In order to truly feel Allah's love in your life, take a few minutes to reflect. Think about the care you were given as a child. You didn't ask for it, it just came when you were born. Think of your family and of your friends. Think of the health God gave you in your body. Think of the opportunities you were given in your life. Then look at the world around you – the beauty of nature. It didn't have to be this way. The world could have been bland and ugly. But there is so much beauty that only you can truly enjoy.

Allah has created us, and yet we worship other gods that we make up. They may not be physical statues, but things like money or status. God blessed us with bounties, yet we attribute those blessings solely to people. Allah's Mercy descends to us while our bad deeds ascend to Him, and still He sends us gifts in order to bring us closer to Him, though He doesn't need us. The Prophet ﷺ tells us that *“Allah Almighty will stretch out His hand during the night, turning towards the one who did wrong during the day, and stretch out His hand during the day, turning towards the one who did wrong during the night, until the day the sun rises from the place it set.”* [Muslim]

God loves those who return to Him, even though we are the ones in need of returning. In the hadith (narration), we are told, “*Allah is happier about the repentance of one of His slaves than one of you would be about finding your camel which had strayed away from you in the middle of the desert.*” [Agreed upon] Even though we are the ones who turned away from Him, Allah keeps the door open to us so that we return. It doesn’t matter what we’ve done; the Prophet ﷺ tells us that Allah says, “*O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.*” [Tirmidhi] And if we leave something for the sake of God – and we know that anything prohibited to us is bad for us anyway – Allah replaces it with something greater.

Allah makes it so easy to go to Him and be close to Him. The Prophet ﷺ tells us:

“Whosoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it with Himself as ten good deeds, up to seven hundred times, or more than that. But if he intends to do an evil deed and does not do it, Allah records it with Himself as a complete good deed; but if he intends it and does it, Allah records it down as one single evil deed.” (Bukhari and Muslim)

His Generosity is so great that not only does He give us, but if we thank for the blessings, He gives us more!¹ And Allah uses the example of possibly the greatest love – that of a mother to her child – and then says that He has even more love and mercy towards us.

It is natural for us as servants to love Him considering that He is

our Merciful Creator. But what is amazing is that Allah gives us so much so that we can seek to come closer to Him. Sometimes we despair and are unforgiving towards ourselves. But the Prophet ﷺ reminds us that, “*Our Lord (glorified and exalted be He) descends each night to the earth’s sky when there remains the final third of the night, and He says: Who is saying a prayer to Me that I may answer it? Who is asking something of Me that I may give it him? Who is asking forgiveness of Me that I may forgive him?*” (Bukhari)

This is an open invitation to **EVERYONE**. Some of us may feel so far – where do we even begin? Yet Allah says in a hadith qudsi, “*If my servant comes closer to Me a hand span, I come closer to him or her an arms-length; and if he or she comes to Me walking, I come to him or her at speed.*” (Bukhari)

So just take that first step. Make the intention to do one new thing or to fix something you weren’t doing so well.

How can we not fall in love with al-Wadud, who showers us with affection daily?

Being a Recipient of Allah’s love

1. Do good

ان الذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات سيجعل لهم الرحمن ودا

“Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds – the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection.” (Qur’an, [19:96](#))

If you believe and do good, Allah will bestow upon you affection. When you do good, you are within the realm of Allah’s love, and He will show you how He loves you. He is *ash-Shakoor* and so will give you so much more than what you gave.

2. Love for people what you love for yourself

Al-Ghazali states, “One is loving-kind among God’s servants who desires for God’s creatures what he desires for himself; and whoever prefers them to himself is even higher than that as the messenger of God – may God’s blessing and peace be upon him – said, when his tooth was broken and his face was struck and bloodied: ‘Lord, guide my people, for they do not know’. Not even their actions prevented him from intending their good. Or as he (may God’s blessing and peace be upon him) – commanded Ali (may God be merciful to him) when he said: ‘If you want to take precedence over those who are close to God, then be reconciled with those who broke with you, give to the ones who excluded you, and forgive the ones who wronged you.’”

3. Thank Him for His affection

When you thank Allah, He gives you more. So thank Him for showering you with love everyday, and watch as that increases, insha’Allah.

1. “And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.’” (Qur’an, 14:7)



When was the Last Time you Witnessed a Miracle?

When was the last time you made an intense, heartfelt *du`a`* (supplication) to Allah, *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He)? A *du`a`* that was so full of conviction—a *du`a`* that a drowning man would make as he struggles to keep afloat, knowing that no one can help him but God. A *du`a`* that made you feel vulnerable because you are laying everything bare, and because you are allowing yourself to recognize that you are helpless without Allah (swt). But also, a *du`a`* that is coupled with absolute trust that Allah (swt) does not ever disappoint.

When was the last time?

Allah is *al-Hayyi*. This Name is not in the Qur’an, but it is found in the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him). In the most famous example from the sunnah (traditions of the Prophet), Salman al-Farsi narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Verily your Lord is Generous (*Kareem*) and Hayyi. If His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication) He becomes shy to return them empty,” (Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi).

Hayyi is a little hard to translate into English. The best I have

found is that it is the opposite of insolence and impertinence (الاستحياء الذي [هو] ضد الوقاحة). *Hayaa* is usually translated as shyness, but shyness can sometimes also denote timidity, and Allah (swt) is the Most Majestic. So I will use the term “*demure*” and “*shy*” interchangeably to describe Allah (swt), bearing in mind that this shyness comes from a place of honor, not meekness. I hope that from the examples, we can come to understand Allah’s Name *al-Hayyi* (swt).

Many cultures have this tradition but in some it is more pronounced than others; it is considered rude to turn someone away. If someone merely compliments, for example, something you are wearing, you would feel obliged to give it to them. If you have a guest over at your house, you honor them by giving them food and hospitality. If their child asks you for something sweet, and you have strict rules in your house about food, then you will make something that satisfies that child but is also healthy. You would never turn someone away, not out of fear, but because of this characteristic. And the Prophet ﷺ tells us that Allah (swt) is so generous and demure, that when you ask Him something, He will never return your hands to you empty.

Imagine that Allah (swt) is shy to say no to you—when you ask Him, He gives; when you seek forgiveness, He forgives; and when you return, He accepts. The Prophet ﷺ tells us:

“The Lord descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the night remains and says: ‘Who will call upon Me, that I may answer Him? Who will ask of Me, that I may give him? Who will seek My forgiveness, that I may forgive him?’” (Bukhari and Muslim).

Allah (swt) didn’t say ‘maybe’ He will accept you. So ask Allah (swt) based on what He can give you. In the hadith, the Prophet ﷺ says that Allah (swt) will not return your hands to you *sifran*—meaning with zero, nothing. You will always get something. The

most grateful of people are those that recognize that when they do not get exactly what they want, they know that Allah (swt) gave them something else for a wisdom. Because He is *Hayyi*, He would not just say no and leave you without anything to work with or to lift you when you need it. In another hadith, the Prophet ﷺ tells us, “Any Muslim who supplicates to God in a *du`a`* which contains no sin breaking of kinship, God will give him one of three things: either his *du`a`* will be immediately answered or, it will be saved for him in the hereafter, or it will turn away an equivalent amount of evil (from him).” The companions said, “So we will ask for more.” He replied, “Allah is more [generous].” [Ahmad]

Hayaa: The Hallmark of a Muslim

The Prophet ﷺ told us: “Every religion has a distinguishing characteristic, and the distinguishing characteristic of Islam is *hayaa*,” (Muwatta’).

Hayaa comes from the root that means life. It is said that the level of one’s *hayaa* correlates to how much life one has in his or her heart. Unfortunately, because we sometimes define *hayaa* as a kind of shy meekness, as opposed to a modesty that comes from a place of dignity and humbleness, this trait is not appreciated. Or even worse, it is seen to only apply to women, when the Prophet ﷺ told us that this is the characteristic of Islam. One of the companions with the most *hayaa* was ‘Uthman bin Affan, *radi Allahu ‘anhu* (may Allah be pleased with him), a male companion and one of the ten promised paradise. One beautiful story that I heard in a [lecture](#) by Sheikh Umar Suleiman is that there was once a poor child who came to ‘Uthman (ra) in the masjid. So what ‘Uthman (ra) did was he gave the child a garment and put a lot of money in the pocket. He told the child to show the garment to his parents and ask them what they thought of it. So the child went home to show his parents his new shirt, and they discovered the money that ‘Uthman put in the pocket. ‘Uthman was not seeking

attention; he did it quietly. He was modest even in giving.

We all appreciate this characteristic when we see it in others; the important person who does not draw attention to him or herself; the rich person who does not boast of their wealth; the beautiful person who is unaware of their beauty. And this characteristic is beloved to Allah (swt). One of the companions, al-Ashaj ibn al-Qays (ra), said, “The Prophet ﷺ said to me, ‘You have two characteristics that God loves.’ So I said, ‘And what are they, O Messenger of Allah?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘They are forbearance and hayaa.’ And I responded, ‘Are these qualities part of my nature or did I acquire them?’ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘They are part of your nature.’ So I said, ‘All praise is due to Allah that He put in me two characteristics that He loves,’” (Muslim)

Some people naturally have this characteristic. For those who don’t, Islam gives us the tools to build this attribute. In a *khutba* (sermon), Imam Zaid Shakir said that Islam provides for you the environment to enable you to have *hayaa*. As Muslims we should enable others to be modest. We should work with each other to foster the best characteristics in ourselves. After all, these characteristics will bind us together in this life and the next. The Prophet ﷺ said:

“Shyness (*hayaa*) is from faith, and the people of faith will be in Paradise. Disagreeable of nature is from crudeness, and crudeness is in the hellfire,” (Tirmidhi).

A distinction must be made though. *Hayaa* is not a shyness that prevents you from doing good things or the right thing. Shyness comes from a sense of dignity: ‘I cannot behave in a certain way because it is undignified. I should give people because that is the characteristic of a Muslim.’ As the Prophet ﷺ told us: “The best struggle is a word of truth in the face of an oppressive tyrant,” (Tirmidhi). ‘Shyness’ or *hayaa* does not prevent you from saying

something because staying silent in the face of an injustice is not *hayaa*. *Hayaa* does not mean that you do not put yourself forward for a job that you know you can do well, with the help of Allah (swt). It is striking that balance between avoiding ostentation and completely retreating. Aisha (ra) said, “How great were the women of the Ansar; their modesty did not prevent them from seeking knowledge about their religion,” (Bukhari). They put themselves forward to learn, but with the best manners.

This is a beautiful article on [modesty](#) by Naiyerah Kolkailah. I recommend the read.

Witnessing a Miracle—Allah al-Hayyi

So if you want to witness a miracle, then remember to ask Allah (swt) for ALL of your needs, big and small. Zachariah (as) asked Allah (swt) for an heir even though he was old and his wife infertile. But it was when he saw the amazing things Allah (swt) had given Mariam (as)—at that moment, at the height of his conviction, he makes the *du`a`*:

“At that, Zechariah called upon his Lord, saying, “My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring. Indeed, You are the Hearer of supplication,” (Qur’an, [3:38](#))

And it was indeed miraculous—Allah (swt) gave him exactly what he asked for. Zachariah himself was shocked:

“He said, “My Lord, how will I have a boy when I have reached old age and my wife is barren?” The angel said, “Such is Allah; He does what He wills,” (Qur’an, [3:40](#)).

Sometimes the reason why we don’t make *du`a`*—or an intense *du`a`*—is because we fear disappointment. Subconsciously, we feel that the odds are too great. But remember that *Allahu Akbar*. He is

greater than any odds. The Prophet ﷺ says that Allah (swt) never turns away the hands that are stretched out to Him without giving them something. Allah (swt) will give. Just remember that He is the Most-Wise. All the waiting is a gentle lesson to you—in trust, in patience and in perseverance.

Du`a` is the essence of worship, because through it we recognize that we truly need Him, that everything is in the Hands of Allah, and that with Him rests all power. Moreover, Allah (swt) does not disappoint your good opinion of Him. So do not be like the people that Allah (swt) describes in the verse:

“It is He who enables you to travel on land and sea until, when you are in ships and they sail with them by a good wind and they rejoice therein, there comes a storm wind and the waves come upon them from everywhere and they assume that they are surrounded, supplicating Allah, sincere to Him in religion, “If You should save us from this, we will surely be among the thankful.” But when He saves them, at once they commit injustice upon the earth without right. O mankind, your injustice is only against yourselves, [being merely] the enjoyment of worldly life. Then to Us is your return, and We will inform you of what you used to do,” (Qur’an, [10:22-23](#)).

Shaitan (Satan) wants us to doubt—‘Was that really an answer to my *du`a`*? It must be a coincidence,’ or even worse ‘Yay for ME! I’M the one who did this!’ Don’t be that person. If you prayed to God that you get to travel first class at least once in your life, and then somehow you get upgraded to business class— that was Allah (swt) giving you ‘something.’ The real test is will you be grateful, or will you say, “Well, I really wanted first class”? God gave you a business class ticket when you would never have gotten it yourself. Be grateful, and be patient. And make every *du`a`* an intense one.

How to Internalize these Meanings

1. *Allah is Hayyi, so be shy in front of Him*

Imagine a Lord who does not want to turn you away. A Lord who is there for your every need. A Lord who does not need you, yet loves to give you even though it brings no benefit to Him. That is Allah (swt). So have a shyness that comes from your awe at the grace of Your Lord. Do not reject His commandments. Give Him from the best of what you have, and that means giving your best in your prayers, in your interactions with people, and in your charity. Because after all, Allah (swt) has given you—the best of the best—how can you not give from the best of what He gave you?

2. *Have hayaa with people*

Let your modesty come from the dignity that Islam gives. Do not be ostentatious, crude or lewd. Do not seek attention. Because ultimately, you don’t need it. Immodest people usually seek their sense of worth from people around them. They love the praise or the shock from people for their behavior. But you know where your sense of worth comes from. You don’t need to shock people or receive their praise.

3. *Try not to turn people away*

The Prophet ﷺ said “*Allah will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother*” (Muslim). Just like you love for God to give you something when you ask, even if you cannot fulfill people’s needs, at least try to direct them to where their needs can be fulfilled. When the homeless person asks you for money and you do not have cash, go to the supermarket and buy sandwich with your debit card. If someone asks you for a ride and you really cannot take them, try to find someone who can

or give them alternatives. Here you are emulating the beautiful attributes of the Most-Beautiful.

4. *Ask Allah for all of your needs*

Ask Allah (swt) without fearing any disappointment. Know He will give you something. Know He won't turn you away empty-handed.

5. *Work hard, and have a good opinion of Him*

One of the evidences of your conviction in God and His promise is that you work hard. What prevents us from doing things? It is usually one of two things: fear—of rejection or of failure—or laziness. But you just asked Allah (swt). There is nothing to fear anymore because your prayer was taken to the heavens. Start on the journey and see where you end up.

As for laziness, then remember that Allah is *Shakoor* (Most-Appreciative). Your faith is like a muscle- you need to exercise it, and it will grow stronger, by the will of God. Push yourself, and you won't regret it. Do good, and you will be given more good in return.

6. *Avoid the things that prevent your du`a' being answered*

The Prophet ﷺ described a man who travelled on a long journey and is disheveled and covered with dust. This person stretches his hands to Allah (swt) saying, "O my Lord, O my Lord." One would assume that his du`a' would be responded to—he is a traveler and he seems to be calling to Allah (swt) from his heart. But the Prophet ﷺ said: "*But his food is haram (forbidden), his drink is haraam, all his nourishment is haraam, so how can his du`a' be accepted?*" (Muslim). All of his earnings are from impermissible means. So we must be very careful with this and try to ensure

that our earnings are halaal (permissible), and that our food is pure.

7. *Know Him*

You may have noticed that I mentioned Allah's (swt) other attributes in this article and linked to those articles. It is so important to be reminded of what we have previously learned. The purpose of this series is to know Allah (swt). By knowing Him, we cannot help but love Him. And when we love Him, we want what He wants for us. Islam is beautified to us. We start to love prayer; to love doing good; to love modesty; and to love learning more and doing more. We are comforted, because we recognize how Allah (swt) is with us every step of the way and how everything has meaning. And we start to see the manifestations of His attributes in our everyday life. And that is truly when we connect.

May Allah (swt) beautify our character with the characteristic of beneficial *hayaa* that He loves, like the *hayaa* of 'Uthman, the women of the Ansaar, and al-Ashaj (ra). And may He give us the internalizing of His Beautiful Names and the conviction to ask Him without fear of being turned away. Ameen.

الصَّبُورُ

The Patient

I'm sure we've all felt this at some point: the frustration that comes with not being able to get something right. Or the anxiety that is felt as a result of lost time. Maybe even the despair because it seems too late. Why can't we ever get it right? If only there was someone to take us by the hand—someone who would be patient with us, understand our difficulties, and pick us up when we fall, yet encourage us to continue. If we've felt this, we probably do not have patience with our own selves. We give up or numb ourselves so as not to deal with 'it' (whatever 'it' may be), hoping things will fix themselves. But we should have patience. Because Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) certainly does—He is *al-Sabur* (the Patient).

This Name is related to *al-Haleem*: the Forbearing. We said that *al-Haleem* is the One who sees the wrong of what people do, but does not hasten to punish. This meaning is present in His Name *al-Sabur* as well. *Al-Haleem* then also forgives. Allah (swt) says:

“And if Allah were to impose blame on the people for what they have earned, He would not leave upon the earth any creature. But He defers them for a specified term. And when their time comes, then indeed Allah has ever been, of His servants, Seeing.” [Qur'an, [35:45](#)]

This deferring is a manifestation of Allah's Name *al-Sabur* and His attribute of patience. As al-Ghazali says: "*Al-Sabur*—the Patient—is the one that does not let haste move him to carry out an action before its time, but rather decides matters according to a definite plan, and brings them about in delineated ways."

Sabur comes from *sabr* (patience)(ص-ب-ر), and the root means to confine or contain (الحبس). So to have *sabr* is to contain oneself from acting rashly. Al-Ghazali also says that when Allah (swt) brings about an action, He does not delay it out of procrastination like a lazy person would, nor does He speed it up out of haste.

Yet the other dimension of Allah's patience with us is His appreciation for and patience with our baby steps. A mother carries her child all the time until he starts to walk. When he takes two steps, his parents are excited, cheering him on, even though he falls after those two steps. It might take him months to walk properly. But they are by his side, helping him. Very few parents would give up on their child because he falls after taking every few steps. Most parents are lovingly patient even when their child is slow to walk. Allah (swt) is far above any analogy, but to bring the message home, this is Allah (swt) with us. He is *al-Sabur*. He is not quick to punish the heedless or even the sinful, and He is not impatient with those of us who are slowly but surely on the path. He is patient when we stray, and makes the path still open to us when we come back. There is a beautiful wisdom in the statement of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him): "*The best actions are those which are small and consistent*," [Bukhari & Muslim]. It is better than what is grand yet inconsistent, and eventually fades away.

To me, this epitomizes Allah's attribute of patience. He is not asking you to be super Muslim in a day and a night. He does not mind that you take small steps to build yourself. We know the opposite: You take one step and He comes to you at speed. The Prophet ﷺ reminds us to "*Do those deeds which you can do easily, as Allah*

(swt) will not get tired (of giving rewards) till you get bored and tired (of performing religious deeds)," [Bukhari]. He does not get bored with waiting for us to get our acts together. He is patient. The frustration that you feel with yourself that makes you give up is from Shaytan (Satan)—he makes you impatient with yourself, whereas Allah (swt) is patient with you. We should remain steadfast with the obligatory, and then add from the voluntary what we can.

Take the example of Suhayl bin Amr. Suhayl bin Amr was one of the aristocrats of Quraysh. And he hated the Prophet ﷺ with a passion—so much so that when his sons and daughter accepted Islam, he tortured them in terrible ways. He was eloquent and would say horrible things about our Beloved ﷺ. During the battle of Badr, Suhayl was captured. Umar *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) asked the Prophet ﷺ if he could punch his teeth out so he would never say anything bad about the Prophet ﷺ again! But the Prophet ﷺ shook his head and told Umar (ra): "No, O Umar. Perhaps you will see in him something that you will praise him for." The Prophet ﷺ was patient. He believed that people could change. Yet after Suhayl was released, he did not change. On the contrary, he joined in all of the battles against the Muslims. And it was Suhayl bin Amr who concluded the treaty with the Muslims in which he refused to accept "Muhammad the Messenger of Allah", and made Ali (ra) write only "Muhammad, son of Abdullah."

Could you be patient with such a person? Allah (swt) was patient with him. Suhayl bin Amr (ra) accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah, when he was over 70 years old. Slowly, he started to change. He started praying and fasting more. He started learning from Muadh bin Jabal, even though he was young and not from Quraysh. People even said to Suhayl, "You are going to him to learn?" Meaning, at least go to someone with more status like Ali bin Abi Talib (ra) or Abu Bakr (ra). And Suhayl was angry with that. He said, "This is what made us fall behind the people [who

accepted Islam before us]! I will learn from him.” He finally recognized that our value does not come from status, money or family, but from being servants of the Most Merciful. He was grateful that he did not end up like Abu Jahal and Abu Lahab.

If Allah (swt) is patient with someone like Suhayl, do you think that Allah (swt) is not patient with you? Do you think that when you sincerely intend to become better and you take the steps, no matter how small, that He gets bored or tired of you?

So do not let the fact that the road seems long deter you. There will always be something to improve, and that is a good thing, because it means we are constantly growing. The companions were always evolving. They slipped up, but they never despaired. Moreover, they were not complacent. They knew their own selves. If it was anger they needed to work on, then that’s what they worked on. If it was prayer, then they focused on that. If it was laziness, then that.

And do not be so hard on yourself when you cannot get something right. Do not be frustrated because you feel you have squandered all of your life in play, and now have no time to make up for it. Suhayl was 70 when he accepted Islam. He was so grateful for that gift that he took the steps. The past only matters in as much as you can learn from it and from your mistakes. But that is it. What matters is this moment now. What can you do now to improve your relationship with God, to improve yourself, to achieve your goals?

One final note: Just because Allah (swt) is *al-Sabur*, it does not mean that we should just be wishful thinkers. Wishful thinking is one of the diseases of the heart (طول المل). A wishful thinker is one who delays and defers for no reason, simply out of laziness and ostensibly because he hopes in Allah’s Mercy. This is actually punishable. The true fruit of hope is effort.

Being with al-Sabur

1. *Make a specific goal.*

Been missing out on your prayers? Always wanted to memorize Qur’an? Parts of your character that need improving? Maybe your relationship with your loved ones needs to be fixed?

Make the intention, formulate a specific and achievable goal, and then take the steps towards it. You should be able to visualize it. Start really small if you need to. If you get bored or simply tired and want to give up, remind yourself that Allah (swt) is patient with you. If you are sincerely working, He will not rush you, because you are doing what you can and your goal is consistency. An extra day of life that Allah (swt) gives you is to push through, insha’ Allah (God willing). So persevere a little more.

2. *Know yourself.*

It may seem odd to have this as a point in knowing Allah (swt). But in order to set the right goals and in order to see Allah’s manifestation of His attributes, we need to know ourselves. When you know yourself, you will actually be able to see how patient Allah (swt) has been with you throughout your life, and truly appreciate His patience and forbearance with you. You will be able to go to the root of why you do things and make the decision to become better, insha’ Allah.

3. *Be patient with other people.*

Patience is an internal state that has outward implications. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ tells us: “Whoever curbs his anger, while being able to act, Allah will fill his heart with certainty of faith,” [Bukhari]. If Allah (swt) can be patient with us despite all that we do, who are we not to be patient?

4. *Be patient with yourself. Be patient with results.*

Remember that the things that are truly of worth can sometimes be the most difficult to achieve, and this why patience is so crucial. Patience is to persevere with God-consciousness despite the odds. As the Prophet ﷺ tells us, “Whoever persists in being patient, God will make him patient. Nobody can be given a blessing better and greater than patience,” [Bukhari]. Patience is the key to that long road to a result that is noble. The Prophet ﷺ also tells us, “And know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and ease with hardship,” (Tirmidhi).

الحَفِيزُ الْمَانِعُ الْقَوِيُّ

Who Is Your Protector?

One of my dearest friends is currently working in a war zone.

In late February, the government building she frequents came under attack, killing one of her colleagues. When I began writing this a couple of weeks ago, she had just called me to tell me about another ordeal. She was woken up in the middle of the night to the sound of bomb blasts, and the electricity was cut off. She had never been so afraid. She is a beautiful, brave human being who wants to help her homeland—so despite the great risk to her life, she stays.

When I was alerted about the first attack, there was nothing I could do. I tried calling, but her phone was switched off. So I turned to the One who sees and hears all. I called Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) by His Names and made a desperate supplication:

“Ya Hafidh, ya Maani’, ya Qawwiyy, Allahumma ihfadha, Allahumma imna’ al-sharr, ya Qawiyy, ya ‘Azeez.”

“O Guardian, O Preventer of Harm, O Strong One, O God protect her, O God prevent harm, O Strong One, O All-Powerful.”

At that moment of helplessness I could not remember any of the *du`a`* (supplications) I had memorized. But I remembered Allah's name and attributes. No one could protect her but Him.

When you are in the depth of helplessness, when you feel overpowered, when you feel unsafe, call on the All-Preserver, the Protector, the Strong.

Al-Hafidh, Al-Maani`, Al-Qawiyy

Al-Hafidh is The Guard (al-haaris, الحارس) and it comes from the root H-F-Dh (ح-ف-ظ). When the brothers of the Prophet Yusuf *`alayhi as-salam* (peace be upon him) asked their father to send with them their youngest brother, Prophet Jacob (as) said:

“He said, ‘Should I entrust you with him except [under coercion] as I entrusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful.’” (Qur'an, [12:64](#))

He said that Allah (swt) is the best guardian (khayrun hafidha – خير حافظا). Despite knowing that his sons had something to do with the disappearance of his son Yusuf, he knew who the ultimate protector was. And Allah (swt) guarded both Yusuf and his younger brother and returned them to him. And Yusuf underwent extreme hardship: from being thrown into a well by his brothers and sold into slavery to being seduced by a powerful woman and then wrongfully accused and thrown into jail. But Allah (swt) protected him in protecting his morals and character from corruption, and from any serious bodily harm, and finally he was made a minister and reunited with his family. Such is His protection even in the most difficult circumstances!

Al-Maani` comes from the root m-n-a' (م-ن-ع), and it means to prevent, restrain or deny. Allah (swt) is the One who prevents harmful actions from coming to you. When a lifeguard rescues a

drowning child, it is Allah (swt) who prevents the drowning. In Bukhari, Abu Bakr *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) narrated the story of when he and the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) were on the journey from Makkah to Madina and being hunted down by Suraqa bin Malik. Abu Bakr (ra) exclaimed, “We have been discovered, O Messenger of Allah!” And the Prophet ﷺ replied, “Do not grieve, for Allah is with us.” The Prophet ﷺ made a *du`a`* to Allah, and the legs of his horse sank into the earth up to its belly.

Al-Qawiyy indicates “perfect power” according to Imam al-Ghazali. This Name is mentioned numerous times in the Qur'an, as we are told over and over:

“Indeed, Allah is Powerful (Qawiyy) and Exalted in Might.” (Qur'an, [57:25](#))

The first battle the Muslims were confronted with was the battle of Badr. They were few in number (three hundred and thirteen, according to the narration) and faced with the more powerful army of Quraish of about nine hundred and fifty strong men. But Allah (swt) tells us:

“And already had Allah given you victory at [the battle of] Badr while you were few in number. Then fear Allah; perhaps you will be grateful.” (Qur'an, [3:123](#))

This is the other meaning of *al-Qawiyy*: you may not be powerful yourself but are made powerful because your protector is the Most Powerful. Relying on the Most Powerful also means doing our due diligence. The Prophet ﷺ did not go to battle unprepared. He did as much as he could with what was given to him, was frequently innovative and always asked the opinions of his companions *radi Allahu `anhum* (may God be pleased with them).

Can you think of a time when you were protected?

Think back to your childhood: the time when you escaped a major accident with minor bruises. When you broke your bones, but Allah *al-Jabbar* healed you. When you said goodbye to your child as they went away for college, worried. When you just barely avoided that major accident.

We do not often remember that most of our life is spent under the protection of Allah (swt); accidents and harm are usually an anomaly. In the 24 hours that we have in a day, we are under protection for most or all of it. Because we take it for granted, we are often unaware that this protection of Allah (swt) is an active act and is constant. The Prophet ﷺ reminds us:

“Whoever wakes up safely in his home and is healthy in his body and has provisions for his day, would have acquired all the worldly possessions he is in need of.” (Tirmidhi)

Tests

Sometimes we may be harmed and experience pain. The Prophet ﷺ tells us in that case:

“No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that.” (Bukhari)

Even when we are harmed, there is a wisdom as well as compensation for it. Nothing that happens to us is overlooked by God.

In situations of war, it may seem that Allah’s protection is absent. But this is why the rules of our religion command us to protect the weak and establish justice. In essence, the true application of Islam brings about the very visible manifestation of all of Allah’s Names

and attributes. When you build a shelter for battered women, like Sister Asma Hanif of Muslimat Al-Nisaa, you are embodying this characteristic of God, which we are commanded to do. When you follow the example of Muhammad Ali, who was not only a world famous boxer but an outspoken critic of the Vietnam war, you are actively trying to protect the lives of innocent. When, like Sister Ameena Mathews, you work to stop violence in your community, you are that shining light that our faith commands us to be. After all, what else were the Quraish so angry with when the Prophet ﷺ commanded that the weak be protected and justice be served? You may suffer hardship as these roles are not easy, but there is no strength like the inner strength that comes with conviction of purpose and faith in God.

Some other meanings

Another meaning of *al-Haafidh* is also that Allah (swt) has guarded and preserved the Qur’an. Allah (swt) says:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur’an and indeed, We will be its guardian.” (Qur’an, [15:9](#))

It is a great honor and gift to be able to memorize the Qur’an. The Prophet ﷺ tells us:

“It will be said to the companion of the Qur’an after he has entered Paradise, ‘Recite, and rise!’ For every verse he recites he will rise one level (in Paradise), until he recites the last verse with him [i.e. in his memory].” (Abu Dawud)

You become a *haafidh*—in essence, a preserver or a guardian of the Qur’an—with your memory. May Allah (swt) make us of them.

Al-Maani’ on the other hand, not only prevents physical harm but spiritual harm as well. So ask Him to protect your soul and your

faith.

Finally, al-Ghazali pairs Allah's Name *al-Qawiyy* (the Strong) with *al-Mateen* (the Firm) in his book, as Allah does in this verse:

"Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider (ar-Razzaq), the firm possessor of strength (thul qiwwatil-mateen)" (Qur'an, [51:58](#)).

Al-Ghazali says that "strength indicates perfect power, while firmness indicates firmness of strength." So Allah does not waiver in His strength.

So whenever you feel helpless, weak or afraid, call on the One whose strength does not waiver and the One who can protect you both spiritually and physically. Please make du'a' for my friend. Thank you.

المحيي المميت

Every Soul Shall Taste It

"The eyes surely tear,
and the heart is surely in pain,
but (with my tongue) I will only say that which is pleasing to
Allah,
and we are indeed sad at being separated from you, O Ibrahim."

—Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (peace be upon him), upon losing his
child Ibrahim at 2 years old

Al-Muhye, Al-Mumeet: The Life-Giver, the Life-Taker

These two names often come together, but I will be brief on *al-Muhye*, as I want to elaborate on it further in a separate article, and focus more on *al-Mumeet* here. These names are not mentioned in this exact form in the Qur'an, but their meaning is conveyed in numerous places. Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) says: *"He gives life and causes death (yuhyee wa yumeet), and to Him you will be returned,"* [Qur'an, [10:56](#)]

Al-Ghazali explains these two names, stating that "none is the creator of life and death but God—may He be praised and exalted, and so there is no life-giver or slayer but God—Great and Glorious."

Allah gives life to things that are dead. We all witness the death of nature around us; a seed—a lifeless thing—is planted and given nourishment, and grows into a tall sturdy tree that gives us flowers and fruits. Then in autumn, the leaves fall, and the trees stand inanimate through the winter. But come spring, the flowers bloom again. Indeed he is *al-Muhye*: He gives life. And perhaps the greatest manifestation is our own life: the growth of a human being, with a soul, from a sperm and an egg. Indeed, these are signs for people who reflect:

“He brings the living out of the dead and brings the dead out of the living and brings to life the earth after its lifelessness. And thus will you be brought out.” (Qur’an, [30:19](#))

The Life-Taker

This is a sensitive matter—while we all know death is coming, we are generally not conscious of it. Death is seen as negative; it signifies the end. Indeed the Prophet ﷺ advised us to *“Think about the destroyer of pleasures,”* [Tirmidhi], that is, death. If we haven’t been through it yet by losing someone around us, we surely will at some point.

To know that Allah (swt) is the Life-Taker is to be certain that there is death. And while most of us fear death whenever we are aware of it, it is usually because we do not know enough about it or because we have not prepared for it. There are two kinds of relationships that we have with death: our own, when we are faced with our mortality, and the loss of someone dear to us.

Every day is a step closer to death. *Sheikh* ‘Umar AbdelKafy once said, “You are not closer to death when you are sitting in an airplane than when you are at home,” meaning that it can come suddenly. There is truly a scary part to death in that our grave is representative of where we will be after we are judged. That in

itself should wake us up. All of these slogans that we hear today: “YOLO”, “Just do it”, “Carpe Diem” and others are very relevant to us, but not in the way that they are intended. They should compel us to do the opposite of the demands of a hedonistic lifestyle: Death is around the corner, and we only have one chance at this life, so let us race towards good. Let us let go of grudges. When it comes to your relationship with Allah, when it comes to helping others and doing good, there should be no hesitation. “Just do it”. No more excuses. “YOLO”.

In this 3-minute [video](#) by *Sheikh* Salman al-Odah (in Arabic with decent English subtitles), he speaks very eloquently on our relationship with death:

He explains that death is simply a continuation of life, a transition from one place to another. We are believers in the next life, so death is not really the “end” in that final sense. Because of that, we can reconcile ourselves with death now; by planting a seed, by being there for our loved ones and making amends for wrongs, by becoming more humble, and by building, not destroying. We make peace with death by re-arranging our priorities while we are able to, and by laying the groundwork for being able to say the *shahada* before we die: *la ilaaha illa Allah* (there is no god but God).

He also talks about our second relationship with death: when those we love are taken away. When it comes to those we love, sometimes we feel angry at death. How dare “death” take our loved ones away from us? But the truth is, Allah is *al-Mumeet*: He is the One who takes away life. *Sheikh* Salman explains an encounter with a child who is asked, “How many people are in your family?” to which the child responds, “Seven. Five are inside, and two are under that tree.” When the man looks at the tree, he sees no one, but two graves. “You mean you are five,” he says, correcting the child. But the child insists, “We are seven.” This child was taught by his father that when he misses those who passed away,

he can visit their graves and pray for them. And soon, we will all join them.

This may be reassuring, but it does not truly take away the pain of separation. Yet this pain is normal. The Prophet ﷺ talked about it when he lost his son, as did the Prophet Ya'coob `alayhi as-salaam (peace be upon him) when he lost Yusuf (as). And imagine when the Companions lost their Beloved ﷺ. Imagine when the Prophet ﷺ went on hajj (pilgrimage), and gave his famous farewell sermon. After more than 20 years of struggle, lots of ups and downs, pain and joy, the Prophet ﷺ and his companions finally go on hajj in a free Mecca. After the farewell sermon, the Prophet ﷺ passionately asks, "Have I relayed the message?" The Companions respond in the affirmative; how could anyone say no? They were finally praying by the Ka`bah. Muslims were being dispatched to different areas in the Arab world, inviting others to Islam. The Prophet ﷺ looks up at the sky, saying, "O Allah, bear witness." Not long after, the Prophet ﷺ becomes ill. In his final days, he cannot even lead prayers. He faints several times in a day. He says, "*Truly death has its agonies*," [Bukhari]. When he passes away, and the Companions pray for the first time after the Prophet's ﷺ death, it was said that the mosque shook from the crying.

The pain at the separation from the Prophet ﷺ never truly left the Companions. Bilal *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) moved out of Medina, unable to be there without the Prophet ﷺ. This is natural. Perhaps nothing can replace someone's presence with you, especially not the Prophet's ﷺ. And this is why we hear of so many Companions asking to be near the Prophet ﷺ in Paradise. They were hurt by the parting, but they also had something to work towards.

Allah (swt) is so generous that when He takes away the life of someone, it is not the end of your relationship with them. As one of the living, your prayers for them still benefit them. If they gave

continuous charity (*sadaqa jariya*), it goes on for eternity. If you love someone, truly love them, then be a cause of goodness for them in this life and the next. Do not let the time that you spend with them be a gossip session. Seek to truly benefit each other by making a conscious effort to do something, even if very small, for the sake of God. That is the meaning of love—it will carry on until after death.

So do not treat death like it is the end, but prepare for it like it is. Invest your life in such a way that you will see the fruits in the hereafter, because surely "*every soul shall taste death*," (Qur'an, [29:57](#)). And we are advised to "*worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (death)*," (Qur'an, [15:99](#)). If any of us had any doubt that death is coming, Allah (swt), being *al-Mumeet*, surely removes any such doubt.

And when your time comes, know that your soul is being taken by Allah (swt), who both gives and takes away life. And to Him we shall return. In that there should be awe, a sense of comfort and a call to action.

Our Relationship with Al-Mumeet and Death

1. Priorities

Heed the advice of Sheikh Salman al-Odah and prioritize things in your life. Work on your character, increase in good deeds, find your passion and figure out how to use it towards good. Let go of animosity because it only brings you down.

2. Pray as if it were your last prayer

While the prayer series helped us to understand the internal element of the various prayer actions, one of the most effective ways to get *khushoo`* (devotion) in prayer is by praying as if it

were your last, as the Prophet ﷺ advised. Hatim al-Asamm, one of the righteous, would imagine that the Angel of Death was behind him as he prayed.

3. Live the way you wish to die with sincerity

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *“When Allah wills good for His slave, He sweetens him.”* He was asked, *“What is this sweetening?”* He said, *“Allah guides him to do righteous deeds before he dies, then He takes (his soul) whilst he is in that state.”* [Ahmad]

The Prophet ﷺ also said, *“Whoever gives charity and that is the last of his deeds will enter Paradise.”* [Ahmad]

Sincerity is key here: the Prophet ﷺ narrates a story of a martyr, a scholar and a man who gave much to charity. Amazing as these deeds are, what these three sought from their deeds were attention and fame. And those people will not be in Paradise [narrated in Muslim]. May Allah protect us.

4. Du`a' (supplication)

Since He (swt) is the One who causes death, He is also the One who can give you a good death. The Prophet Yusuf (as) made a supplication: *“Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous.”* (Qur'an, [12:101](#)) None of us knows what our state will be, so one of the most important things is to remember that only Allah (swt) can give us what we desire, and He is *al-Mujeeb* (the One who responds to prayers) so we should ask Him to only take our soul when we are in the best, most sincere state; to make our best deeds the final ones; and to accept from us the best of what we gave. The Prophet ﷺ said, *“A person whose last words are la ilaha ila Allah [there is no god but God] will enter Paradise,”* [Abu Dawud]. May Allah make us of them.

5. Love

If those whom we love have passed away, then we can still benefit them and bring them good by praying for them. And if we are fortunate enough to still have our loved ones around us, then it is the perfect time to transform our relationship with them from one that is limited to this life to one that lasts for eternity. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur'an:

“But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened and its keepers say, “Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein,” [they will enter].” (Qur'an, [39:73](#))

It can start with something simple: start a monthly gathering with a few friends and family and do something that brings you tranquility, make a messaging or email group and send daily hadith, or have a yearly charity project that will benefit you even after you pass away. More importantly, make sure your intention is sincere. Follow it with actions and du`a', and let Allah (swt) elevate your relationship.

6. Sadaqa Jariya: Ongoing charity

The Prophet ﷺ told us, *“When a man dies, his good deeds come to an end except three: ongoing charity (sadaqa jariya), beneficial knowledge, and righteous offspring who will pray for him,”* [Muslim].

Death does not have to be the end. We can leave behind things that bring benefit to and help people, and that also benefit us long after we are gone. The Prophet ﷺ gave us some examples of that:

“The good deeds that will reach a believer after his death are: knowl-

edge which he learned and then spread; a righteous son whom he leaves behind; a copy of the Qur'an that he leaves as a legacy; a mosque that he built; a house that he built for wayfarers; a canal that he dug; or charity that he gave during his lifetime when he was in good health. These deeds will reach him after his death." [Ibn Majah]

Moreover, we are told:

"There is none among Muslims who plants a tree or sows a seed, and then a bird, a person, or an animal eats from it, but it is regarded as a charitable gift from him." [Bukhari]

It is important to remember that the opposite is true. Do not leave behind something that is a 'bad legacy'; that harms others spiritually or materially and may harm you after you are gone.

7. Pay your debts

The Day of Judgment is also the day on which debts are paid. It is important to make sure that we leave this world without any outstanding debts, whether it is money that you owe people or even an apology.



Giving Life to a Dead Heart

Alhamdulillah (all praise be to God), we have entered into Ramadan. While this is the most beautiful time of the year—a time in which the doors to Paradise are open, the gates of hell are closed, and the devils are chained—some of us may be coming into it carrying a heavy burden. Some of us might be broken. And still others might not really feel anymore. No one knows our internal state, the fact that all those months have done something to us, that our hearts are numb and we are not even really sure what it is like to feel that energy or that love anymore.

If you are that person, and if you feel that something in your heart has died, don't give up just yet. This Name of Allah, subhanahu wa ta'ala (exalted is He), is for you. Allah tells us:

"And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom?" (Qur'an, [6:122](#))

In the last article, we briefly mentioned Allah's Name *al-Muhyi*—the Giver of Life. We see manifestations of His Name all around us. Life and death are two sides of the same coin; He who causes death, also brings life out of death. In Surat al-Baqara, Allah (swt)

tells us the story of the Prophet ‘Uzayr, *‘alayhi as salaam* (peace be upon him), when he came to Jerusalem and found it to be burnt to the ground, with no traces of life whatsoever. ‘Uzayr (as) exclaimed:

“How will Allah bring this to life after its death?” So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years; then He revived him [...]” (Qur’an, [2:259](#)).

Just as Allah (swt) brought back to life ‘Uzayr—and indeed the whole of Jerusalem—and just like He created a sturdy 400-year-old Redwood tree from a tiny seed—a seed that seems dead, a seed that had you stepped on it would have been crushed—know that He can bring alive your beautiful heart. The same heart that He created to know Him.

If we fail to use our hearts for what they were created for, that is when they become rusty. A person who never exercises finds it much harder to run a marathon, and cannot take it. Even more than that, a person who is bedridden for months probably won’t be able to walk straightaway when he is better, because his legs were out of use for so long. Similarly, when we fail to use our hearts by directing them to Allah (swt), slowly they die and we forget how to exercise them in what they were created for.

It does not really matter how we got here. We may think, “But I am different. I am so beyond help.” That is *Shaytan* (Satan) or your *nafs* (base self). Remember Malik bin Dinar, who most people know as a great scholar. But it was not always so. He was a person who went to the extremes in what was prohibited—whether it was through illicit relationships, alcohol or gambling. There wasn’t anything he did not try. But God blessed him and tested him in ways that brought him back. And his heart came alive, even though you would not have believed it if you had met him before.

Some of us may have had a very difficult year, or a very difficult

couple of years, and these things take their toll. Others of us may have slowly slipped, such that everything has become more important than our relationship with Allah (swt). But whatever the journey, the result is the same. And for each and every one of us, Allah *al-Muhyi*, the Giver of Life, calls us to bring us back to life. So don’t think that there is no hope for you, and that there is no point in trying. The only way to truly bring us back is by mending our relationship with Him and making Him our center again.

Just remember your part. Make the intention. Intend to bring back your heart. And remember that you will get what you intend. This Ramadan, intend *tawba*—a return to Him. And know with full conviction that He will accept you, as He tells us:

“Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow [their] passions want you to digress [into] a great deviation.” (Qur’an, [4:27](#))

When your heart comes alive—truly alive—you will be light and fulfilled, because your heart is full of what it is meant to be full of—love for Allah. And you will be a living manifestation of Allah’s Name *al-Muhyi*. Because our hearts are rusty, it may take a while. But Allah is *al-Muhyi*, so the result is guaranteed *insha’Allah* (God willing). So what can we do to aid in the journey?

Qur’an

“O mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers.” (Qur’an, [10:57](#))

The Qur’an was sent as a healing for our hearts, and this is the month of the Qur’an. So reflect on the Qur’an this month in addition to reciting it. If you feel you do not have the tools to do so, then make it a goal to listen to tafseer every night (Nouman Ali Khan is great for this, and I believe he has a Ramadan Qur’an

series). Also, make it a point and a goal to choose 5 lessons from the Qur'an that you will implement by the end of Ramadan. This way you are of the people who not only listen to and reflect on the Qur'an, but you are of those who implement it. You will be what the Prophet ﷺ (peace and blessings be upon him) describes as a "citron – its scent is fragrant and its taste is good," (agreed upon) because of your recitation and implementation of the Qur'an.

Istighfaar—Seeking Forgiveness

Sometimes this numbness is as a result of the wrongs that we do that have become so numerous we do not even notice them anymore. But as the Prophet ﷺ taught us:

"When a slave commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. But if he gives it up, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart will be cleansed. But if he repeats it, (the blackness) will increase until it overwhelms his heart." [Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah]

The essence of istighfaar is reflection. Our hearts become numb when we do not reflect. So cleanse your heart by seeking forgiveness from Allah (swt).

Du'a'—Supplication

This is key. Truly, no one knows of that emptiness that we feel except for Him, and only He can fill it. *Du'a'* that comes from the heart represents our need for Him, and only Him. So call out to Him in the night. Ask Allah (swt) to bring alive your heart. Ask Him to fill it with love for Him. Take the steps, even the baby steps, to come closer to Allah, through your prayers, through remembering Him and through good company. Remember that He is Generous, Shy and He responds. Pour out your heart to Him this Ramadan. Ask for what you need to give your heart life.



Starting Anew

Sometimes we make a mistake or commit a wrong that other people know about. We may have given up the sin, or it may have been a one-off, but we just wish that we could erase the memory of that mistake from the minds of those other people. Similarly, when we commit a sin only Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), knows about, even when we repent and hope for His forgiveness, we wish we never committed the wrong to begin with. We wish it would just disappear. Allah (swt), who is closer to us than our jugular vein, knows this. And so He has given us way of starting anew, insha'Allah (God willing).

The Last Ten and Pardoning

Subhan'Allah (glory be to God)—the last 10 days of Ramadan have begun. One of these nights will be *Laylat al-Qadr* (the Night of Power) *insha'Allah*—a time for intensified reflection, worship and giving. Aisha *radi allahu 'anha* (may God be pleased with her), realizing the magnanimity of this time, asked the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him): "O Messenger of Allah, if I know what night is the night of Qadr, what should I say during it?" He said: "Say:

اللهم إني أعفوتك عني

Allahumma innaka `afuwwun, tuhib al-`afwa fa`fu `anny

O Allah, You are the One who pardons, and You love to pardon, so pardon me.” (Bukhari)

Out of all of the things the Prophet ﷺ could have advised, he taught us to ask for ‘afw. ‘Afw is sometimes translated as ‘forgiveness,’ but so is *maghfira* [i.e. when we say *astghfirullah*, I seek forgiveness from God]. Unfortunately, there is something that is lost in translation, because ‘afw is more expansive than *maghfira*—and here we will see why.

Meaning

One of the meanings ‘afw is the complete removal of something—removing its traces. For example,

هذه أرضٌ عَفُو

“This is a land with no traces on it, i.e. it is untouched.”

So what does this have to do with the *du’a* (supplication), “*O Allah you are ‘afw, and You love al-‘afw, so have ‘afw on me*”?

When we ask for *maghfira*, we are asking for Allah (swt) to cover up our sin for us and to protect us from the effects of our sin. We ask Allah (swt) that even though we committed that sin, that He not punish us for it. When we ask for ‘afw, we are asking Allah (swt) to completely erase the sin, such that its traces are also removed. This means that our slate is literally wiped clean—there will be no questioning for those sins on the Day of Judgment in sha’Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ teaches us about this difference in two *ahadeeth* (narrations). In the first hadith, the Prophet ﷺ tells us about a

person who is questioned by Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgment. Allah tells His servant, “*O my servant, do you remember when you did such and such a sin?*” and the servant will lower his head in shame, nodding, thinking that surely he will be of the people punished. Then Allah (swt) tells him, “*I concealed these sins from people in dunya (world), and I will not shame you here. I have forgiven you (ghafartu lak).*” (Ahmad)

That is *maghfira*.

In the second hadith, the Prophet ﷺ is told that 70,000 of his *um-mah* (global community of Muslim believers) will enter jannah (paradise) without reckoning because:

عفا الله عنهم

“*Allah has pardoned them.*”

And then the Prophet ﷺ asks for more, so with every thousand people of those pardoned, Allah will pardon 70,000 more. And Allah is *Al-‘Afuww*—He name Himself this to let you know that indeed He is the One that completely erases your sin. He knows everything we do, yet He chooses to wipe our slate clean.

Laylat al-Qadr and ‘afw

Sufyan ath-Thawri said, “During this night [i.e. Laylat al-Qadr] the most beloved thing for me to ask for is what the Prophet ﷺ told us to ask for.”

This is a night of ambition. We don’t simply ask for forgiveness, but for removing even the traces of our sin. We ask for a clean slate. The Prophet ﷺ tells us of a person who goes to the Eid prayer after Ramadan and he does not have one sin in his book—it was all pardoned.

When Allah (swt) tells us about ‘aḥw in the Qur’an, it is usually with something major—as if to tell us, there is no sin too great. It can all be wiped away.

When the Children of Israel worshipped the calf, Allah (swt) tells us:

“And [recall] when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights. Then you took [for worship] the calf after him, while you were wrongdoers. Then We forgave [pardoned/‘afawna] you after that so perhaps you would be grateful.” (Qur’an [2:51-52](#))

Allah pardoned, wiped away the greatest sin—the sin of shirk (polytheism). So if you come to Allah (swt) sincerely in these last 10 nights, if you come to the One who loves to pardon, then insha’Allah He will erase that sin you are so worried about, and those many sins for you.

O Allah! You are the One who pardons, and You love to pardon, so pardon us!

Source: Lecture by Amr Khaled



He Will Always Be With You

When Ramadan ended this year, I felt my heart break. There is always a sadness with the departure of Ramadan, but usually it is mixed with the excitement of Eid.

Not this year. This year felt different.

Perhaps it was because I didn’t accomplish what I wanted. But I also felt that Ramadan, our companion, left me. And with that came a feeling of abandonment. Walking to the mosque to pray the Eid prayer, I reflected on my melancholic state. My friend who was feeling the same way said, “I feel like Allah is leaving us.” As is human nature, we were attached to something temporary. Something that we know would come and go. Something that is a means to Him but is not Him. So I had to remind us that Allah is *al-Baaqi*, and He remains after everything disappears. Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) tells us in the Qur’an:

“And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor.” [Qur’an, 55:27]

The Name *al-Baaqi* and its derivatives come from the root *baa-qaf-ya*, which means: to remain, continue and to be permanent.

Al-Ghazali tells us that “the everlasting is such that the projection of its existence into the future has no end.”

So the root of our heartbreak is attachment to that which does not last, whether it is to the spirituality of Ramadan or another human being. And this is where we can see how intimately Allah knows us. He tells us His attribute of permanence—He is *al-Baaqi*. When everything else leaves or dies, He is with us. There is no heartbreak if we are attached to Him—He will always remain. As He tells us Himself:

“Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting. And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do.” [Qur’an, [16:96](#)]

The magicians during the time of the Prophet Musa `alayhi sallatu wa sallam (may God send his peace and blessings on him) understood this. When they saw Musa’s (as) staff turn into a real snake—unlike their trickery—they bowed down to Musa (as), and declared their belief in His Lord. Pharaoh was livid. He threatened to torture them and crucify them. But they said:

“Indeed, we have believed in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and what you compelled us [to do] of magic. And Allah is better and more enduring.” [Qur’an, [20:73](#)]

That last sentence is key. They said Allah is more enduring (*abqa*, from the same root). It did not matter what Pharaoh did to them. Pharaoh would die one day but Allah (swt) would remain. And the deeds done for Him will endure.

So when Ramadan ends, our relationship with Him should continue. Even if we wasted the whole of Ramadan, Allah’s attributes outside of Ramadan will not change. He is still the One who accepts you when you return, who forgives you when you mess up,

and who has more mercy on you than your own mother. He is *al-Baaqi*. He tells us:

“O son of Adam! As long as you invoke Me and plead to Me, I will forgive you whatever you have committed, and I will not make much of it. O son of Adam! If your evil deeds reach the borders of the sky, and then you ask Me for forgiveness, I will forgive you. O son of Adam! If you bring forth the earth full of errors, then you meet Me while you do not associate anything (or anyone) with Me, I will bring forth for you its full of forgiveness.” [Tirmidhi]

So just like we work hard to make temporary things last, let us work even harder for the ultimate permanence. As Allah tells us: *“Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life. But the enduring (al-baaqiyaat) good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one’s] hope.”* [Qur’an, [18:46](#)]

Spare yourself the heartbreak and the pain of separation. Work on the things that remain, for He who remains.

The article on Allah’s Name *al-Mumeet* also gives us ways to strive for what will remain.



He Has Your Back

We have different categories of friends. Some friends are fun to hang out with, but that is pretty much it; you cannot exactly rely on them. Other friends are there for you but don't always give you the best advice. But there are some friends – or that one friend – that truly has your back. The friend you would call to bail you out, because you have no doubt that they will, no matter how much trouble you are in. This friend is actually protective of you. Think for a moment: do you have a friend like that?

Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (Exalted is He), tells us that He is that Protective Friend. He is al-Wali. Allah says in the Qur'an:

“And it is He who sends down the rain after they had despaired and spreads His mercy. And He is the Protective Friend (al-Wali), the Praiseworthy.” (Qur'an, [42:28](#))

When looking into the root of this word, we cannot help but feel close to Allah (swt). The nuances that come with understanding His Names and the relationship of those Names with us shows us the beautiful intimacy of Allah's knowledge of His servants. *Al-Wali* comes from the three-letter root: w-l-y. The root of the

word means to be very close, without any barrier. For example, if someone was sitting somewhere, the person right next to him – not separated by anyone else – is the one *yaleehi* or the *wali*:

وَجَلَسَ مِمَّا يَلِينِي، أَيِ يُقَارِبُنِي

Hence it also has the following meanings: to be a friend and a helper; to defend and to guard. Al-Ghazali states that *al-Wali* is also **“lover and protector.”**

And so what does it mean for Allah (swt) to be *al-Wali* – the Protective Friend? It means that He has your back. He could have just been a ‘friend,’ but some friends are flaky. Abu Abdullah ‘Amr bin Al-‘as, *radi Allahu ‘anhu* (may Allah be pleased with him), said that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ (peace be upon him) saying openly not secretly, *“The family of so-and-so (i.e., Abu Talib) are not my supporters (awliya’). My supporter (wali) is Allah and the righteous believing people. But they (that family) have kinship with whom I will maintain the ties of kinship.”* (Bukhari and Muslim)

He is the true *Wali*, demonstrating His closeness to you and His protectiveness of you. This beautiful verse encapsulates how Allah (swt) manifests this attribute in our lives:

“Allah is the wali of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light...” (Qur’an, [2:257](#))

Allah says He is the Protective Friend of those who believe. Nouman Ali Khan explained that Allah did not use the word *mu’minoon* meaning “the believers.” He said “those who believed.” Who are they? They are the people who have entered into iman (faith) but it has not settled in their hearts yet. He is the Protective Friend of those people! Not the perfect ones, but the ones who struggle- the ones who are not there yet. And how is He a Protective Friend? He has the constant attribute of pulling them – pulling us,

those who go up and down in their faith – out of darknesses, and bringing us into light. Not just one time, but over and over again. Just like He forgives over and over, He has your back always.

This is the general meaning of Allah (swt) being *al-Wali*. There is the general meaning of this Name, and then the specific one- the *wilaya* of those who are close to Him. Look at what Allah *al-Wali* said to the Prophet ﷺ:

“And be patient, [O Muhammad], for the decision of your Lord, for indeed, you are in Our eyes...” (Qur’an, [52:48](#))

While we all enjoy this friendship with Allah (swt), those who take their relationship with Him seriously, and do what they can to cultivate this relationship and be true slaves of the Most-Merciful, receive the special protection and friendship. This is alluded to in the hadith qudsi, where Allah (swt) tells us that:

“Whosoever acts with enmity towards a closer servant of Mine (Wali), I will indeed declare war against him. Nothing endears My servant to Me than doing of what I have made obligatory upon him to do. And My servant continues to draw nearer to Me with the supererogatory (nawafil) so that I shall love him. When I love him, I shall be his hearing with which he shall hear, his sight with which he shall see, his hands with which he shall hold, and his feet with which he shall walk. And if he asks (something) of Me, I shall surely give it to him, and if he takes refuge in Me, I shall certainly grant him it.” (Bukhari)

By focusing on what Allah loves – the obligatory acts – we begin on this journey of closeness to Him. And it is not just by doing the actions, but understanding the true meaning behind them: seeking to connect to Him with our prayer; restraining the lower self when we fast; being humble when we give charity; and remembering that we are brothers and sisters when we perform the Hajj (greater pilgrimage). Then by moving on and adding those things that

are voluntary, we become beloved to Him, and then become part of His special friendship and protection. Al-Ghazali states that the one who is a *wali* of Allah befriends His friends, and shows enmity towards His enemies. And who are the enemies? “One’s own [lower] self and Satan.” *The fruit of that is having neither fear nor grieving* (Qur’an, [10:62](#)).

We have countless examples from the life of the Prophet ﷺ. The people of Qureish in Makkah were planning on assassinating the Prophet ﷺ. On that night, he escaped Madinah with his closest friend, Abu Bakr (ra), but they were followed by his would-be assassins. So the Prophet ﷺ and Abu Bakr hid in the Cave of Thawr, but they were followed there too. They were inches away from being discovered by their persecutors and with calm, the Prophet ﷺ said to Abu Bakr (ra): “Do not be sad, Allah is with us.” And they were not discovered and were able to make it to the security of the city of Madinah.

Look at what happened to Aisha (ra), the beloved wife of the Prophet ﷺ. She was the subject of a horrible rumor that attacked her very character and morals. But she was very sick for a whole month, and had no idea what was going on. That sickness was a protection for her. When she was better and finally made aware of the rumors, she was devastated. But that only lasted 3 days. She was hoping the Prophet ﷺ would receive a vision declaring her innocence, but something even more amazing happened. Verses of the Qur’an were revealed in Surat an-Nur (the Chapter of Light), so that there could be no ambiguity about her innocence.

In understanding this concept of *wilaya*, we need to go beyond the superficial. It is not just external protection that Allah (swt) gives; it is also the internal strength and tranquility that enables us to withstand the external hardships that is gifted to us. There will always be external struggles in this world, especially when we are striving to do good. The life of the Prophet ﷺ was not easy,

nor was it for the companions or those who strived and continue to strive for justice and goodness for His sake. But the *awliya’* (the recipients of His special friendship and protection) are given a tranquility to continue, and the vision to see beyond the superficial nature of things.

So do not worry. Allah (swt) is your Protective Friend. He has your back. Strive for Him and be ambitious in your goals, and do not let fear prevent you from doing good. As the Qur’an tells us:

“Indeed, my protector (wali) is Allah, who has sent down the Book; and He is an ally to the righteous.” (Qur’an, [7:196](#))

May we enhance the relationship with the Best Friend we could ask for, our Wali, Allah (swt).



Take Your Needs To The One Who Has No Needs

There was a realization that came to me when I was young and only just starting my journey towards God *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He). It may seem obvious to some, but this one realization changed my outlook and relationship with those around me for the better. On one day, I was very frustrated. I wanted someone to talk to. Actually, I felt like I needed someone to talk to. None of my friends were answering their phones, and my family seemed distracted at home. I was starting to feel irritated.

And then it hit me: people cannot be there for you all the time.

This is not because people are bad. Actually, I believe that most people are good. But all people have their own needs. And because we all have needs, we necessarily all have limits. A person may want to be there for you, but sometimes they just cannot. Sometimes, they are dealing with their own issues. Sometimes they are juggling too many things for you to be their sole focus. Sometimes they may not know how to help.

Not Allah (swt). He is *al-Ghani*. He is Needless. He is Rich. He is Self-Sufficient. And so, He is Limitless.

What a liberating thought.

Al-Ghani and you

There are two things we have to realize about Allah *al-Ghani*: the first is that we are human and we have needs, yet our ultimate and true need is Allah (swt). The second is that He does not need us, nor anything for that matter. He is completely independent and self-sufficient. He has no dependency. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur'an:

"O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need (al-Ghani), the Praiseworthy." (Qur'an, [35:15](#))

In truth, we all need Allah (swt). Some of us may realize it and some may not. If we do not, we may seek to assuage the calling of our soul with quick fixes. But just like we cannot quench our thirst by eating dry foods, we can never fulfill our needs by ignoring the very thing we do need. Quick fixes may provide a temporary distraction, but the need will always remain. As Ibn al-Qayyim said: "In the heart there is a void that cannot be filled except by His love, turning to Him, always remembering Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, that would never fill the void."

And this may be our ultimate problem. We do not realize that we need Him, or how much we need Him. And so we attempt to fill that void with things that were never meant to fill it.

Prophet Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him), we are told in the Qur'an, helps two women get water from the well. Someone else would feel proud that they just helped someone who was in need. But Moses (as) understood something. He sat down in the shade and said:

"My Lord, indeed I am, for whatever good You would send down to me, in need." (Qur'an, [28:24](#))

He knew that he was impoverished before Allah (swt), even when he had helped someone else in need.

The second part to understanding Allah *al-Ghani* is to realize that nothing that we do benefits or hurts Allah (swt). Our prayers do not give Him anything, nor do our sins hurt Him. We do these things out of love and reverence; and because He has commanded them of us, we know that they are good for us. He is Needless and yet He understands our needs. So He gives us the antidote to our illness. He teaches us the best way to fulfill the needs of our heart, body and soul. Allah (swt) says in a *hadith qudsi* (a sacred narration):

"[...] O My servants, you will not attain harming Me so as to harm Me, and you will not attain benefiting Me so as to benefit Me. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as pious as the most pious heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not increase My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as wicked as the most wicked heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not decrease My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all to stand together in one place and ask of Me, and I were to give everyone what he requested, then that would not decrease what I Possess, except what is decreased of the ocean when a needle is dipped into it. O My servants, it is but your deeds that I account for you, and then recompense you for. So he who finds good, let him praise Allah, and he who finds other than that, let him blame no one but himself." (Muslim)

This is why Allah (swt) forgives over and over, because our sins do not harm Him, but they harm us. And this is why He accepts

even the smallest of deeds, because how big or small they are does not affect Him positively or negatively. The deeds help us. And Allah (swt) can give us anything and everything because He does not need any of it. Ultimately, we are the ones in need. And so we take our needs to the only One who has none.

You and Others

The realization I spoke about above helped me in my relationship with others. It may seem counterintuitive; how can the realization that people cannot be there for you improve your relationship with them? Because with this realization, we cease to project our unrealistic expectations onto them, and therefore prevent ourselves from being disappointed as a result of those failed expectations. God (swt) gave us people as gifts, but they were not meant to fulfill every need. So when we find that those we love cannot give us something, it is time to direct that need to *al-Ghani* Himself, and be forgiving and understanding of their situation.

And something amazing happens here. Because He is also *al-Mughni* (the Enricher), He can enrich you. He enriches you to a point where you can love people while ultimately your dependency is on Him. Al-Ghazali states that a person who has “no neediness save for God the most high, he will be called ‘rich’ [*ghani*].”

Connect to His Names

1. *Realize that you need Him, and cannot do anything without His help*

This will enhance your worship. When we understand that, for example, prayer is to fulfill a certain need of our soul, we can make more of a conscious effort to improve and beautify our prayer, and use it to connect to the Most High. Moreover, our *du`a`* (supplication) also has more meaning when we realize that

we are the ones truly in need.

2. *Understand that people have needs, because only He is free of needs.*

This will ensure that your ultimate dependency is not on people, and that you will not have unrealistic expectations. When we feel that others have let us down, we can direct ourselves to the One who has no needs.



All Praise Is To Him

“Thank you so so much! I really appreciate it,” I wrote to a stranger I had never met. I was so grateful to that man. In my first visit to New York, I had lost my phone in a cab. This phone had all my numbers in it, pictures, saved messages... everything. As silly as it felt to be making *du`a`* (supplication) for something seemingly so trivial, I asked Allah, *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He), to return my phone. I tried to have conviction that, because I had said the remembrances that day, I had not lost my phone.

Indeed, the next morning, I received an email from the man who had found my phone. A few arrangements were made, and I was reunited with my phone shortly after. As I thanked that man, I turned to Allah (swt) in my heart and said, *Alhamdulillah* – all praise is due to Allah.

Al-Hameed: the Praiseworthy

It is befitting to learn about Allah’s Name *al-Hameed* after having studied His Name *al-Ghani*, as these two Names come together in the Qur’an. *Al-Hameed* comes from the three-letter root ha-meem-dal (ح-م-د), which is the opposite of the word *al-thamm*, which means to condemn. Something that is complete and perfect

deserves *hamd*, while something that has faults or is incomplete receives *thamm*. This praise is accompanied with feelings of adoration, gratitude and submission. Al-Ghazali states:

“God – great and glorious – is the Praised by virtue of His praise for Himself from eternity, and by virtue of His servants’ praise for Him forever. But this comes down to the attributes of majesty, of exaltation, and of perfection, as they are linked to the repetition of those who continually remember Him, for praise involves recalling the attributes of perfection in so far as they are perfect.”

This Name is closely associated with *shukr*, meaningful thankfulness. But *hamd* is much more encompassing than *shukr*. Thankfulness is expressed to someone for a particular deed or favor, whereas *hamd* is praise and gratitude not simply for overt favors, but for the inherent qualities the praiseworthy possesses. Thus it is said that *hamd* (praise) is the pinnacle of *shukr* (thankfulness). Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. And indeed, Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy (al Hameed)” (Qur’an, [22:64](#)).

Thus Allah *al-Hameed* is the One we go to with gratitude and humility, praising Him not just for those favors we feel thankful for, but for His very essence and all His decrees. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi has said that *al-Hameed* is the only One deserving of true praise, which is why we repeat in every prayer:

الحمد لله رب العالمين

All-Praise is due to God, the Lord of the Worlds

The importance of this Name is that Allah (swt) teaches us not to be attached simply to His blessings, but to His essence. Yes,

He gives us, and we thank and praise Him for what He gives. But when we think of *al-Hameed*, it ceases to be solely about the blessing. We are reminded of His inherent attributes, of *al-Hameed* Himself, and thus we praise Him when things are good or seemingly bad, because they all come from Him. When we realize that good came out of the calamity we were facing, or on the Day of Judgment when we see how we are rewarded not only for our gratitude for the good but for our patience with the hardships, do we embody the spirit of praise, and say wholeheartedly: *al-hamduliLah!*

And thus His Name: the Praiseworthy, the Praised.

The Prophet ﷺ and Praising Allah

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) praised Allah throughout his life, whether he was in hardship or receiving many beautiful gifts from Allah. In a famous *hadith* (narration), Aisha, *radi Allahu ‘anha* (may God be pleased with her), saw the Prophet ﷺ praying for so long that his feet became swollen. So she asked him:

“O Messenger of Allah, why do you undergo so much hardship despite the fact that Allah has pardoned for you your earlier and later sins?”

He ﷺ responded: *“Afala akuna abdan shakura? – Should I not be a thankful servant?”* (Bukhari)

And what did the Prophet ﷺ say as he was praying in the night? Ibn ‘Abbas relates that the Prophet ﷺ used to say when he stood for the *tahajjud* (late night) prayer:

“O Allah! Yours is the praise. You are the sustainer of the heavens and the Earth and all that they contain. And Yours is the praise. Yours is the dominion of the heavens and the Earth and all that they contain. And Yours is the praise. You are the light of the heavens and the Earth and all that they contain. And Yours is the praise. You are the

king of the heavens and the Earth. And Yours is the praise. You are the Truth. Your promise is true. The meeting with You is true. Your word is true. Paradise is true and the Fire is true. The prophets are true. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is true. The Hour is true..." (Bukhari, Muslim).

The Prophet ﷺ, throughout his hardships, reflected on the nature of this world. And he saw the majesty of Allah's attributes in all of creation, and in everything that happened. And with awe, humility and gratitude, he makes that *du`a`* we see above from all of His heart.

Paired Names

We know that Allah pairs many of His Names and attributes in the Qur'an. One of the reasons is to show us how these Names relate to each other. *Al-Hameed* is paired with a few Names in the Qur'an: *al-Ghani*, *al-Wali*, *al-Majeed*, and *al-Hakeem*.

1. Allah says: "O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need (***al-Ghani***), the Praiseworthy (***al-Hameed***)," (Qur'an, [35:15](#)).

If a human being is seen as self-sufficient, that usually causes him to withdraw from people. Since this person does not need people, he may not see any reason to help or to give or to be nice—and he is certainly not perfect in his essence. But truly glory is that Allah (swt) does not need anyone, yet He still gives people, and acts with ultimate wisdom, and is praised.

2. "And it is He who sends down the rain after they had despaired and spreads His mercy. And He is the Protective Friend (***al-Wali***), the Praiseworthy (***al-Hameed***)," (Qur'an, [42:48](#)).

You might assign someone to be your lawyer, entrusting him to

protect you. But if this lawyer is careless, and loses your case, he would not be praised, neither for his action nor for his essence. But when Allah is your Wali, you cannot help but praise Allah, who defends and protects His intimate friends.

3. "They said, "Are you amazed at the decree of Allah? May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy (***al-Hameed***) and Honorable (***al-Majeed***)," (Qur'an, [11:73](#)).

Al-Majeed, according to al-Ghazali, is "one who is noble in essence, beautiful in actions, and bountiful in gifts and in favors." Thus while Allah is the Lord and commands that come from Him do not need to be explained, out of His nobility and bounty He explains many things in the Qur'an. So He is praised for that.

4. "Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise (***Hakeem***) and Praiseworthy (***Hameed***)" (Qur'an, [41:42](#)).

Here Allah (swt) is pointing out to us that if we reflected on His decree, we would praise Him for His wisdom. Because while Allah does as He pleases, He is also the Most-Wise and thus there is always the best wisdom behind His actions.

Connecting to Al-Hameed

- Praise Allah through the good and the bad

The Prophet ﷺ tells us that "*Alhamdulillah fills the scales*," (Muslim). One way of retaining blessings is thanking and praising Allah (swt) for them. And through the bad, we should remember that ultimately whatever occurs is out of Allah's wisdom, He is both *Hakeem* (all-Wise) and *Hameed* (Praiseworthy), and therefore we should remember to humble ourselves and praise Him.

- Write down Allah’s Name *al-Hameed* and then write down all of Allah’s blessings upon you

We know the verse in the Qur’an where Allah states: *“And if you should count the favor of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful”* (Qur’an, [14:34](#)).

Interestingly, Allah uses the word “favor”—*ni`ma*—in the singular, as though saying: even trying to enumerate the blessings of one single favor is impossible! To reflect deeply upon just one favor, and to ponder over its impacts, can fill us with so much awe for *al-Hameed*.

- Speak well to people

Allah says in the Qur’an, *“And they had been guided [in worldly life] to good speech, and they were guided to the path of the Praise-worthy (Al-Hameed)”* (Qur’an, [22:24](#)).

In a beautiful reflection, Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi says that it is as though the path to Allah *al-Hameed* is through good speech, as Allah also says: *“[...] And speak to people good [words][...]”* (Qur’an, 2:83).

A beautiful hadith of the Prophet ﷺ states that: *“A person’s faith is not upright until his heart is upright, and his heart will not be upright until his tongue is upright”* (Ahmad).

- Praise Allah by using His gifts in His service

The highest form of praise is to use those gifts He has bestowed upon us in His service and therefore in good. But do not be like those who Allah says about them:

“And whoever exchanges the favor of Allah [for disbelief] after it has come to him – then indeed, Allah is severe in penalty,” (Qur’an, [2:211](#)).

Belief is a blessing, but this can apply to other favors as well. If we use those gifts in ways that are unbecoming, then this is the opposite of *hamd*. The result is that our favors could be taken away, or perhaps worse, we cannot find the joy or sweetness in those favors. If we look at the story of Qarun in the Qur’an, he was given many blessings. He was from the people of Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him). And Allah says, *“We gave him of treasures whose keys would burden a band of strong men...”* (Qur’an, [28:76](#)). Yet Qarun tyrannized his own people, and had the gall to say, “I was only given it because of knowledge I have.” He did not attribute His gifts to Allah AND he used them for corruption. And what was the result?

“And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves” (Qur’an, [28:81](#)).

May Allah protect us.

“Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds – their Lord will guide them because of their faith. Beneath them rivers will flow in the Gardens of Pleasure. Their call therein will be, ‘Exalted are You, O Allah,’ and their greeting therein will be, ‘Peace.’ And the last of their call will be, ‘Praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds!’” (Qur’an, [10:9-10](#))



To Whom Belongs Sovereignty?

In this journey through Allah's Names, we have learned about both His attributes of Beauty and of Majesty. The intention is to inspire fear, hope and, ultimately, love. If we misunderstand Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), we may not see the wisdom behind the things that happen in the world or in our personal lives. We might not understand how Allah (swt) fits into our life. We may also find it difficult to love Him, because how can you love someone – deeply love someone – you do not know?

Thus it is hoped that these Names have increased our knowledge of our Creator, and have made apparent how Allah (swt) is with us in every moment.

Today's Name should inspire in us '*khashya*' and '*hayba*'. These words are sometimes both translated as 'fear', thus removing the important distinctions between the two words. In the '[Sweetness of Prayer](#)' series, we explained the difference between the different types of fear:

'*Khawf*' is to flee from the thing that you fear, and requires no knowledge of that which is feared. You can be afraid, or have

'*khawf*', of the dark. '*Khashya*', on the other hand, is fear with knowledge. The more a servant has knowledge of his Lord, the more '*khawf*' turns to '*khashya*'. As Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge" (Qur'an, [35:28](#)).

'*Hayba*' is fear associated with respect, awe and glorification. You could, for example, fear fire. But the reason for your fear is that the fire may harm you, so fire earns no '*hayba*'; you do not glorify it. However, you could have a certain '*hayba*' of your father; you could be afraid to do something wrong in front of him, but that fear is out of respect.

Al-Qahhar: The Dominator

Allah's Name *al-Qahhar* comes from the Arabic root qaf-haa-ra (ق-ه-ر). It means 'to dominate over' or 'to subdue from above'. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an in Surat al-An'aam;

"And He is the subjugator (al-qaahiru) over His servants. And He is the Wise (al-Hakeem), the Acquainted [with all] (al-Khabeer). (Qur'an, [6:18](#))

Someone with this attribute might be considered a tyrant, which is why Allah (swt) tells us that this attribute is possessed by the One who is also the Most Wise and the One who is Best Acquainted with everything. This reference is also for the benefit of those who doubt this attribute, and might ask "why has Allah not overpowered the tyrants of today, of whom there are many?" Allah (swt) is reminding us that there is ultimate wisdom in whom He chooses to subdue at any point in time. This is where our understanding of the holistic nature of Allah's Names should come in: we spoke before about how Allah (swt) is Forbearing and Patient, and He gives people – even tyrants – the opportunity to turn back.

Thus we see in the Qur'an that Allah sends Moses and Aaron '*alayhimaa as-salaam*' (may Allah's peace be upon them both) to Pharaoh – and calling Pharaoh 'oppressive' would be an understatement! – telling them initially to speak to him gently. Pharaoh rejects them. Moses then shows him proof of his prophethood. Pharaoh rejects him again, insisting on enslaving the Children of Israel. Finally, Allah (swt) overpowers him by drowning him, using someone from the very people that Pharaoh was oppressing, who grew up in his own house. Such is the way of *al-Qahhar*, who manifests His power by subduing tyrants through the objects of their tyranny.

This is why Imam al-Ghazali describes *al-Qahhar* in this way: "The Dominator is the one who breaks the back of the powerful among His enemies... Indeed there is no existing thing that is not subject to the domination of His power, and powerlessness in His grasp. That is all." Therefore, when we look at events today and wonder "where is *al-Qahhar*?", we should remember the story of Moses. Remember that Moses prevailed. Remember that Pharaoh was overpowered.

Our role is to strive against this oppression, knowing that ultimately this is what we will be asked about, and everything is subjected to the Will of Allah (swt). Indeed, so many tyrannical powers eventually come crashing down, bowing to the will of *al-Qahhar*. Unfortunately, we may not attribute it to Him, but as Allah (swt) tells us:

"The Day they come forth nothing concerning them will be concealed from Allah. To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing (al-Qahhar)." (Qur'an, [40:16](#))

On that Day, all will be apparent. All those who oppressed, in both seemingly small and big ways, will be before Allah, *al-Qahhar*. Then, there will be no ambiguity.

Living with these Names

1. *Balance fear and hope*

Today's Name might cause us to be afraid. This is not a subject we like to talk to about, because it is so much more reassuring to focus on those attributes that enable us to relax. But remembering that Allah (swt) has attributes of Majesty should instill in us the '*khashya*' and '*hayba*' described earlier. Moreover, Allah's Names are to be looked at holistically. He is *al-Qahhar* and He is also *al-Lateef* (the subtle, the most kind).

2. *Dominate your lower desires*

In previous articles, we talked about how we should emulate the attributes of Beauty. But what about attributes of Majesty? How do we apply them? Al-Ghazali counseled: "The dominator amongst men is the one who subdues his enemies. The greatest enemy of man is his soul, which is within him. This soul is more of an enemy to him than Satan, of whose enmity he is wary. Whoever conquers his passions conquers Satan, since Satan lures him to ruin by means of his passions."

3. *Use that fear to stop at least one sin*

To know that Allah is *al-Qahhar* is to burn the desire for sin in the heart. Because Allah (swt) is the Dominator, we should fear that perhaps *al-Qahhar*, *al-Mumeet* (the Life-Taker) might take our soul as we are committing the sin. This should alert us that despite it seeming as though we are being allowed to oppress our souls, we may still face the fate mentioned in this verse:

"So when they forgot that by which they had been reminded, We opened to them the doors of every [good] thing until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly, and

they were [then] in despair." (Qur'an, [6:44](#))

These people used the gifts of Allah (swt) in the opposite manner to that for which they were intended, and then they were seized. In another chapter, Allah (swt) describes to us the people of the garden, who took an oath that they would reap all of their fruits and leave nothing for the poor. Allah (swt) caused their garden to be completely burned to the ground, but the owners of that garden understood the lesson. They willed something, but Allah (swt) overpowered their will, and so they turned back to Him.

Hence, this fear should not paralyze us from doing good, but it should paralyze us from doing bad. We should try to choose at least one thing – like backbiting or lying – and do our best to use this Name to help us stop it.

4. *Do not oppress others*

The surest way to earn the wrath of *al-Qahhar* is to oppress others. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an: "*So as for the orphan, do not oppress [him] (fa laa taqhar)*" (Qur'an, [93:9](#)). The word '*taqhar*' comes from the same root of the name *al-Qahhar*. We should understand that oppression is not simply for unjust leaders or cruel human traffickers. We may also be oppressing others in more subtle ways, and thus we should be diligent to avoid this.

الواحد الأحد

Incomparable, Unequaled

When Bilal *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him), a Companion of the Prophet ﷺ, spoke a single, specific word, it infuriated his tormentors. Bilal was an Abyssinian slave who had accepted Islam without the permission of his masters. They were furious, so they tortured him – but all he would say was one word:

(The below [scene](#) contains violence and may be unsuitable for sensitive viewers.)

As he was being beaten, Bilal (ra) only said “*Ahadun Ahad. Aha-dun Ahad. Allahu Ahad.*”

God is One.

One

Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) is both *Al-Waahid* and *Al-Ahad*. Most linguists say that they both come from the same root but differ slightly in meaning. The root is waw-haa-dal (و-ح-د), which means ‘to be one’, ‘the only one’ or ‘to unify’.

Al-Ahad is completely unique. *Al-Waahid* has no partner. So we can say that *Al-Waahid* is the One and *Al-Ahad* is the Only One. So Allah (swt) is the One and Only.

Theologically, this was a response to Quraysh who said that they worshipped Allah (swt), and wanted to know what was so different about the Muslims who also worshipped Allah (swt). Surat *al-Ikhlās* (Qur'an 112 'Sincerity') clarified the attributes of Allah (swt); that He is *Al-Ahad* and *As-Samad* (the Eternal Refuge). The differences between the two will be explored in the next section.

Back to the Essence

This Name brings us back to the essence of Islam. It brings us back to what this is really about.

It is about Allah (swt): One, Unique.

And we cannot really talk about *al-Ahad* without talking about the chapter which mentions this Name, the chapter on sincerity (Surat *al-Ikhlās*). How amazing that the Name *Al-Ahad* is only mentioned once in the Qur'an, yet the chapter it appears in is equal to one third of the whole Qur'an!¹ It is possibly the most important name, since our profession of faith is based on it: "*la ilaha ila Allah – there is no deity but God*". Some scholars have said that this chapter is equal to a third of the Qur'an because one third of the Qur'an talks about the attributes of Allah (swt). Yet if you only have this surah, you have all you need to know Allah (swt). Why?

The way the word '*ahad*' is used in this verse is incredible. '*Ahad*' is used in Arabic to negate, so one would say '*la ahad*' meaning 'there is no one'. To refer to someone, there would have to be an addition; for example, '*ahadukum*' means 'one of you'. However, without an addition, '*ahad*' can only refer to Allah (swt). *Al-Ahad* negates anything else, and in this form can never be used to describe another – only Allah (swt). It signifies His utter unique-

ness. This provides the basis for understanding His other Names, because while we as humans might possess a limited portion of His other attributes (such as mercy or knowledge), we cannot truly be compared in any way to them.

This is why, when Bilal (ra) said that one word, the Quraysh could not take it. It shattered all of their notions about their gods, as well as what they thought about Allah. That is why this chapter was so beloved to the Companions *radi Allahu `anhum* (may God be pleased with them all). For example, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ once sent a Companion out at the head of an expedition. During their travels, the Companion led those with him in prayer and always recited Surat *al-Ikhlās*. When the expedition returned, they told the Prophet ﷺ about it, and he told them to ask the man why he did always read this surah. The man replied: "It is because it this surah describes the Most Merciful, and therefore I love to recite it." Upon hearing the man's reply, the Prophet ﷺ said: "*Tell that man that Allah loves him.*" (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Name *Al-Waahid*, on the other hand, appears 15 times in the Qur'an, six times with His Name *Al-Qahhar*. Allah (swt) brings *Al-Waahid al-Qahhar* together because, in order to overpower others, human beings usually need to bring their armies and cannot do it alone. However, Allah (swt) is telling us that He is the One, and He overpowers all others alone. Moreover, al-Ghazali states that *Al-Waahid* is the one who can neither be divided nor duplicated. Theologically, this sums up the difference between Islam and other faiths; for example, those who say that God is One but is also three, or that God is One but He is in everything. The Name *Al-Waahid* tells us that He is just that: One, without any parts or equals.

What are the implications of knowing He is One, Unique, Unparalleled?

Can you feel what Bilal felt when he said, “*Ahadun Ahad*”? He felt conviction in his heart that there is nothing equal to Him, from which he was able to derive his strength. Not even torture could bring him down – and this is what the best of people were tried for. This is what the Companion, `Ammar bin Yasir (ra), was tried and tortured for. This is why Asiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, was tormented.

So we need to ask: ‘Is Allah One in my life? Do I direct everything to Him – from fears and hopes to needs?’ Realizing that He is One is to know that there is no love like His love, that there is no One who gives like Him, and that there is no One else who can fill the void – only Him, the One. His Oneness and Uniqueness force us to say to ourselves, ‘*I cannot put my desires in one hand and Him in another. He is Al-Ahad.*’ The weight of that knowledge should negate our lower desires and those subtle things that we worship – be it money, status or anything else. Knowing that He is *al-Waahid al-Ahad* reminds us that this life is about Him. He is our ultimate goal. This life is temporary; its joys and the pains will disappear, and this knowledge should negate our worldly attachments.

How else do we connect to this Name?

- *Sincerity*: Since He is Al-Ahad, we should direct our intentions towards His pleasure and love. The effect of this is that we do not ‘see’ people any more in terms of their praise or their criticisms. It is all about Allah (swt). This is the Name that brings everything to its essence and reminds us of the importance of sincerity. You might do things for praise but you may or may not receive it. Even if you do receive it, it will slowly wither. If you prevent yourself from doing the right thing because of what people will say or do, their reaction becomes a false idol that you worship alongside Allah. However, we know that anything done for Him in the right manner will remain. If this Oneness is realized in our hearts, that is when

we actualize true freedom.

That Oneness will weigh heavily on the scales. The Prophet ﷺ said: “*Allah will save a man of His community, the record of whose sins fills 99 books, each book extending as far as the eye can see. Against all this will be weighed the one good deed that he has, which is his witnessing that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger, and it will outweigh all the rest.*” The Messenger of God ﷺ then said: “*Nothing is of any weight compared to Allah’s Name.*” (Ahmad)

- Renew your faith: The Prophet ﷺ told his Companions: “***Renew your faith.***” They said, “O Messenger of Allah, how can we renew our faith?” The Prophet ﷺ said: “***Say often, ‘there is no God but Allah (la ilaha ill Allah)’.***” (Ahmad)

Why is this important? When the dunya (this world) takes over again, we become burdened by its worries and our intentions start to mix once more, this statement will remind us what this life is really about. It will remind us of *al-Waahid al-Ahad* and all the implications of these Names.

- Be ‘unique’: Sheikh Hisham al-Awadhi added that another way to connect to this Name is to know that the One who is truly Unique has created you in a unique way too, and you have your own purpose to fulfill. Thus, try to leave a legacy that is specific to you.

1. The Prophet ﷺ told his Companions: “Are you not able to read a third of the Qur’an in one night?” They found this very difficult and replied that nobody amongst them could do so. The Prophet ﷺ replied: “Allah, The One, the Self-Sufficient, Surah ‘Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad’, equals a third of the Qur’an.” (Bukhari)



Who's Been Taking Care of You All This Time?

“And out from where they had been concealed walked two other detectives. They’d had me covered. One false move, I’d have been dead...

If I hadn’t been arrested right when I was, I could have been dead another way. Sophia’s husband’s friend had told her husband about me. And her husband had arrived that morning, and had gone to the apartment with a gun, looking for me. He was at the apartment just about when they took me to the precinct...

I have thought a thousand times, I guess, about how I so narrowly escaped death twice that day. That’s why I believe that everything is written.”¹

These are the words of the late Malik el-Shabazz – Malcolm X – may Allah’s mercy be upon him, as he told the story of the day he got arrested. It was through prison that he was exposed to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam. It would be many more years before he visited Makkah, as a member of the Nation, and accepted orthodox Islam. It was as though someone was taking care of him all this time – nudging him, teaching him through hardship and blessing, and caring for him. It may not have

been clear at the time, but it became apparent later on.

Because someone was taking care of him. The same One who takes care of you and me.

He is Allah, *Al-Rabb* (the Lord). This attribute is mentioned so many times in the Qur'an, but it is different from His other Names. While Allah is *Al-Haleem* (the Forbearing) or *Al-Wahhab* (the Giver of Gifts), you cannot say, "Allah is my *Haleem*", for example. Linguistically it does not make sense. You can say He is forbearing with you, or He is The Forbearing, but you cannot use it in the possessive form. But when '*Rabb*' is mentioned, you can change the form.

He is not just *Al-Rabb*. He is '*Rabby*' – my *Rabb*. This shows us how close Allah is to us. That's why the first verses to be revealed to the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) were:

"Recite in the name of your Rabb who created –" [Quran 96:1]

Though the Prophet ﷺ was an orphan, it is as though this verse came to tell him, 'You have a *Rabb*, Someone has been taking care of you all this time.' '*Rabb*' is hard to translate because it has so many meanings attached to it. It is commonly translated as 'Lord', but that is only part of the meaning. In the dictionary it is stated:

الرَّبُّ يُطْلَقُ فِي اللُّغَةِ عَلَى الْمَالِكِ، وَالسَّيِّدِ، وَالْمُدَبِّرِ، وَالْمُرِّيِّ، وَالْقَيِّمِ، وَالْمُنْعِمِ
وَالرَّبُّ: الْمُصْلِحُ لِلشَّيْءِ
والله جَلَّ ثَنَاؤُهُ الرَّبُّ؛ لَأَنَّهُ مُصْلِحُ أَحْوَالِ خَلْقِهِ

Al-Rabb linguistically is said to be the Owner, the Master, the One who arranges all matters, the Nurturer, the Sustainer, and the One

who bestows favors and blessings. *Al-Rabb* is also the one who mends something; and Allah is *al-Rabb* – *subhanahu wa ta'ala*, exalted is He – because He mends the conditions of His creation.

Because *Rabb* encompasses all of these meanings, Surat al-Fatiha (Qur'an 1) is a beautiful introduction to His Name. We are told:

"[All] praise is [due] to Allah..." [Quran 1:1]

Imagine you are reading this for the first time. You might say 'well, who is Allah (swt)?'

"...Rabb of all the worlds." [Quran 1:1]

If He is a *Rabb* – with all of the meanings this word encompasses – then the logical conclusion is 'I must be a slave'. But what is my relationship with this *Rabb*? What kind of *Rabb* is He?

"The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful." [Quran 1:2]

Wow. That is who is He is. That is the type of *Rabb* Allah (swt) is. He is the *The Rabb*, the One who is your Master, but the Master who nurtures you with His All-Encompassing Mercy. So how can we not worship Him? How can we not seek His nearness?

Allah shows us how he arranges everything in this world, how He is master of things that you are not even aware of. When He first speaks to Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) and tells him that he must confront Pharaoh, Moses (as) makes a supplication. Allah (swt) grants Him what he asked for, but then He reminds Moses (as):

'And We had already conferred favor upon you another time, When We inspired to your mother what We inspired, [Saying], 'Cast him into the chest and cast it into the river, and the river will throw it onto

the bank; there will take him an enemy to Me and an enemy to him.’ And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under My eye. [And We favored you] when your sister went and said, ‘Shall I direct you to someone who will be responsible for him?’ So We restored you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve. And you killed someone, but We saved you from retaliation and tried you with a [severe] trial. And you remained [some] years among the people of Madyan. Then you came [here] at the decreed time, O Moses. And I produced you for Myself. Go, you and your brother, with My signs and do not slacken in My remembrance. Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].’ [Quran 20:37-44]

Allah (swt) reminds Moses (as) that He was there for him all along – even when he did not know it. Even when he thought that he was going through a hardship, Allah (swt) was there. Allah (swt) was teaching him, like a Rabb would. And what do Moses and Aaron (as) say?

‘They said, “Our Lord, indeed we are afraid that he will hasten [punishment] against us or that he will transgress.”’ [Quran 37:45]

They say ‘Rabbana’ – our Rabb. That is how personal this Name is. They beseech their Rabb, telling Him of their fears. And Allah (swt) responds, reassuring them once more:

‘[Allah] said, “Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see.’ [Quran 37:46]

In another chapter, Moses (as) and the Children of Israel are being hunted down by Pharaoh and his army. They are fast on their heels. The Children of Israel cry out in despair, “Indeed, we are to be overtaken!”² But Moses (as), firm in his faith, says, “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord [Rabby]; He will guide me.”³

There is a hadith (saying) of the Prophet ﷺ in which he says:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَنَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ الْمَنَّانُ بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَازَادُ الْجَلَالَ وَالْإِكْرَامَ يَا حَيُّ يَا قَيُّوْمُ

“O Allah, I ask You by virtue of the fact that praise is due to You, there is no god but You, Who shows favor and beneficence, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, O Lord of Majesty and Splendor, O Living One, O Eternal One.”

The Prophet ﷺ then said, “*He has supplicated Allah using His Greatest Name; when supplicated by this name, Allah answers, and when asked by this name, He gives.*” (Abu Dawud)

There are other sayings with different wordings. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi stated that some are of the opinion that *Al-Hayy Al-Qayyum* (the Ever-Living, the Sustainer) are His greatest Names, while others were of the opinion that the greatest Name is that which pertains to your situation. For example, if you are poor, you may ask Allah *Al-Razzaq* (the Provider) or *Al-Ghani* (the Self-Sufficient). If you are sick, you would ask *Al-Shaafi* (the Healer). Others stated that His greatest Name is *Al-Rabb*. If we look at the Qur’an, the Prophets (peace be upon them) call on Allah (swt), their Rabb:

‘And [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, “My Lord (Rabby), do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors.”’ [Qur’an, 21:89]

The Prophet Zechariah (as) calls out “Rabby” when asking for an heir. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, when he was expelled from Ta’if, made a heartfelt call to his Rabb:

“O Allah! To you alone I complain my weakness, my scarcity of resources, and the humiliation I have been subjected to by people. O

Most Merciful of those who have mercy! You are the Lord (Rabb) of the weak, and You are My Lord (Rabby) too.

To whom have you entrusted me? To a distant person who receives me with hostility? Or to an enemy to whom you have granted authority over my affair?

But as long as You are not angry with me, I do no care, except that Your favor is a more expansive relief to me. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face by which all darkness is dispelled and every affair of this world and the next is set right, lest Your anger or Your displeasure descend upon me.

Yours is the right to reproach until You are pleased. There is no power and no might except by You.”

Al-Rabb is a beautiful Name and attribute of Allah (swt) that should make us feel close to Him. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi likens this attribute, which is sometimes used for a human being, to a compassionate father who takes care of his household. With a human, there has to be an addition, for example ‘*rabb al-bayt*’ – the rabb of the house. But Allah (swt) is the only One who is Al-Rabb – *The Rabb*.

Coming alive with this Name

- Look back at your life and see how He has been taking care of you all along

Just like the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Prophet Moses (as), Malcolm X, and many more, look back at your life and see how Allah (swt) has been taking care of you. Talk to Him and thank Him for being there with you. Remember that in every hardship there is a lesson from ‘a Merciful Lord’ [Qur’an, [36:58](#)].

- Worship your Rabb

Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

‘Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path.’ [Quran [3:51](#)]

‘And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty (death).’ [Quran [15:99](#)]

Knowing that Allah (swt) is our Rabb is to worship Him wholeheartedly. And that worship has a sweetness, especially when we know who we are worshipping. As Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an to the people of Paradise:

‘[And] “Peace,” a word from a Merciful Lord.’ [Quran [36:58](#)]

1. The Autobiography of Malcolm X, p. 241-242
2. Qur'an, 26:61
3. Qur'an, 26:62



Secure Your Heart Through Faith

Are you a *Mu'min*? Think hard. Are you? A *Mu'min* is usually translated as 'believer'. So some may answer yes. Others may remember the verse in the Qur'an that says:

"The Bedouins say, 'We have believed (aamanna).' Say, 'You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], 'We have submitted (aslamna),' for faith (iman) has not yet entered your hearts. And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not deprive you from your deeds of anything. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.'" (Qur'an, [49:14](#))

And thus the answer to the question might be: *"God willing! I try."*

Now, what does it mean to you when Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) tells us that one of His Names is *Al-Mu'min*? Does it mean that Allah (swt) has faith? In what?

This Name of Allah (swt), when realized, is beautiful and can do much to strengthen our hearts. *Mu'min* comes from the root a-m-n can mean to be secure, safe, free from fear and also to believe in. Allah (swt) says in Surat Quraysh:

"Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, [sav-

ing them] from hunger and made them safe (aamanahum), [saving them] from fear.”

Allah (swt) uses the word “aamanahum“, from the same root, to describe how He had made Quraysh safe from any fear.

In an insightful narration, the Prophet ﷺ tells us that, “*Whoever among you wakes up secure (aaminan) in his property, healthy in his body, and he has his food for the day, it is as if he were given the entire world,*” (Tirmidhi). The same root gives rise to the word the Prophet ﷺ uses—“aaminan”—for someone to be secure in his home.

A-m-n also means to believe or affirm truth. Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an in the story of Prophet Joseph *‘alayhi as-salaam* (may peace be upon him):

“They said, “O our father, indeed we went racing each other and left Joseph with our possessions, and a wolf ate him. But you would not believe (bi-mu’mín) us, even if we were truthful.”” (Qur’an, [12:17](#))

To bring it back to Allah’s Name (swt), you can only truly believe in someone if they make you feel secure. Allah (swt) is *al-Mu’mín*; He grants you that security of faith and through faith. As al-Ghazali says:

“Al-Mu’mín—the Faithful—is the one whom security and safety are ascribed because He conveys the means to attain them and blocks the paths of dangers... The absolutely faithful one is God—may He be praised and exalted—as the one from whose direction alone security and safety may conceivably emanate.”

As human beings, we have weaknesses. We have fears. And as al-Ghazali explains, the biggest fear is eternal damnation, and nothing can protect us from that but the profession of faith in the

unity of God. That is where true security and safety lie. If you believe in Allah (swt), truly believe, then He is the source of security. He will give you safety.

Aasiya, the wife of Fir’on (Pharaoh) was one such person who was granted this security of faith. Her husband was a tyrant, and eventually she would be the object of his tyranny. But in her heart, she did not falter. She was secure, unwavering. Allah (swt) tells us:

“And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, “My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.”” (Qur’an, [66:11](#))

Aasiya could see what was beyond. As Imam Suhaib taught us, she does not simply ask for a house in Paradise. The crucial part is “near You”, meaning priority is nearness to Allah (swt). And that was how she could face a tyrant: iman (faith) in *al-Mu’mín*.

It is through faith in Allah (swt) that we are given true security. When we recite the Qur’an, we can see how its teachings and lessons are directly applicable to the world today. We can find comfort in the fact that Allah (swt) makes after hardship, ease (Qur’an, [65:7](#)); we widen our vision when we understand that we may dislike something that might actually be good for us (Qur’an, [2:216](#)); and we force ourselves to self-reflect when Allah (swt) tells us that the corruption we see around us may very well be what our own hands have wrought (Qur’an, [30:41](#)). This iman means that we are secure in our hearts. Therefore, when we say we have iman, what we are saying is that we have been granted security and tranquility.

May *al-Mu’mín* grant us true iman!

Living with Allah's Names

- Give other people security

Al-Ghazali counseled: "A man's share in the name and attribute lies in all creatures' being safe from him... Those men will be most worthy of the name 'faithful.'" As the Prophet ﷺ emphatically declared: *"By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe!"* The companions asked, *"Who, O Messenger of Allah?"* And the Prophet ﷺ replied: *"He whose neighbor is not safe from his misdeeds,"* (Bukhari).

- Let your actions affirm the truth of your speech

Mu'min is also to believe or affirm the truth. Allah's actions and speech in the Qur'an confirm one another and there is no contradiction. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi advises that our actions must correspond and affirm our speech.

- Guide others to safety

And the most deserving person to be called a *Mu'min* is he who guides others to what will give them ultimate safety and security; he guides others to *Al-Mu'min* Himself. While we know that it is only Allah (swt) who guides, guidance here means in advising with wisdom and informing.



Who Is Really In Control?

“Say, ‘O Allah , Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.’” (Qur'an, [3:26](#))

The beautiful poem in the [video](#) above by Brother Ammar al-Shukri reminds us of Allah *Maalik al-Mulk*. We will explore these meanings today.

Recently, we were all shocked to hear the news of the tragic murder of three beautiful souls: Deah Barakat, Yusor Abu-Salha and Razan Abu-Salha. For many of us, this violence was, and still is, hard to process. Perhaps what made it more infuriating was some of the media coverage: some giving ample airtime to the wife of the man who committed the murders while others used it to talk about how to calmly get parking space. In Canada, a dear brother, Mustafa Mattan, was also shot and killed, but the media coverage was almost non-existent. We look around and the world seems to be overtaken by tyrants and oppressors. And those people act as though they are kings or possessors of other people, acting how they will with the lives of innocents.

Al-Ghazali stated about Allah, *al-Malik*, that “everything other than He is subject in its essence and its attributes, while He is independent of everything—and this is what it is to be king absolutely.”

At the end of it all, even if it seems that people are able to act in unjust ways, they are all subject to Allah, who is both *al-Malik* and *al-Maalik*; He is both the King and the Ultimate Possessor. When we recite Surat al-Fatiha, we say, “*Maaliki youm ad-deen*” or “*Maliki youm ad-deen*” (“Sovereign of the Day of Recompense”) depending on the type of recitation. They both come from the same root, m-l-k (م-ل-ك), which means to have power over, to possess, and to have kingship.

Maalik means a possessor, while *Malik* means that you have sovereignty over something and can do with it as you wish. And Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) is both *Maalik* and *Malik*. He fully controls and has ownership over the Day of Judgment and what occurs therein. He is also *Maalik al-Mulk*, to emphasize and intensify these meanings, that He is the Sovereign over all worlds. And this is something we seldom reflect upon; there will be a day when we will be face to face with the One who has true sovereignty over everything.

Allah tells us that He is “*Maaliki youm ad-deen*” after He tells us that He is Lord of the worlds. If He is the Lord of the worlds, then He must also be the Lord on the Day of Judgment. But to specifically single out the Day of Judgment is for all of us, who either behave in unethical ways or wonder how others are allowed to behave in such ways. But Allah reminds us that the innocent lives lost are not lost forever. Power will fade. And we will all be before Allah, *al-Malik al-Maalik*.

Ultimate Justice

While the above Names speak of the reality of who is truly in control, we need to be acquainted with another Name of Allah to understand how Allah exercises His power. We know that “*Indeed, Allah does what He intends*,” (Qur’an, [22:14](#)). We are also told that on the Day of Judgment:

“And the record [of deeds] will be placed [open], and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it, and they will say, ‘Oh, woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great except that it has enumerated it?’ And they will find what they did present [before them]. And your Lord does injustice to no one,” (Qur’an, [18:49](#)).

We are also told in a beautiful hadith (narration):

“O my servants, I have forbidden oppression for myself and I have made it forbidden among you, so do not oppress one another.” (Muslim)

Allah is *al-`Adl*. This word comes from the root `a-d-l (أ-د-ل) which is the opposite of transgression, and thus means to act justly and fairly. Allah has no desires and so His judgment is never clouded, and thus He is able to apply true justice. Al-Ghazali states that to know Allah is Most Just enables us to feel tranquility and prevents us from objecting to God’s judgment or cursing Fate. We know that He is the Most-Merciful as well as the Most-Just.

Connecting to these Names

Al-Malik

Al-Ghazali recounts a story where one person said “to a certain shaykh: ‘Advise me’, and he said to him: ‘Be a king in this world and you will be a king in the next.’ When he said: ‘How might I do

that?’ The shaykh answered: ‘Renounce this world and you will be a king in the next.’ He meant: detach your needs and your passions from this world, for kingship lies in being free and able to dispense with everything.”

Al-`Adl

In knowing that Allah is just, we must seriously consider whether we apply justice in our own lives. Are we just to our souls, in ensuring that we have connected to Allah? Are we just to our relatives? And are we just to animals?

Allah (swt) tells us that He has forbidden oppression for Himself and made it forbidden for us. So we should be vigilant over our souls and actions.

In the end, we must know with certainty that Allah is the Ultimate Possessor of everything, and this will be made apparent on the Day of Judgment. We are reminded of this everyday when we recite Surat al-Fatiha so that we never lose sight of that, even when tyrants act like they run the world And Allah, the Possessor and the Most Just, will surely make justice prevail.



There's Room For You And Me

A few years ago, I took my little nephew to a public park for the first time. While we have a garden at home, it was his first time to see such vast open space. He almost immediately started running, in awe of the vastness and beauty, not even sure what to do with it. It was so big to him, and the possibilities were endless. He then came back and hugged me, saying, “Thank you, Auntie! Thank you!” My heart was warmed of course, but I was also amused at this kid’s first experience with open spaces.

But as I started reflecting, I realized that we are all my little nephew in relation to Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He). Most of us are not familiar with Allah’s vastness—that He named Himself *al-Waasi`* (the Vast)—and once we get a little taste of it, we are left in awe; humbled and grateful.

Al-Waasi` comes from the root w-s-` (و-س-ع), and it is the opposite of constriction and difficulty. It means to be vast, spacious without limit, and all-encompassing. Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“And to Allah belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing (waasi`) and Knowing.” (Qur’an, [2:115](#))

In the verse above we are told that wherever we turn, Allah (swt) is there. He is vast and cannot be contained in space. Al-Ghazali stated that “*Al-Waasi`* —the Vast—derives from expansiveness, and expansiveness is sometimes linked to knowledge, when it extends to and comprehends a multitude of objects; and at other times it is linked to charity and widespread blessings, extending as far as possible to whatever they descend upon”.

So what does this mean for you and me?

It means there is room for us. There is room for me and you. There is room for us, with all of our struggles and our mistakes and our faults: Allah is vast. No matter how broken we are. No matter where we have been. No matter how many times we have messed up. There is room for everyone. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

“My punishment – I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses (wasi`at) all things.” (Qur'an, [7:156](#))

The word used here for ‘encompasses’ is from the same root of Allah's Name *al-Waasi`*. His mercy encompasses everything. Every. single. thing. Allah (swt) also says:

“Indeed, your Lord is vast (waasi') in forgiveness.” (Qur'an, [53:32](#))

Do you feel so as though your sins are too heavy? Allah's forgiveness is also all-encompassing. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: “*Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, says, ‘O son of Adam, as long as you call on Me, I shall forgive you of what you have done, and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, even if your sins were to reach up to the clouds in the sky, and then you were to ask for My forgiveness, I would forgive you and think nothing of it. O son of Adam, even if you were to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth, and then you were to meet Me after death, not worshiping anything besides Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as the earth.’*” [Tirmidhi]

Allah (swt) tells us in Surat *at-Tawba*:

“And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.” (Qur'an, [9:118](#))

The description in this verse is so apt. It speaks about the three companions who abandoned the Muslims in their time of need, how they regretted it and how they felt like the earth was closing in on them, and that their souls were confined. But what happened? There is no refuge from God except to Him. And Allah (swt) accepted them. That constriction that they felt was released. They could breathe. Allah's vastness allows you to breathe.

Allah (swt) is all-encompassing when you ask Him. Sheikh Akram Nadwi once said (paraphrased): “If you were to ask me for a penny, how hard would it be for me to give it you? It would be like giving nothing. When you ask Allah (swt), what you are asking of Him is even less to Him than that one penny is to me.” So do not confine Allah to what you think He can give. Remember that He is limitless.

And there is another meaning here. Allah's religion is vast. We all have things that are obligatory upon us—such prayer, fasting and good character—but beyond that, we have all been given different talents and passions. We are told of so many different ways to come to Allah (swt): smiling,¹ helping others,² being an honest business person,³ even simply having good intentions.⁴ This religion is for you. You can contribute in your own way.

Once, Imam Malik was rebuked in a letter for wearing nice clothes. He was told that he should spend his time fasting during the day

and praying during the night. Aside from the fact that wearing nice clothes does not preclude one from extra praying and fasting, Imam Malik responded in the most beautiful way. He wrote back to the person that Allah (swt) has apportioned acts of worship like He apportioned sustenance. And Allah may have put a deep love of voluntary fasting and prayers in the heart of the author of the letter, but Allah (swt) had also put love in Imam Malik's heart for learning and teaching. And in all is good.

So connect to Allah (swt) with the obligatory, and then use what inspires you from the permissible to go deeper into that love. Just remember that He is vast, and so is His religion. He will accept you. In His mercy, there is enough space for you, with all of your mistakes. There is enough space for your talent. We all have things that are required of us, such as prayer. But Allah is all-encompassing and boundless, He accepts our own journey to Him. You do not have to be the scholar, but you can if you want. You can be the honored cleaner of the mosque. You can be the one in your family that always brings people together. You can be the person known for his or her integrity. You can be like Uways al-Qarni, who was "unknown to the people on earth, but well-known to those in the heavens" because of his sincerity. Those are all beautiful paths to God.

So what is your way to Allah (swt)?

Breathe. You are with *Al-Waasi`*. And His Vastness will embrace you.

1. "Your smile for your brother is charity." Tirmidhi
2. "Allah will aid a servant [of His] so long as the servant aids his brother." Muslim
3. "May Allah's mercy be on him who is lenient in his buying, selling, and in demanding back his money." Bukhari
4. "A person to whom Allah grants knowledge but He does not grant him wealth, but he is sincere in his intention and says: If I had wealth, I would do the same as So and so does. He will be rewarded according to his intention and their reward will be the same." Ahmad

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ

When The Delivery Is Late: Knower Of The Unseen And The Witnessed

As human beings, we usually act upon what we know. For the things that we do not know, we try to make educated guesses (or not). But there is also a realm that we do not know at all—the realm of *al-ghayb* (the unseen).

Previously, we learn about Allah's Names *al-'Aleem* (the All-Knowing) and *al-Hakeem* (the Most Wise). We learned that Allah knows every single thing—what is, what was and what will be; what could have been and what could be—and acts with the Ultimate Wisdom. Today, it is about Allah's Attributes of "*`aalim al-ghayb wal-shahaadah*"—the Knower of the Unseen and the Witnessed. Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) tells us:

"He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful." (Qur'an, [59:22](#))

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi teaches us that everything that falls under our senses is the realm of the witnessed; those things that we can touch, hear, see, taste and smell. Other things that fall within this realm are those things whose effects we witness: for example, we cannot see electricity. But when we switch on the lights, we see

the effects of that electricity.

As for the world of the unseen, Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi says that it is of two types. The first type is only known by Allah (swt). That which is only known by Allah is hidden from us, or He can choose to reveal parts of it; for example, Allah tells us there are Angels. They are in the unseen realm, but we know of their existence because Allah told us. The second type is something that moves from the unseen realm to that of the witnessed. Allah (swt) tells us:

“Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs lose [prematurely] or exceed. And everything with Him is by due measure. [He is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Grand, the Exalted.” (Qur’an, [13:8-9](#))

At the beginning of pregnancy, we do not know what a woman carries in her womb. It is in the unseen. But it moves from the unseen world to that of the witnessed. Allah (swt) then tells us:

“It is the same [to Him] concerning you whether one conceals [his] speech or one publicizes it and whether one is hidden by night or conspicuous [among others] by day.” (Qur’an, [13:10](#))

Imam Suhaib once said, “I got 99 problems, and Allah has Ninety-Nine Names to help me with them”. I truly felt the impact of Allah being the Knower of the Unseen a few weeks ago, when I came home really tired. I was not in the mood to cook, so I decided to order food online.

I had ordered on that website before. Once you pay, a circle appears with 6 boxes that get ticked off as they get done. The order roughly was: “processing payment”, “transferring to restaurant”, “waiting for restaurant to accept order”, “preparing food”, “food on its way”, “delivered!”

After the first two boxes were ticked, it stopped at “waiting for restaurant to accept order”, and it stayed there for a while. This part sometimes takes some time, and as it was Saturday night, I was kind of expecting it. Anyway, I waited and waited, but it did not get ticked off. I started to do things in the meanwhile. I came back and it was still in the same place. Grr. Why did I order food on a Saturday night? Should I just cancel the order?

Suddenly my doorbell rang. When I answered, it was the delivery guy. It actually only took 30 minutes from when I placed the order. The restaurant people had just forgotten to update that page.

This might seem like such a silly example, but I truly felt that Allah is *al-Lateef* (the Subtle and Kind) and *‘Aalim al-Ghayb wal-Shahadah*.

That 30-minute experience is like a microcosm of life. We focus on the frustrating thing in front of us thinking that because we cannot see it move or change, nothing is happening. So we react out of our impatience, and feel justified in our anger. But in the unseen world, and in places we have no knowledge of, things are happening.

So just because things are moving slow in front of you—or maybe not moving at all—despite your efforts, remember that whatever Allah (swt) has written will pass. If something is written for you, no one can stop it. And if it is not, it will never befall you. You might want to give up, you might want to leave, but remember just because you cannot see the change in front of you, it does not mean that things are not moving forward.

And maybe, if you are patient enough, the delivery guy will surprise you by coming at an unexpected time.

Indeed, *“That is the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Exalted in Might, the Merciful,”* (Qur’an, [32:6](#)).

الْبَاعِثُ

When We Are Raised Again

We have arrived at our 45th article on the Names of Allah, and our 58th Name. Do you feel closer to Allah *subhana-hu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He)? Do you feel more able to turn to Him? Do you feel like you can see the manifestations of Allah's attributes in your day-to-day? This series is not meant merely as an academic study on the Names of Allah; its aim is to know enough about each Name to be able to connect to Him, to be able to effect change; and to understand the purpose behind certain things.

I hope that we can all return to those Names again and reflect on them. And please, feel free to share how you feel you connected.

Previously, we talked about Allah (swt) being the Giver of Life and the Life-Taker, how these Names are manifested, and what we can learn from them. Absolute certainty in those Names brings us to this Name of Allah: *Al-Ba`ith*: the Resurrector, the Raiser of the Dead.

Resurrection and Accountability

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

“And [that they may know] that the Hour is coming – no doubt about it – and that Allah will resurrect [yab`ath] those in the graves.” (Qur’an, [22:7](#))

Ba`th (from the root ب-ع-ث) literally means to awaken, to raise up or to send. So it would be said:

بعث الناقة أثارها، بعث فلاناً من نومه أيقظه، البعث بعث الجنود إلى الغزو

“Ba`th of a camel means to excite it/wake it, Ba`th of someone from his sleep means to wake him up, and ba`th of the armies means to send them forward to battle.”

For people who question whether we can really be raised up again, Allah (swt) asks in the Qur’an:

“Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth and did not fail in their creation, is able to give life to the dead? Yes. Indeed, He is over all things competent.” (Qur’an, [46:33](#))

Is it more difficult to create something from nothing, or to bring something already in existence back to life?

So what does this mean for us?

Two things: purpose and accountability.

It is easy to forget that we will be raised again, and we may wander aimlessly not knowing what to do with our lives. But knowing that we will be raised up should infuse new meaning into the things that we do. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an:

“Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?” (Qur’an, [23:115](#))

So we can ask ourselves, what am I going to present to Allah (swt)? What is the thing—or things—that we will say to Allah (swt), “My Lord, I tried to do good, I did this, for you”? Let us take a lesson from the mother of Maryam `alayha as-salaam (peace be upon her) when she said to Allah (swt):

“My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.” (Qur’an, [3:35](#))

But what if we do not know what to give for Allah?

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi says that another meaning of ba`th is that Allah sends to or inspires His servants to do good. So when you are feeling the urge to do something good, act upon it; do not delay it. In our short series on “[Seeing the World in a Different Way](#)”, we gave tips on [how to attach a sincere intention](#) and meaning into the things that we do.

The second related point of feeling the effect of Allah (swt) being al-Ba`ith is that of accountability. There is a certain mantra going around of “this is who I am, accept it”. This might be a good attitude sometimes, for example, if you want people to accept your interests or certain qualities that you have. This shouldn’t be the attitude that we have with regards to blameworthy qualities, such as a bad temper. As Muslims, we must constantly be evolving for the better. This is what our beloved Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) taught his Companions. When they made a mistake, he taught them, and they pledged to change.

In the story in Surat al-Qalam, Allah (swt) tells us about the people of the garden who wanted to take all of the harvest for themselves and left nothing for the poor. So Allah (swt) caused the garden to burn down. The amazing thing is that they realized their mistake. They said:

‘They said, “Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, we were wrongdoers.”

Then they approached one another, blaming each other.

They said, “O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors. Perhaps our Lord will substitute for us [one] better than it. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous.”’ (Qur’an, [68:28-32](#))

They realized their mistake, took responsibility and moved towards their Lord. They did not try to justify what they did; rather, they became better because they learned from their mistake, and never lost hope in Allah (swt).

Sending of a Messenger

Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“And We certainly sent [ba`athna] into every nation a messenger [...].” (Qur’an, [16:36](#))

The beloved Prophet ﷺ was sent to us as a mercy and a teacher. And he was sent to all of us as the best example. Most importantly, he was sent from Allah (swt), the One who cares about us the most.

So when we speak of purpose, we need to look at the things that the Prophet ﷺ encouraged. He taught us that the seemingly small things matter, and the thing that matters most is your intention. He told us of the lofty station of the woman who used to clean the mosque, the high status of those who spent from their wealth in charity, the closeness to him of the person who supports an orphan, and the greatness of the deed of removing harmful things from people’s path. Being connected to the Prophet ﷺ and following his way no doubt connects us to *al-Ba`ith*.

How to Come to Life with this Name

1. ***Have purpose:*** Remember where you are going, and that indeed you are going somewhere. Make every moment count. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an: “O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow – and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (Qur’an, [59:18](#))
2. ***Hold yourself to account:*** It is reported that Omar bin al-Khat-tab, the companion of the Prophet ﷺ, said: “Hold yourself to account before you are held to account, for that is better for your accounts. And weigh yourselves before you are weighed, and prepare yourselves for a day when ‘you will be exhibited [for judgement]; not hidden among you is anything concealed.”
3. ***Study the life of the Prophet ﷺ:*** If you find that you are running low on inspiration, study the life of the Prophet ﷺ. His life and character provide the blueprint for our own lives.
4. ***Lift people up with knowledge:*** Al-Ghazali counsels: “The truth of the resurrection refers to bringing the dead to life by creating them once more. Ignorance is the greatest death and knowledge the noblest life. God—may He be praised and exalted—mentioned knowledge and ignorance in His holy book, and called them life and death. Whoever lifts another out of ignorance to knowledge has already created him anew and revived him to a blessed life. And should a man have a way of conveying knowledge to people and calling them to the Most High that would be a kind of revivification, and such would be the level of prophets and the scholars who are their heirs.” (Al-Ghazali, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*)

الحَسْبُ

Allah Is Sufficient

A sixteen-year-old boy was put in front of a fire. The fire was so huge that he had to be placed into a catapult in order to be thrown from a safe distance. This boy was the Prophet Abraham *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him), whose people wanted to burn him alive because he challenged their views on God and their way of life. Before he was thrown in, he said the following words with a heart full of conviction:

“Hasbuna Allah wa ni`m al-wakeel.”

“Sufficient is Allah for us, and He is the best Trustee.”

[Bukhari]

And then:

*“Allah said, ‘O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham.’
And they intended for him harm, but We made them the greatest
losers.”*

(Qur’an, [21:69-70](#))

We might have all had small—or great—moments, when we’ve faced something unbelievably difficult, and yet our hearts have been calm. That calmness came from knowing that Allah is there,

no matter what. It came from knowing that the ultimate source of everything is Allah, and only He gives and takes away. And it came from knowing Allah is sufficient because everything is from Him.

The feeling of “I have Allah, and I have all I need.”

We might have been lucky enough to have felt the same conviction that Allah describes in this verse:

“Those to whom hypocrites said, ‘Indeed, the people have gathered against you, so fear them.’ But it [merely] increased them in faith, and they said, ‘Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best Disposer of affairs.’” (Qur’an, [3:173](#))

In the verse above, we are told of those people who were told to fear because people had gathered against them. Instead of fearing, they said that Allah is sufficient for them and He is the best Disposer of Affairs. The next verse explains what happens:

“So they returned with favor from Allah and bounty, no harm having touched them. And they pursued the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.” (Qur’an, [3:174](#))

Those words, said by Abraham (as) and the believers described in the verse, are given to us to say every morning and evening. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said whoever says:

حسبي الله لا اله الا هو عليه توكلت وهو رب العرش العظيم

Hasby Allah, la ilaha ila huwa, `alayhi tawakalt wa huwa Rabb al-`arsh al-`adheem

‘Sufficient is Allah for me, in Him I put my trust and He is the Lord of the formidable throne’, seven times in the morning and evening, Allah will spare him what worries him. [Abu Dawud]

When explaining this statement, we usually focus on Allah’s Name *al-Wakeel*—the Trustee—and then we learn about *tawakkul* (relying on Allah). But that only accounts for the second half of the statement. The first half tells us that Allah is sufficient for us. *Al-Haseeb* is one of Allah’s Names. This Name comes from the root h-s-b (ح-س-ب). It means to count, calculate or to be sufficient.

As al-Ghazali says: “*Al-Haseeb* is the one who suffices, for He is all one needs who belongs to Him.” In another version: “He is of such a nature that when one has His blessing, one has everything.”

This Name reminds us where to place our trust and our hope. It reminds us that there is no scarcity with Him. It reminds us that if we have God, we have everything. `Umar bin al-Khattab *radi allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) is reported to have said that when he was faced with a calamity, he would thank God that the calamity was not in his religion. He valued his relationship with God because he knew that with Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) he could face whatever hardship came to him. Being with Allah meant that he could see beyond the hardship, and indeed even see the blessing within it.

Knowing that Allah is sufficient—that He is *al-Haseeb*—should empower us. But we should not misunderstand; it does not mean that we should not seek help from worldly means. If we are going through, for example, depression, we should find a trained therapist to help us. Knowing that Allah is *al-Haseeb* is knowing that these remedies are ultimately from Him and He has provided them for us. So if we feel better, we thank Allah (swt) and thank the therapist. We know that it is Allah who has created the means by which the therapist was able to help us. Remember that it is the Prophet ﷺ who taught us to:

“Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease,

namely old age.” (Abu Dawud)

When we truly internalize that Allah is *al-Haseeb*, we are able to shed whatever internal shackles we have that are holding us back. We are able to act because we know that everything is in His Hands, and not in the hands of people. Allah suffices those who trust in Him, and in order for our trust to be true, we need to work with the means that we have. And if we are truly without any means, knowing that Allah is *al-Haseeb* is not despairing.

The Prophet ﷺ was the greatest embodiment of this. He planned everything to the minutest detail. We know that when he escaped Makkah, he left at night, and he let Ali bin Abi Taleb (may God be pleased with him) sleep in his bed as a decoy to buy time. He hid with Abu Bakr in the Cave of Thawr while the people of Qureish were fast on their heels. In those moments in the cave, Abu Bakr was worried that Qureish would find them. And the Prophet ﷺ said to him: “Do not be sad, Allah is with us.” That is one who knows that Allah is Sufficient.

He who Accounts for everything

Allah says in the Qur’an:

“And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet [in return] with one better than it or [at least] return it [in a like manner]. Indeed, Allah is ever, over all things, an Accountant (haseeba).” (Qur’an, [4:86](#))

Allah (swt) tells us that He also *haseeb* over everything, meaning He accounts for everything, even the tiniest of deeds. We sometimes make the mistake of belittling our deeds, whether good or bad. We belittle a sin because it is small, or think that doing a small good deed does not amount to anything. But Islam accounts for both the micro and the macro. Yes, we should try to do amazing great things and avoid the greatest sins. But we also do the small

deeds that people might find insignificant, that are nonetheless appreciated and loved by Allah. And we try to avoid the so-called ‘minor’ sins, because as a scholar said, ‘Mountains are made up of small stones.’ Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (Qur’an, [99:7-8](#))

Connecting to Allah with this Name

1. *Connect your intention to Him*

Al-Ghazali states: “Indeed the religious fruit from this for a man is that God alone suffices for him, in connection with his intention and his will, so that he wants only God – great and glorious.”

2. *Remember that Allah is the source and trust in Him*

Al-Ghazali also says: “Do not imagine that when you need food, drink, earth, sky, sun, or the like, that you need something other than Him, or that He is not all you need. He is the one who supplies all you need by creating food and drink, heaven and earth, so He is all you need.”

3. *Do not belittle what is seen as small*

The Prophet ﷺ said, “*Do not belittle any good deed, even meeting your brother with a cheerful face,*” [Muslim]. Those small things add up, and your intention can magnify the seemingly small deeds.

4. *Take yourself to account*

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr stated that knowing that Allah counts all of our deeds should inspire us to be vigilant over ourselves, and guard against the major and minor sins.

الْعَدْلُ

How Far Does Your Justice Go?

There is a story in the Qur'an that we are seldom told about. Before revealing the *ayah* (verse), let us understand the context in which it was revealed. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) had lived in Madina for about two years before this incident occurred. The situation in Madina was very different to Makkah, as were the demographics. There were two tribes—al-Aws and al-Khazraj—as well as hypocrites, and three Jewish tribes. Al-Aws and al-Khazraj had a troubled history. Though they accepted Islam, tensions sometimes flared between them.

A man from al-Aws named Rafa' bin Nu'man was awarded a shield of armor from a battle in which they were victorious. Armor was considered precious at that time as not many people were able to acquire it. But two days later, his armor was stolen. Rafa's cousin, Qatada, said that he saw a man named Ta'ma bin Ubayriq steal the armor. Ta'ma was from Khazraj, and he was a new Muslim.

To ascertain the truth, the Prophet ﷺ sent people to look in Ta'ma's house. The armor was not there. People from the tribe of Khazraj said that it was a Jewish man who stole the armor. So they went and checked in his house, and found it buried in the backyard. The Prophet ﷺ was mad at Qatada. How could he accuse

someone, and a Muslim no less, of theft?

In any case it seemed that the matter was solved. The Muslims prayed `Isha (evening prayer) together.

But something happened. Allah, *subhanahu wa ta`ala*, sent the Angel Gabriel to the Prophet ﷺ to declare that the Jewish man was innocent, and it was indeed Ta'ma who stole the armor. Allah (swt) revealed in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate.

And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.

And do not argue on behalf of those who deceive themselves. Indeed, Allah loves not one who is a habitually sinful deceiver.

They conceal [their evil intentions and deeds] from the people, but they cannot conceal [them] from Allah, and He is with them [in His knowledge] when they spend the night in such as He does not accept of speech. And ever is Allah, of what they do, encompassing.

Here you are – those who argue on their behalf in [this] worldly life – but who will argue with Allah for them on the Day of Resurrection, or who will [then] be their representative?

And whoever does a wrong or wrongs himself but then seeks forgiveness of Allah will find Allah Forgiving and Merciful.

And whoever commits a sin only earns it against himself. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.

But whoever earns an offense or a sin and then blames it on an innocent [person] has taken upon himself a slander and manifest sin.

And if it was not for the favor of Allah upon you, [O Muhammad], and His mercy, a group of them would have determined to mislead you. But they do not mislead except themselves, and they will not harm you at all. And Allah has revealed to you the Book and wisdom and has taught you that which you did not know. And ever has the favor of Allah upon you been great." (Qur'an, [4:105-113](#))

Ta'ma had stolen the armor. He told some of his relatives, and they all conspired with him to protect him. But Allah (swt) knows all. And Allah, *al-`Adl*, revealed these verses before fajr (morning prayer) so that the Prophet ﷺ could declare it after prayers.

The Jewish man did not accept Islam. This is important to point out. Allah is *al-`Adl*, and He is the Most Just. He commands us to be just for the sake of it, not for the reason to convert people to Islam. *Da`wah* (inviting people to Islam) is important, but justice is established because Allah (swt) commands us to do so.

Allah is *al-`Adl*

This story highlights to us Allah's justice. The issue was not about tribes, or Muslims vs. non-Muslims. Allah's justice is true justice; it does not favor any 'group'—only the group that establishes His justice. Indeed, this is why one of Allah's Names is *al-`Adl*, and according to an-Nabulsi, it is a Name that the entire *ummah* (Muslim community) agrees upon. While we touched briefly upon this Name in a previous article, we will go into detail here. *`Adl* comes from the root *`a-d-l* (ج-د-ل) which means to make something upright; it is the opposite of transgression. Al-Ghazali explains to us *Al-`Adl* means "one who is Just, and He is one from whom just action emanates, the opposite of injustice and oppression."

We see manifestations of Allah’s justice both in this world and the Next. That said, not everything will see the justice that we expect in this world, or in the time that we want. We might live to see the demise of the Pharaoh, and we might not. But at the same time, while it might seem that the person committing the injustice has ‘won’, we need to look beyond the superficial. We do not know what Allah (swt) has written for the unjust after he dies, nor do we know what spiritual nourishment this person has been denied because of his transgressions. Moreover, when it comes to injustice, we need to reflect inwardly. We sometimes fail to uphold our covenant to Him. Allah (swt) has commanded us to be just, but we do not act in such a way. We allow those small transgressions in our daily lives, and only complain when something affects us. This can even be at the lowest of levels; do we believe rumors about people without being absolutely certain about the evidence? Do you give people the chance to explain themselves?

A Muslims, as servants of *al-`Adl*, we can never ever give up on striving for justice on all levels. Allah (swt) in the Qur’an says:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.” (Qur’an, [5:8](#))

Ibn Taymiya is even reported to have said that Allah (swt) will protect a just nation even if it were not Muslim, and He would bring down an unjust nation even if it were Muslim. So crucial is the principle of justice to our faith that Allah (swt) also says:

“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. So follow not [personal] inclination, lest you not be just. And if you distort [your testimony] or refuse [to give it], then indeed Allah is

ever, with what you do, Acquainted.” (Qur’an, [4:135](#))

Allah tells us to uphold justice even if it were against our families or even our own selves. When we understand that Allah (swt) has Named Himself the Most Just, it should reassure our hearts that even if we do not see justice now, there will be justice eventually. Moreover, it should push us to strive to establish justice, because we are servants of the Most Just.

Connecting to this Name

1. *Commit yourself to justice*

Justice is at many levels, and true submission to the Most Just is to work for justice at all levels:

- *With yourself:* Al-Ghazali states that justice concerning yourself means to put your “passion and anger under the guidance of reason and religion; for as soon as he puts reason in the service of passion and anger, he will certainly commit injustice.” Every time we transgress—by crossing the limits of Allah—we harm ourselves. Even if we do not see the immediate effects, these things affect us spiritually. So be just with yourself.
- *With your family:* We know that charity starts at home, but so does justice. We cannot be unjust to our siblings, abusive towards our spouse, or unfair in the treatment of our children, and claim to be servants of the Most Just.
- *With your community:* The Prophet ﷺ told us, “*The believer who mixes with people and patiently bears their annoyance will have a greater reward than the believer who does not mix with people and patiently bear their annoyance,*” (Tirmidhi). It may sometimes be disheartening to deal with a community that only gives lip service to the principles of justice, but this is Islam: to strive for justice when it is most difficult; to con-

tinually improve; and be just not only to humans, but to the environment and to the animals. It applies as much to the rejection of gossip as it does to establish equitable mosques where all members of the congregation are respected.

- With the wider society: As we have heard many times, justice is not “just us”. The Prophet ﷺ stood with the oppressed in his society before they became Muslim. He ﷺ was witness to a treaty when he was young that guaranteed the rights of the weak, and said that if Quraish had offered to sign such a treaty with him, he would accept.
- For Allah (swt): Being committed to justice at all these levels for the sake of Allah (swt) means that we cannot transgress. We do not choose our ‘group’ over others. Allah is the Truth and the Most Just, and thus we need to seek Truth and Justice in all our interactions, even if it were against ourselves.

2. *Always remain hopeful*

When you see a situation that is unjust and feel helpless to change it, remember that Allah (swt) is the source of justice. Nothing passes without His knowledge and there will be ultimate justice.

3. *Be certain that He is the Most Just*

Al-Ghazali says, “Man’s religious gain from his believing that God—great and glorious—is just lies in not taking objection to Him in His plan, His decree and all of His actions, whether they correspond to his will or not. For all that is just: it is as it should be and how it should be.” Al-Ghazali reminds us that sometimes we do not know the alternative to what seems to be a big injustice. Indeed, He (swt) knows the unseen.

4. *Be Merciful*

Just like, when it comes to our sins, we like for Allah (swt) to deal with us with His Mercy rather than justice, so should we be merciful with people’s slights against us and in covering their sins, as long as they are not harming others.

May we be of those who stand for justice for all, even if it were against our own selves.

الضَّالُّ النَّافِعُ

Seeing Beyond: He Who Harms, He Who Benefits

The youth destroyed all of the idols, bar one – the largest one. When his people came back from their celebrations, they were shocked to see that their idols were destroyed. They said, “Who has done this to our gods? Indeed, he is of the wrong-doers.” They had heard that a young man named Abraham had mentioned their idols, so they summoned him. Then they questioned him, but he told them to ask the remaining idol who had done this.

They replied to him, “You have already known that these do not speak!”

He said, “*Then do you worship instead of Allah that which does not benefit you at all or harm you?* [Qur’an, [58:65-66](#)]

The Prophet Abraham *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) did not only physically destroy their idols. He reminded them of something they already knew: that which they worshipped could not harm them or benefit them. Only Allah could.

We might think that we are far removed from this example. We do not bow down to concrete things we have made ourselves; that

would be absurd. But in our own way, we do. We may worship money, status or our own desires, believing them to be the true sources of harm and benefit. And we favor them over Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He).

Yet the reality is that Allah is *al-Dar, al-Nafi`*: The One who Harms, the One who Benefits.

There are two different aspects to these Names:

1. He is the Only One who can truly harm or benefit us.

This is an important point. Often we live our lives only seeing what is in front of us; that is, we might behave a certain way because we believe that this is the way that we will benefit in this world and avoid being harmed. It is natural for us to want to live the best lives we possibly can.

The problem is when we see what is in front of us as the source of benefit and harm and so we choose it over Allah (swt).

Take the example of Qarun. He was a rising star of Bani Israel (the tribe of Israel), and he became unbelievably wealthy. We are told in the Qur'an that the keys to his treasures were too much for people to carry, let alone the actual treasures themselves! His wealth started to get to him. His people tried to advise and remind him of the ultimate source of benefit and harm:

"...Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant. But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters," (Qur'an, [28:76-77](#)).

They reminded him that what he had was from Allah (swt), and

that he should use it to do good. But Qarun did not listen. On the contrary, he attributed the good to himself and saw that money in and of itself was a source of benefit. He said, *"...I was only given it because of knowledge I have,"* (Qur'an, [28:78](#)).

Money can only benefit you if Allah (swt) blesses it. Qarun used his money for corruption and was arrogant in attributing the good to himself. Eventually he was swallowed by the earth. Allah (swt) then tells us:

"And those who had wished for his position the previous day began to say, 'Oh, how Allah extends provision to whom He wills of His servants and restricts it! If not that Allah had conferred favor on us, He would have caused it to swallow us. Oh, how the disbelievers do not succeed,'" (Qur'an, [28:82](#))

The people who thought that Qarun had it all because of his wealth realized that the material was never the source of benefit.

2. He Harms to Benefit

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi made two important points with regards to these names of Allah (swt). Firstly, we know these names because they are mentioned in a very famous hadith that lists the names of Allah (swt), but this hadith is weak. Some have disagreed that Allah (swt)'s Name could be "*al-Dar*" because Allah never harms for the sake of harming, and that a superficial understanding of this name would be at odds with His attributes of mercy and justice. However, the meaning of these names could be correct if we understand it in the way mentioned above (that the ultimate benefit and harm is with Allah, and not creation).

Secondly, if we accept that these are indeed of His names, then these two must be mentioned together. We cannot just say *al-Dar*; it is *al-Dar, an-Nafi`*. This is because if Allah (swt) decrees

what appears to be harm, it is only to ultimately benefit and for a wisdom that He knows.

We have mentioned before in this series the story of the people of the garden, who plot to take all of the harvest from their garden and leave nothing for the poor. Their father had been a righteous man who allowed the poor and needy to take from the garden, and when he passed away, his sons intended to stop this practice. When Allah (swt) destroyed their garden, it caused them to return to Him. Had Allah (swt) allowed them to do what they intended, they may never have returned to Allah (swt). Indeed, it might have affirmed in their mind that what truly benefits them is having all of the fruit in the garden and denying the poor. They might have believed that ultimate good was in the material, no matter the cost of getting it. The ‘harm’ they went through brought them ultimate benefit: returning to Allah and rectifying their actions. They said in the end:

“O woe to us; indeed we were transgressors. Perhaps our Lord will substitute for us [one] better than it. Indeed, we are toward our Lord desirous,” (Qur’an, [68:31-32](#))

How we can relate to these names

1. *Make the right choice.*

When making a choice, remember who is the ultimate Source of harm and benefit. Choosing an unethical path or a temporary pleasure because we believe that is what will benefit us means that we believe more in the promise of *Shaytan* (Satan) rather than in God’s promise. *Shaytan* promises us poverty and orders us to immorality. This immorality is what makes us in essence impoverished, though it may give us a temporary sense of benefit and pleasure. Even if we flourish financially, our spiritual light is extinguished. One thing leads to another, and the inner

sight—the *baseera*—is affected. We are then unable to see beyond the material. Fear of people becomes greater than the fear of God. And then there is the downward spiral.

But Allah (swt) promises us forgiveness and true salvation in this life and the next. He promises that those in His path will be taken care of by Him. Indeed, He is the Source of Peace.

2. *See beyond.*

When Bilal *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him) was being tortured for believing in One God, he was able to stay strong. He knew the torment was temporary, and that Allah (swt) was the ultimate source of benefit. He knew that in reality, they could not harm him, at least not in the long-term and most definitely not in the next life. And he was able to remain steadfast.

So even if it appears that you have you lost, remember that the ultimate benefit is *Jannah* (Paradise), which you are moving closer towards *insha’Allah* (God-willing), and the ultimate harm is the Hellfire. Whatever thing it seems you have lost, remember that you are actually moving closer *Jannah* when you make the right choice and see things as they are and not how they appear to be.

المُقَدِّرُ الْمَوْجِبُ

When The Timing Isn't 'Right': He Who
Brings Forward, He Who Delays

I knew a wonderful woman who was in her mid-thirties. She was not married, and absolutely loved children; she also loved Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) with a passion. I never heard her complain, but only saw her doing good. I met her the day she completed her memorization of the Qur'an. Shortly after, I started memorizing with her, and she corrected my *tajweed* (pronunciation). I then left to complete my studies, and we kept in touch via WhatsApp. She started teaching Qur'an at the mosque near her house, then shortly after, got engaged and then married. She now has two children.

What some might have seen as a 'delay' in her marriage was a delay from the Most High. She was able to do what would have been infinitely more difficult had she been married with kids, and she is now a memorizer and teacher of Qur'an, which she will also be able to teach her children. In whatever situation Allah put her, she made the best of it.

Another person I know is married, but she and her husband are undergoing treatment as they cannot have children. It is a painful thing to see as they both want kids so much, but the beautiful thing is that this hardship has brought them so much closer

together. I can feel her love for her husband radiate in how she speaks about him, and their mutual support for one another. They have been married for quite a few years now, and while I have seen other people experience tension in their marriages or even boredom, with this friend, I have only seen their love and closeness increasing.

Even in this delay, beauty is apparent. The couple's relationship with one another would not have been as strong without this test, and they are both closer to Allah (swt) as a result. Whether they eventually have kids or not – and may Allah bless them with righteous healthy children – they gained something in their relationship that makes them better spouses and will make them better parents, *insha'Allah* (God willing).

At other times, something might come to us when we feel we are not ready, and we wish it would be delayed! But it comes to us at the time that we need to step it up. Allah (swt) brings it forward for a reason: we can handle it.

That is Allah, *al-Muqaddim al-Mu'akhir*; He who brings forward and He who delays. This Name appears in the following supplication of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him):

اللهم اغفر لي ما قدمت وما أخرت، وما أسررت وما أعلنت، وما أنت أعلم به مني،
أنت المقدم وأنت المؤخر، لا إله إلا أنت

“O Allah! Forgive my past and future sins and whatever I have done in secret, and whatever I have done in public, and what You are more knowledgeable of than I. You are The One Who brings forward and Who delays, there is no deity worthy of worship but You”. (Muslim)

I was taught another beautiful *du`a'* (supplication) attributed to the Prophet ﷺ:

“O Allah, make me content with Your decree, so that I may not love to hasten what You have delayed, or delay what You have hastened.” (Tabarani)

Sheikh Muhammad an-Najdi made a beautiful point about the Prophet Joseph *`alayhi salaam* (peace be upon him) when it comes to 'delays'. When Joseph (as) was in jail, he was considered the best person even by those who shared his cell. They said to him, *“Indeed, we see you to be of those who do good,”* (Qur'an, [12:36](#)). Yet even though he was better than them, he remained in jail for longer; his release was 'delayed'. The first cellmate was released and went on to become a servant; the second was executed. When Joseph (as) was finally released many years later, he became a Minister and was reunited with his family.

So if you ever feel that your dreams are delayed, and everyone else seems to be moving forward, just remember the example of Joseph (as). Stay true to Allah (swt) and to yourself and remember that *“Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of the doers of good,”* (Qur'an [9:120](#)). Indeed, He is *al-Muqaddim*, *al-Mu'akhir*; the One who brings forward and the One who delays.

The Promoter, the Delayer

The root for *al-Muqaddim* is q-d-m (ق-د-م) which can mean to precede and also to put at the front. The word for 'foot' in Arabic is 'qadam', as our feet move forward when we walk. *Al-Mu'akhir* comes from the root a-kh-r (أ-خ-ر), which has the opposite meaning: to postpone or to go back.

Thus al-Ghazali says about these Names that Allah (swt) is “the one who brings close and who pushes away, and whomever He brings close He promotes, while those He pushes away He banishes.” Thus those who strive to come close to God, He brings them forward before anyone else.

Moreover, Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi teaches that Allah (swt) might give people things in terms of wealth or intelligence whereby it appears that they are promoted. Most of us have been given something, but these things should not delude us into thinking that we have been preferred because of them. Rather, look to your heart and actions.

Connecting to these Names:

- *Trust in Allah's timing and do the best where you are*

We do not know what is in the unseen world, and thus we do not know the things that will be delayed and the things that will be hastened. The key is to trust in Allah's timing, and make the best of wherever you are put, as in the first two examples presented in this article. However, knowing these Names of Allah (swt) should not cause us to be lazy; sometimes delays may simply occur because we are not working hard, so we have to strike a balance between action and trust in Allah (swt).

- *Remember that Allah (swt) has given all of us good, and Allah (swt) brings forward those who do good*

If someone seems to be promoted because of their wealth or another because of his intelligence, remember that Allah (swt) has given each of us something. We should be grateful for and appreciate His gifts, and we should remember, as Ghazali says, that truly "the one promoted with respect to God, Most High, is the one brought close to Him [muqarrab]." As the Prophet ﷺ said: "Whoever is slowed by his deeds will not be hastened forward by his lineage." (Muslim)

- *Bring forward the good and delay the bad*

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr said that one of the fruits of knowing Allah's attributes of bringing forward and delaying is that we should strive to 'bring forward' our good deeds, meaning hasten to them, and that we should at the very least put off something bad, with the aim to forgo doing it entirely.

القَرِيبُ

Closer To You Than Yourself

“And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein.” [Qur’an [50:16](#)]

Some relationships change with distance. Sometimes those people who are supposed to be close to us don’t know us at all. And some relationships are temporary.

Sometimes you want to tell someone something, but the words get stuck in your throat. They might misunderstand. They might not know where you are coming from. They might get mad.

At other times, the fear of being hurt prevents us from being close to people. We have been hurt and disappointed before, so why should this time be any different?

Is there anyone to whom we can be close– truly close?

Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) says in the Qur’an:

“And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me – indeed I am Qareeb [near].” [Quran, [2:186](#)]

For all those times you have wondered whether Allah (swt) is near or far, Allah doesn't use an intermediary to answer this question. He does not tell the Prophet (ﷺ), "tell them". He answers you directly in the verse above: "I am near."

For all those times you have wondered whether Allah (swt) hears you, He answers: "*Indeed, He is Hearing and near,*" [Quran [34:50](#)].

For all those times you have wondered if He has heard the silent *du`a`* (supplication) of your heart, He answers: "*Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive,*" [Quran [11:61](#)].

Sometimes even our best friend does not understand what we are going through. Allah (swt) is so close to us He hears our thoughts, our reflections, our unuttered questions and our secret *du`a`*. There may even be times when we have thought of something we want, but never ask for it. And somehow, Allah (swt) gives it to us. There may be times when we do not even know what we want, and yet somehow we get that thing we need, sent by the Most High.

Because is He is near – *al-Qareeb*.

Allah (swt) is with you

One of the fruits of being close to someone is feeling safe and understood. And if you have ever felt lonely, Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an, "*and He is with you wherever you are,*" [Quran [57:4](#)].

We might all know this on a theoretical level, but it is hard to actually manifest that understanding. And we are not alone in this. The Prophet Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) knew how close Allah is – he even spoke to Allah (swt) – but it took him a while to get to the point of acting in accordance with that knowledge. When Allah (swt) first told Moses (as) to throw his

staff and it turned into a snake, Moses (as) was so freaked out that "*he turned in flight and did not return,*" [Quran [27:10](#)].

Next, when Moses (as) challenged the magicians, they threw their sticks; when the sticks started to move, he felt afraid and "*sensed within himself apprehension,*" [Quran [20:67](#)]. He was stronger than before, and did not run away, but he still did not feel 100% safe.

Finally, Moses (as) encountered his most dangerous situation. He fled from Pharaoh and his army with the Bani Israel, who despaired and said, "*Indeed, we are to be overtaken!*" But Moses (as) replied with certainty, "*No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me,*" [Quran [2:62](#)].

It was a journey, but Moses (as) got there. So do not despair if you feel unsure of Allah's (swt) closeness, but be like Moses (as) and build your relationship with Him. The One who named Himself *al-Qareeb* is inviting you to be close to Him, and He does not close that door to the servants who seek Him.

Al-Qareeb and Ramadan

Imam Suhaib once said, "If you feel far from Allah (swt), ask yourself: who moved?"

Ramadan comes to quench our thirst. It does not matter how far you have been. It does not even matter if you have never felt that closeness to Him; Allah (swt) tells us that He is near because He wants you to learn to feel that. He gives us Ramadan so that we can recharge and reconnect – so make use of this month for that purpose.

Gaining nearness to the One who is Near

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr said that Allah (swt) is near to everyone, but there are those who are special and seek His nearness. How can we be of those who strive towards His nearness?

1. Understand His Names

One of the best ways to come close to Allah (swt) is to know Him, and the best way to know Him is to understand His Names and attributes, which are in and of themselves an invitation to closeness.

You can only be close to people whom you know really well and who know you in return. Often, when you tell people about yourself, it is because you want them to know you and therefore become close. Allah (swt) wants you to know that He is close, so He tells you this and many other things about Himself. Re-read some of the Names in this series and get re-acquainted with Allah.

2. Prayer

The root of the word *salah*, the Arabic word which is translated as ‘prayer’, is to turn completely towards something with all your being.

Prayer was given as a gift to us so that we can connect with Allah (swt) and be with Him. If you do not know how to connect through your prayer, read over the ‘[Sweetness of Prayer](#)’ series.

3. Ask Him

In the verse in which Allah (swt) tells us that He is close, He follows it with: *“I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he*

calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.” [Quran [2:186](#)]

So ask Him for closeness.

4. Be there for people

Being close to Allah (swt) does not mean being disconnected from His creation, but rather the opposite. We are told in a hadith (narration of the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him):

“Allah will say on the Day of Judgment, ‘Son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me.’

‘My Lord, How could I visit You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’

‘Did you not know that one of My servants was sick and you didn’t visit him? If you had visited him you would have found Me there.’ Then Allah will say, ‘Son of Adam, I needed food but you did not feed Me.’

‘My Lord, How could I feed You when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’

‘Did you not know that one of My servants was hungry but you did not feed him? If you had fed him you would have found its reward with Me.’

‘Son of Adam, I was thirsty, but you did not give Me something to drink.’

‘My Lord, How could I give a drink when You are the Lord of the Worlds?’

‘Did you not know that one of My servants was thirsty but you did not give him a drink? If you had given him a drink, you would have found its reward with Me.’” (Bukhari)

Notice the wording. For most of the acts listed, Allah (swt) says that we will find the reward with Him—but for visiting the sick, He says ‘if you had visited him, you would have found Me there.’

Look after people. Visit the sick. Stand in solidarity with the oppressed. You will find nearness to Him.

May Allah (swt) make us of those who are close to Him and allow us to reap the rewards of the month of Ramadan.

الْغَفْلَةُ الْخَفِيَّةُ

Think You've Messed Up Bad? Allah's Got You Covered

Ramadan is always a time filled with hope; a time to start over with a clean record and get back on track. But for some – or many – of us, it may feel like we were never on track to begin with. It may feel like we are too far out to ever find the way back. What is the point of trying this Ramadan, when we so inevitably slip back into our old habits?

Whatever the reason for our apprehension, Allah's got us covered. He has a Name, or rather, three Names, that address all of our insecurities. For those of us who say:

"I messed up."

Or:

"I messed up way too many times. I still mess up."

Or:

"I'm too ashamed to even tell you how I messed up!"

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) responds that He is

al-Ghafir, al-Ghafur and al-Ghaffar.

Many of us already call on Allah (swt) by this Name, and worship Him by this attribute, even though we do not know the actual nuances of the Names.

So what is the difference between them, and what does this mean for us?

Maghfira (Forgiveness)

These Names comes from the same root: gh-f-r (غ-ف-ر), which linguistically means to cover and protect. When we say “*Rabby ighfir-ly*”—which is usually translated to “My Lord, forgive me”—what we are actually asking Allah (swt) for is to cover our sin and protect us from it.

So what are the kinds of things that Allah (swt) covers and protects us from?

Allah tells us in the Qur'an:

“Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills.” (Qur'an, [4:48](#))

Allah tells us that He forgives everything; the only thing He does not forgive is if you were to die associating another deity with Him. This *maghfira* is a covering and protection in this life and the next. Allah (swt) covers your sin in this life and protects you from its effect, and covers the sin up in the Hereafter and protects you from the Hellfire.

Who does He forgive?

Allah (swt) did not give Himself three different Names from the

same root for no reason: He is inviting you to call Him by these Names, inviting you to be forgiven. Let us look at how these Names have come in the Qur'an:

Al-Ghafur appears 91 times in the Qur'an. Allah (swt) says:

“And when those come to you who believe in Our verses, say, “Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy: that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself – indeed, He is Forgiving (Ghafur) and Merciful.” (Qur'an, [6:54](#))

Al-Ghaffar appears five times in the Qur'an. In the example below, it is the Prophet Noah (as) calling his people after they have committed grave injustices:

“And said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver (Ghaffara).” (Qur'an, [71:10](#))

And Ghafir appears once:

“The forgiver (Ghafir) of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment, owner of abundance. There is no deity except Him; to Him is the destination.” (Qur'an, [40:3](#))

The number of times and the context these Names appear in give us a glimpse into what their nuances mean. *Ghafir* occurs once in the Qur'an, and it tells that Allah (swt) forgives sin. Some of us might shake their heads. Sin? We have way too many to count! Then Allah (swt) reminds us, He is *Ghafur*. *Ghafur* is the One who forgives over and over and over again. Some of us might still be skeptical. It might not be the number of sins, but it might be that we have sins we are too ashamed to talk about. And this is where He tells us that He is *Ghaffar*: this Name relates to intensity. Allah (swt) forgives the gravest of sins. So Allah (swt) is telling us that

He has covered all the bases. No matter how many sins or even the type of sin, Allah will protect you from it.

Allah tells us in a beautiful hadith (narration):

“O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.” (Tirmidhi)

What is beautiful is that Allah (swt) is inviting you. We are told in the Qur’an:

“Their messengers said, ‘Can there be doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays your death for a specified term.’” (Qur’an, [14:10](#))

The Day of Judgment

On the Day of Judgment, Allah (swt) will bring all of us forward and will speak to us without an intermediary. We will be confronted with our sins. When our book of deeds is open, Allah (swt) will ask us, “Do you know this sin? Do you know that sin?” and the believer’s reply will be, “Yes, O Lord,” until they are reminded of all of their sins, and they think they will perish. Then Allah will say, “I covered up your sins during your life, and I will forgive your sins today,” (Bukhari/Muslim). Then the believer will be given their book of good deeds.

That is the beauty of Allah’s forgiveness.

Do not make a mockery of the forgiveness of Allah

Knowing that Allah forgives should give us so much hope. But we should balance fear and hope so that we do not purposefully disobey Him and say that we will repent later. These are some things to keep in mind:

1. Allah (swt) will forgive all of us a first, second and third time, sometimes even before we ask for forgiveness. But Allah may remove His covering in this life if we are persistent in doing what we know we should not. Once a man was caught for stealing at the time of Umar *radi allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him). And the thief said, “I swear it is the first time!” And Umar, knowing *al-Ghaffar*, said, “No, for Allah would never expose you on the first time.” And then it was found that it was actually his eighth time stealing.

Of course, if we turn back sincerely, Allah tells us that He will forgive us.

2. Do not expose yourself. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) taught us: *“All of my nation will be forgiven except al-mujahirun (those who are public about the wrongs they do). It is a part of sinning openly when a man does something at night, then the following morning when Allah has concealed his sin, he says to someone, ‘I did such and such last night,’ when all night his Lord has concealed him and the next morning he uncovers what Allah had concealed.”* (Bukhari/Muslim)

The Benefits of Seeking Forgiveness

1. People would ask al-Hasan al-Basri, the scholar, for advice for various problems, and he would tell them to seek forgiveness from Allah (swt). One man heard him and said to him, “You give the same advice to everyone!” And al-Hasan al-Basri re-

sponded with the following aya (verse) from the Qur'an: "Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.'" (Qur'an, [71:10-12](#))

2. The Prophet ﷺ told us: "When a slave commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart, but if he gives it up, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart will be cleansed." (Tirmidhi). Sometimes, we do not realize the spiritual effects of sins on our heart. Seeking forgiveness polishes the heart and gives way for a spiritual light from Allah (swt).
3. The Prophet ﷺ told us: "The one who (regularly) seeks forgiveness, Allah will relieve him of every burden, and make from every discomfort an outlet, and He will provide for him from (sources) he never could imagine." (Abu Dawud)

How to do istighfaar (seeking forgiveness)

1. *Start with the heart:* Reflect on yourself and your deeds, so that you become aware of the mistakes you made, and what you need to do to get better. This ensures that we are always evolving for the better, because we are always seeking to improve.
2. *Ask for forgiveness, and do it A LOT.* The Prophet ﷺ would sometimes seek forgiveness 70 or 100 times in one sitting! One of the best du'a' (supplication) for istighfar was told to us by the Prophet ﷺ.

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ وَأَنَا عَلَى عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذُنُوبِي

فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

"O Allah! You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshiped but You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You."

He said: "Whoever says it during the day with firm faith in it, and dies on the same day before the evening, he will be from the people of Paradise; and if somebody recites it at night with firm faith in it, and dies before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise." (Bukhari)

3. *Go to Allah (swt) with good deeds and be in gatherings of the remembrance of God:* We are told in the Qur'an to "establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember," (Qur'an, [11:114](#)).

Ibn Taymiya said about the Prophet Moses that he made grave mistakes, but that Allah (swt) still loved him. Why? Because he also did great and amazing deeds. He even stood up to the Pharaoh of Egypt.

As for being in gatherings where we are remembering Allah (swt), the Prophet ﷺ tells us that Angels seek out such gatherings and then have a conversation with God about those people. Allah (swt) then says to the Angels: "You are My witnesses that I have forgiven them."

One of the angels will reply: "Person x is not really one of them; he came (to the gathering) for some other reason."

And Allah will say, “*They were all in the gathering, and not one of them will be excluded (from forgiveness).*” (Bukhari)

4. *Forgive others if you want that Allah (swt) should forgive you.* In the incident of *al-Ifk*, a slanderous rumor was being spread about Aisha (ra), the wife of the Prophet ﷺ. When it was discovered that one of the people who was spreading the rumor was a relative whom her father, Abu Bakr (ra), was helping financially, Abu Bakr promised that he would not help him anymore. Then this verse was revealed:

“And let not those of you who possess wealth and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have had to emigrate for Allah’s sake. They should forgive and forbear. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” [Qur’an, [24: 22](#)]

Allah (swt) was telling Abu Bakr (ra) that the best path was to forgive, because wouldn’t he like Allah to forgive him?

May Allah forgive us, raise us and help us in embodying prophetic characteristics.

السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

I Am With You—Hearing And Seeing

They say that one of the signs of a good friend is the ability to listen to you. We all appreciate those amazing people in our lives who we can call up at almost any time and just talk to them. A close loved one who is there, does not interrupt and just hears what we need to say. And it is even better if that person has witnessed what we are experiencing, because we know that they understand.

Ever thought of Allah, *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He), in that way?

To emphasize that He hears and sees everything, Allah (swt) reveals the following verse in an incident where a woman named Khawla bint Tha’laba, *radi Allahu `anha* (may God be pleased with her), went to the Prophet ﷺ (peace be unto him) to complain about her husband.

“Certainly has Allah heard the speech of the one who argues with you, [O Muhammad], concerning her husband and directs her complaint to Allah . And Allah hears your dialogue; indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing.” (Qur’an, [58:1](#))

When this verse was revealed, Aisha (ra) the wife of the Prophet ﷺ was shocked:

“Praise be to Allah Whose hearing encompasses all voices. Khawlah came to Allah’s Messenger ﷺ complaining about her husband, I was in the other room but I could not hear what she said. Then Allah (swt) revealed [these verses]!” (Bukhari)

What message is Allah (swt) sending to us? Allah is *al-Samee` al-Basir*—the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing. He is telling us that He hears us—and when Allah (swt) hears us, it is not a passive act. When we pray, we say, “Allah (swt) hears those who praise Him.” Now, it does not mean that Allah (swt) does not hear those who do not praise Him. But the type of hearing implies both awareness as well as action: it is listening. It means that because you have praised Allah (swt)—and that means you know you have a Lord that has all the attributes of praise—He is listening to you and will respond to you. And we are also told that He sees everything. He is not oblivious to anything that is happening to you.

Ibn al-Qayyim (ra) says that Allah (swt) is all-Hearing such that He hears all of the prayers to Him in all languages, and listening to one person does not distract Him from listening to another; and All-Seeing such that He sees the crawling black ant under a hard rock in the darkest of the night. When you talk to Allah (swt), it is a one-on-one even if you are in a crowded room full of people. You are the focus of His attention. Do not ever belittle yourself to think that Allah (swt) would not listen to you. Al-Ghazali (ra) also said beautifully that Allah (swt) “hears secrets as well as whispers, and even what is subtler and more concealed than these.” Allah (swt) even hears the thoughts that go through your mind that you have not even articulated. And *Al-Basir*—the All-Seeing—is the “one who witnesses in such a way that nothing is remote from Him, even what is under the earth.”

Allah (swt) has many, many attributes. Some are hidden and some are revealed. So why does Allah (swt) reveal to us that He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing?

The first is to let us know that He is aware and also to reassure us. When Musa, *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be unto him), and Harun (as) were told to speak to Pharaoh, they were understandably afraid. They said to Allah (swt):

“Our Lord, indeed we are afraid that he will hasten [punishment] against us or that he will transgress.”

And Allah (swt) responded to them to reassure them:

“Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see,” (Qur’an, [20:45-46](#))

So when you are feeling lonely or in difficulty, call out to the One who hears everything and sees everything. Talk to the One who revealed this attribute to you so that you know that He is there for you. He is the close One that listens to your words when they are spoken and when they are trapped in your heart and you cannot express them. Rest assured that the difficulty that you are going through has not gone unnoticed.

You are never alone. He is with you – hearing and seeing.

And because He is *al-Kareem* (the Most Generous), when He hears those thoughts and hopes that remained trapped in your mind or in your heart, He still responds without you asking. How many of us have had unexpected gifts given to us—the exact thing we were hoping for without asking for it—knowing that no one heard these hopes except Allah?

Secondly, knowing that Allah (swt) is All-Hearing and All-Seeing

should make us aware. There are certain things we would not say in front of someone we respect. Knowing that Allah (swt) hears and sees everything should make us vigilant over our speech and actions.

Finally, Sheikh Abulrazzaq al-Badr (ra) stated that the reason why *as-Samee`* comes before other attributes when they are paired is that, for us, Allah's hearing of our calls and our *du`a'* (supplications) is more important. It is reassuring to know that Allah (swt) hears us.

What does it mean for us?

1. *Talk to Allah (swt)*

You know that He can hear you, and that He understands your language. So speak to Him and tell Allah (swt) what is in your heart. It does not necessarily mean that you have to be asking for something. You could just be talking to Allah (swt).

2. *Guard your speech and actions*

Remember that Allah (swt) can see and hear and everything, so guard yourself against evil speech and evil actions.

3. *Accustom yourself to hearing and seeing what is beneficial*

Allah (swt) gave many of us the ability to hear and see, so we should be grateful for these gifts by using them in beneficial ways.



Unimagining God: The Holy, The Pure

There are many misunderstandings about God. Without realizing, we anthropomorphize God. When we sin, we treat Him like a human being who cannot forgive completely. When we see evil in the world, we use human logic to conclude that God must not be merciful, or that He does not have full knowledge or power, or to deny His existence completely. When we misunderstand God, we are pushed away from Him and the path that leads to Him. When we see Him as a human being, we also attribute to Him the flaws and imperfections of a human being.

Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) is the Most Merciful, the Forbearing and the Generous – and these are attributes of which we have an idea because they manifest themselves in human forms. We see one dimension of these different attributes: mercy in the acts of kindness around us; forbearance when we are given a second chance; generosity when we are given much more than expected. We understand these attributes at a very basic level because we experience them, and they give us a glimpse into the attributes of God.

But the Qur'an tells us, "*Nothing is like Him*," (Qur'an, [42:11](#)). Whatever mercy, forbearance or generosity we experience in this

world, it is not even a fraction of God's mercy, forbearance and generosity. It is important to keep this in mind. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal said that whatever comes to your mind in terms of conceptualizing Allah (swt), know that He is not that.

Our occasional conflation of divine attributes with human imperfections is what leads us to attribute negative human qualities to Allah (swt). This is why Allah (swt) invites us to know Him via His 99 Names. There are Names that introduce us to His Mercy and Beauty, and the fact that we have experienced the human dimension of these attributes makes them easier for us to comprehend. There are also Names that show us the attributes of Majesty, which should fill us with awe.

However, it is some of these attributes, if not properly understood, which may cause us confusion about God. Then there are the Names that, in their essence, teach us that Allah's (swt) attributes are nothing like human attributes. They serve as a reminder that, for example, His mercy is not affected by a lack of wisdom, nor is His overpowering a result of irrational rage.

Here, we come to Allah's (swt) Name *Al-Quddus* (the Pure). Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is exalting Allah, the Sovereign, the Pure (Al-Quddus), the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (Qur'an, [62:1](#))

In ruku' (bowing) in prayer, the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) would occasionally say:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ

Subuhun Quddus, Rabb al-Mala'ikati wa al-Ruh

"Exalted, Pure, Lord of the Angels and the Spirit" (Muslim)

After the witr prayer (the last prayer of the night), the Prophet ﷺ would also say, *"Subhan al-Malik al-Quddus,"* ("Exalted is the Sovereign, the Pure") three times (Bukhari).

Quddus is an aggrandizement of the root word q-d-s (ق-د-س), and can mean 'pure', 'holy' or 'blessed'. It tells us that Allah (swt) is pure from any defect and purified from anything blameworthy. Another meaning of *Quddus* is that Allah (swt) purifies the hearts and souls of His worshippers, but what Allah (swt) Himself is purified from may be something that is necessary for humans. A person who does not sleep is an insomniac and most likely needs treatment. With Allah (swt), His non-sleep shows His self-sufficiency. And according to Imam al-Qurtubi, the name *al-Quddus* also describes the One who is glorified and revered by the angels.

At its core, this Name teaches us that that Allah's (swt) essence and actions are pure and untainted. Imam al-Ghazali tells us:

"Al-Quddus is the One who is free from every attribute which a sense might perceive, or imagination may conceive, or to which imagination may instinctively turn or by which the conscience may be moved, or which thinking demands. I do not say: free from defects and imperfections, for the mere mention of that borders on insult... I will rather say, the Holy (al-Quddus) is the one who transcends every one of the attributes of perfection which the majority of creatures think of as perfection."

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi also tells us that *al-Quddus* "is free from all anthropomorphic qualities of perfection that man attributes to himself or imagines. In other words, whatever qualities of perfection you might think of do not apply to Allah (swt), for He is far above them."

If our conception of perfect qualities is still imperfect when it comes to Allah (swt), what about when we attribute to Him qualities that are negative? As Ibn al-Qayyim reminds us, *al-Quddus* is too pure and holy to ever act with oppression. This is important to keep in mind and comprehend, so that we do not attribute blameworthy human attributes to Allah (swt). Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr shows that the Name *al-Quddus* comes with the Name *al-Malik* in the Qur'an, which means the Sovereign or King. When people hear that Allah is King, that could be a neutral attribute, or it could even be a negative one if they have had bad experiences with oppressive kings. Hence, Allah (swt) tells us that He is "*Al-Malik al-Quddus*", reminding us not to get confused. He is the King, but He is Pure and so He acts with ultimate justice. There is no oppression under Him.

In further explaining this Name, Ibn al-Qayyim points to the word Bayt al-Maqdis (بيت المقدس), which refers to the whole area encompassing al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. This is the "Holy House", because people go there to be purified of sins, and whoever visits it for the sole reason of praying there will return from it completely cleansed of his sins.

Remember these beautiful attributes, and remember that Allah (swt) is Pure in His essence and actions, and thus only mercy and wisdom can come from Him.

Connect to al-Quddus:

- Purify yourself

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi said: "He who knows this Name purifies his time from wrong-doing, his heart from the way of heedlessness and his soul from idle life."

- Sanctify that which Allah (swt) has sanctified

Al-Quddus has taught us which things are holy and thus He has sanctified certain things. We are commanded to value life, to protect people's honor and to respect our own places of worship, as well as the places of worship of others. Let us learn the things that Allah (swt) has sanctified and give them their proper respect.

القَادِرُ الْمُقْتَدِرُ

When You Are Not Able, Ask For Strength From The One Who Is Able

We all have moments when we look at a seemingly insurmountable obstacle and think to ourselves: ‘How can it be overcome? It does not seem possible.’

A prophet once thought the same thing. He stood in front of a barren land to which he was sent, and asked the question, “How can Allah bring this back to life after its death?”

Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) showed him how He could. When the Prophet `Uzayr saw the town that was once razed to the ground, then a mere hundred years later filled with people and homes and markets, he exclaimed, “I know that Allah is over all things competent (qadir)!” (Qur’an, [2:259](#))

Even before going into the linguistics of this name, many of us are at least theoretically aware of this attribute of Allah (swt). He is able to do all things, and we see this everyday in our very own existence. We read the Qur’an and know that Allah (swt) created this world from nothing, and He has the power to make it disappear.

For others among us, this attribute is not just an abstract notion.

The knowledge that Allah (swt) is able to do anything and everything is precisely why we call on Him with so much certainty in our *du`a`* (supplication). We might not call on Him with these Names specifically, but we ask Him because we know that He has the ability and power to respond to us and give us more.

Wa ma qadaru Allaha haqqa qadrihi: And they did not appraise Allah with true appraisal.

Allah (swt) is *al-Qadir* (the Most Able), *al-Qadar* (the Omnipotent) and *al-Muqtadir* (the Perfect in Ability), all from the root q-d-r (ق-د-ر). This root can mean ‘to measure something’ or ‘to make manifest the measure of something’, and thus gives rise to meanings such as ‘appraising’ and ‘power’ and ‘ability’. The horse that is *aqdar* is the one whose back-hoof falls exactly where his front-hoof was when running, as though perfectly measured and executed.

And thus it brings us to Allah (swt) who has the ability to decree and carry out His decree. When we talk about *Laylat al-Qadr* (The Night of Qadr), scholars disagree over whether it means the Night of Power or the Night of Decree, because the root may give rise to both meanings.

As Names of Allah (swt), all three words are found in the Qu’ran. Allah (swt) says:

“Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth, is [the one] Able (Qadir) to create the likes of them? And He has appointed for them a term, about which there is no doubt. But the wrongdoers refuse [anything] except disbelief.” (Qur’an, [17:99](#))

“And it is He who has created from water a human being and made him [a relative by] lineage and marriage. And ever is your Lord competent (Qadir).” (Qur’an, [25:54](#))

“Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and rivers, in a seat of honor near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability (Muqtadir).” (Qur’an, [54:54-55](#))

Sheikh Abulrazzaq al-Badr explains the nuances between these Names. *Al-Qadir* is the One who is able to do everything, from causing things to exist to ceasing their existence, or causing them to change or to return them to what they were. Al-Ghazali adds that, “God is all-powerful in that He could bring about the resurrection now, and He would bring it about were He to will it.” *Al-Qadir* is the One who does what He pleases based on His decreed wisdom. Finally, *Al-Muqtadir* is an intensive form of the root which adds the element of absolute power that no one can stop or oppose.

I know God is capable of all things, I just know that I am not.

There are two ways of looking at these attributes of Allah (swt). We can view them in an abstract way, perhaps feeling great awe (which is a good thing) and then sit back. Sure, Allah (swt) is capable of all things, but we humans are limited.

Then there is another way of looking at these Names. Allah (swt) is able to do all things, and so whatever difficulty we face, we can overcome it if we seek strength from Him. At times, we are our own worst enemies. We stop ourselves from attempting something because of the belief that ‘there is no way this could happen’. We close doors that may have been open to us.

When you believe that Allah (swt) is capable of all things, you are open to more possibilities. It is not simply about positive thinking or hoping something will materialize out of thin air. It is knowing that because Allah (swt) is able, and He has revealed this attribute to you, you can derive strength from Allah (swt) and you have possibilities. Have you ever pondered over the *du`a`* of *istikhara*

(guidance)?

“If one of you feels inclined to do something then let that one pray two units of optional prayer, then say: ‘O Allah! I seek Your guidance by virtue of Your knowledge, and I seek ability by virtue of Your power, and I ask You of Your great bounty. You have power; I have none. And You know; I know not. You are the Knower of hidden things. O Allah! If in Your knowledge, (this matter) is good for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs, immediate and in the future, then ordain it for me, make it easy for me, and bless it for me. And if in Your knowledge, (this matter*) is bad for my religion, my livelihood and my affairs, immediate and in the future, then turn it away from me, and turn me away from it. And ordain for me the good wherever it may be, and make me content with it.’” (Bukhari)*

We say to Allah (swt), “I seek ability (استقدرك) by virtue of Your power (بقدرتك).” We recognize that we have no power, but that does not debilitate us.

If we go back to the story of `Uzayr, Allah (swt) shows His power to both us and His prophet by bringing a dead town back to life. He showed us possibility where we could only perceive impossibility. Allah (swt) teaches us that He is able, and this has consequences for the way that we perceive things. We do not limit ourselves to one interpretation of reality, but realize that there could be multiple paths. This affects our actions.

Take the example of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (peace be upon him). If you had asked anyone in Makkah in the first couple of years of revelation whether they could imagine that the religion taught by the Prophet ﷺ would span the lands between China and Spain, they would have called you crazy and delusional. You would probably have understood why – it seemed impossible at the time. But the Prophet ﷺ knew who Allah (swt) was. He was reminded in verse after verse about Allah’s (swt) ability, and he

derived strength from that.

When something got difficult, he never saw the dead-end in front of him. He was able to see the whole picture and take alternative routes. When he was persecuted in Makkah, and knew it would get worse after his uncle passed away, he did not despair; he made plans to leave. When he was rejected in Ta’if, he did not tell himself that there was no use; he used the Hajj season, when all the tribes would congregate in Makkah, to seek help.

When they were in Madina and an attack by the Meccans was imminent, he did not freeze up; he was open to the idea of building a trench. When the Meccans proposed a peace treaty and negotiated terms that appeared to be disadvantageous to the Muslims at the time, he did not concentrate on those terms; he focused on what this peace treaty would enable the Muslims to do.

This is the secret of all of the Prophets and the righteous. When Musa (peace be upon him) was being hunted down by Pharaoh and his army, he said, *“Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.”* (Qur’an, [26:62](#)). The army of Talut, when faced with the much larger army of Goliath, said: *“How many a small company has overcome a large company by permission of Allah . And Allah is with the patient.”* (Qur’an, [2:249](#)).

When Hajar (peace be upon her) was left in the desert with her infant son, she ran back and forth between the mountains of Safa and Marwa. A person might have seen her and thought, “What is the use?” But when you believe that Allah (swt) is capable of all things, you are able to be open to different possibilities and alternative paths. And Hajar was given the well of Zamzam.

Connecting to al-Qadir

- Recognize that Allah (swt) is capable of all things.
- When you supplicate, have certainty because you know that Allah (swt) is *al-Qadir*
- Be open to possibilities.
- Pray *istikhara* before starting matters of importance.



The First, The Last – And Everything In Between

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: “Any matter of importance which is not begun with ‘bismillah’ (in the name of Allah) remains defective.” [Ibn Hibban]

What is the first thing you think of when you wake up in the morning?

That you need coffee?

The things you have to do that day?

Facebook? Your emails?

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He)?

They say that if you want to know what your priorities are, reflect on the first thing you think of in the morning. That thing (or things) which are foremost in your mind not only set the tone for your day, they also determine your destination. A person who wakes up thinking about money (whether it is because he is in financial difficulty or because he wants to become rich) will then seek out and prioritize those things that lead him to money. A

person who wakes up thinking of a loved one will probably talk to him or her first thing in the morning and be connected all day if they can. Allah (swt) tells us:

“He is the First (al-Awwal) and the Last (al-Akhir), the Ascendant and the Intimate, and He is, of all things, Knowing.” (Qur’an [57:3](#))

Al-Ghazali explains these two Names beautifully, saying: “When you ponder the order of existence and consider the ordered chain of beings, God the most high is first with respect to it... Whenever you ponder the order of wayfaring and observe the states attained by those journeying towards Him, He is the last, for He is the final point to which the levels of the ‘knowers’ ascend.... the first beginning was from Him; and to Him is the return and destination.”

Allah (swt) is, quite literally, the First. He was before anything was. He is also the Last because He is our destination and He remains when everything else goes away. There are deeper meanings here too. We prioritize things before Allah (swt), and then we wonder why we feel a spiritual void. We may wonder why bad things happen, why we cannot seem to get something right or why nothing satisfies us despite our pursuit of material means. To know that Allah (swt) is *al-Awwal* (the First) is to see Allah (swt) before seeing anything else, because even the physical means start with Him.

This is why, for example, we do not simply drive to a destination, but we start with the *du`a`* (supplication) for travel. Living the reality of this Name is to seek Allah (swt) first even before we seek the means, because the means can only work with His blessing. This is one of the reasons for the *du`a`* of *istikhara* (seeking good); we are asking Allah for the best choice when embarking on something. As Ibn al-Qayyim says, worshipping Allah (swt) by this Name is to realize our complete need for Him, because we realize that He came before everything and He created the means.

And this leads us to His being *al-Akhir* (the Last), because as Ibn Ata’illah said: “He who is illumined at the beginning is illumined at the end.” Allah (swt) is the destination. We start with Him in everything that we do so that we can end up with Him. We praise Him at the end of every matter and seek forgiveness from Him for any shortcomings. Ibn al-Qayyim says that worshipping Allah (swt) by His Name *al-Akhir* is to be unattached to results, and rather to be attached to Allah (swt), Who remains no matter the results. If our intention starts with Him, then no matter the outcome, our efforts are recorded by Him and are appreciated because they were for Him. In the Qur’an, Allah (swt) asks, “*So where are you going?*” (Qur’an, [81:26](#))

So we need to ask ourselves – where are we going?

Everything leads to Him

As believers, it may be easy to conceptualize that Allah (swt) is the beginning of everything and the end. However, if we consider the example at the beginning of the article, about the first thing we think of when we wake up, living this Name requires more than just knowing.

For you to begin thinking of someone like this, every morning when you wake, there has to be something in your heart. There has to be love. Many of us may know someone who has been in love: that person talks to her beloved in the morning and the beloved is the last person she speaks to at night. Simply connecting to the beloved sets the tone for her whole day. Do we have that kind of relationship with Allah (swt), and if we do not, then how can we start one?

The secret is living the knowledge that Allah (swt) is *al-Awwal* and *al-Akhir*. It is making a conscious effort to remember Allah (swt) at the beginning and at the end of everything. The fruits of this

will be immediate. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur'an:

"Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured."
(Qur'an, [13:28](#)) And: *"So remember Me; I will remember you."*
(Qur'an, [2:152](#))

The Prophet ﷺ tells us: *"Remember Allah during times of ease and He will remember you during times of difficulty."* (Tirmidhi)

Just like a person who is in love finds comfort in the mention of his beloved, imagine the effect on your heart of remembering the absolute Source of love and peace before you do anything. Putting into practice Allah's (swt) attributes as the First and Last brings us back to our ultimate purpose, until the meanings of these Names are truly etched into our hearts and we are confronted with true reality. We then become the person in love, and for us, Allah (swt) is the First in our hearts and the Last in our journeys.

A very famous song contains these lyrics:

"You're my first, my last, my everything."

Little did the songwriter know that Muslims would hear this and think of God, because truly whoever understands that God is the First and the Last, knows that Allah (swt) is everything.

Connect to Allah (swt)

- *Start with Him, end with Him*

Remember Allah (swt) at the beginning of everything, and praise Him and seek forgiveness at the end. This will ensure that you are always in remembrance of Him and that, for you, He is the First and the Last in all your endeavors.

- *Memorize the du'a' (supplication) for the start of a matter and its end, then incorporate them into your every day routine*

This is related to the first point, but it entails memorizing those things from the Qur'an and the sunnah (tradition of the Prophet ﷺ), such as supplications for:

- » The start and end of your day
- » Starting a journey
- » The beginning and end of a meal
- » The conclusion of prayers

Many of these supplications can be found in the book Husn al-Muslim (Fortress of a Muslim).

Memorize this supplication that contain Allah's (swt) Names 'the First' and 'the Last'

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ، رَبَّنَا وَرَبَّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، فَالِقَ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى، وَمُنْزِلَ التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ، وَالْفُرْقَانِ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ أَنْتَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهِ. اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الْأَوَّلُ فَلَيْسَ قَبْلَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الْآخِرُ فَلَيْسَ بَعْدَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ، وَأَنْتَ الْبَاطِنُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ، اقْضِ عَنَّا الدَّيْنَ وَأَغْنِنَا مِنَ الْفَقْرِ

'O Allah! Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Magnificent Throne. Our Lord and the Lord of everything; Splitter of the grain and the date-stone; Revealer of the Torah and the Gospel and the Furqan (the Qur'an), I seek refuge in You from the evil of everything that You shall seize by the forelock. O Allah, You are the First and nothing has come before You, and You are the Last, and nothing may come after You. You are the Most High, nothing is above You and You are the Most Near and nothing is nearer than You. Remove our debts from us and enrich us against poverty.' (Muslim)



He Heals The Hearts Of A Believing People

All of us become ill. We may be inflicted yearly with the flu, get a fever or infection from time to time, or suffer from something more serious and/or more frequently, may Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), protect us all and ease the suffering of those who are ill. We are suddenly confronted with how weak we can be, and, sometimes without being conscious of it, plead with Allah (swt) to heal us. Indeed, as the Prophet Abraham, *'alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him), said:

“And when I am ill, it is He who cures me (yashfeen).” (Qur'an, [26:80](#))

Aisha, *radi Allahu `anha* (may God be pleased with her), narrated that when she or any of the Prophet's ﷺ (peace be unto him) wives would become ill, he would put his right hand over the place of ailment and say:

“O Allah, the Lord of the people! Remove the trouble, for You are the Healer (al-Shafi). No healing is of any avail but Yours; healing that will leave behind no ailment.” (Bukhari)

This *du`a'* (supplication) teaches that it is Allah (swt) who is the

Healer: He is al-Shafi.

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Bader said that the meaning of Allah al-Shafi is that He is the healer of the diseases of the body and He is the healer of the diseases of the heart—such as rancor, envy, and hatred. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"... and [Allah will] heal the hearts of a believing people." (Qur'an, [9:14](#))

The Healing of the Body

When we become ill, there are some of us who will grab a pill or visit the doctor. Others of us may try to figure out what the du'a's of the Prophet ﷺ were in a similar situation.

Which one of the two groups believes with certainty that Allah is *al-Shafi*?

The answer is: both, depending on the state of their heart. The Prophet ﷺ taught us that, *"Every disease has a cure. So if the treatment is applied to the disease, the disease is cured by the Will of Allah."* (Muslim) The Prophet ﷺ set up a make-shift hospital in the form of a tent in Madina and appointed a woman named Rufaydah al-Aslamiyah (ra) to run it. Aisha (ra) stated that the companion Sa'ad bin Mu'ath was injured during the Battle of the Trench, and it was Rufaydah who tended to him (Muslim). Moreover, Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani praised Rufaydah's skill and wisdom, as she realized that the arrow that had hit Sa'ad (ra) was too deep to pull out, and so she worked on stopping the bleeding instead.

Al-Shafi is the source of all cure and healing. Allah (swt) created this world and its laws. He decreed that when a chemical reaction at a certain temperature occurs between oxygen and a fuel, the result would be fire. He also decreed that water would put out

(most) fire. Similarly, the laws dictate that when certain things happen—injury, infection, an unhealthy lifestyle or particular genes—we become ill. And those same laws provide for us a prevention from or cure for disease.

Seeking these cures (or making use of the prevention) and making *du'a*' are complimentary when we understand that *al-Shafi* is the source. He heals us through the laws that He created in the universe—which is why we are commanded to seek cures for our illnesses—and through our asking for His healing. Indeed, the Prophet Ayyoub (as) (Job) prayed to Allah (swt):

"Indeed, adversity has touched me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful." (Qur'an, [21:83](#))

And Allah (swt) healed him.

We must remember though that we can cause our own illnesses. Think of a person who is a heavy smoker and is then afflicted with diseases in his lungs and throat. Indeed Allah is *al-Shafi*, and He can cure whom He wills, but we must also take responsibility for our actions. We cannot be resigned and say, "Well, Allah willed it," as an excuse to avoid accountability. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"...do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction." (Qur'an, [2:195](#))

This verse is in specific reference to withholding charity, but *mu-fasiroon* (commentators on the Qur'an) such as Tabari stated that the general meaning is also applicable to doing the things that may bring about your own destruction.

Illnesses, whether self-inflicted or not, also provide us with opportunities:

1. Realizing our need for Allah

There is nothing like illness that reminds us of our weakness and how much we need Allah (swt). It is important to be a worshipper of Allah (swt) in all circumstances, whether things are good or bad.

2. Purifying us

The Prophet ﷺ told us that, “No fatigue, nor disease, nor sorrow, nor sadness, nor hurt, nor distress befalls a Muslim, even if it were the prick he receives from a thorn, but that Allah expiates some of his sins for that,” (Bukhari). In another narration, a companion visited the Prophet ﷺ when he was ill. The Prophet ﷺ told him: “No Muslim is afflicted with any harm but that Allah will remove his sins as the leaves of a tree fall down,” (Bukhari).

3. Raising our station

Allah says in the Qur’an: “Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account.” (Qur’an, [39:10](#))

When we strive to be patient and steadfast through our illness—meaning here we continue in our trust in Him, pray to Allah (swt) and persevere with treatment if we have it—we have to understand that Allah (swt) gets it. He knows what we are going through. And nothing that you go through is wasted. The verse cited tells us that those who are patient will be given their reward without having to go through the meezan (scale) on the Day of Judgment (Tabari). So rest assured that your patience and perseverance has not gone unnoticed.

The Healing of the Hearts

Allah says in the Qur’an:

“The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.” (Qur’an, [26:88-](#)

[89](#))

While a person may be rewarded during their physical illness and forgiven for sins, there is no such reward for the diseases of the heart. The reward for the disease of the heart is in the effort put into its removal.

Allah (swt) tells us about a beautiful *du`a`* in the Qur’an:

“And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful.’” (Qur’an, [59:10](#))

Allah (swt) talks to us about those who come after the *muhajiroon* (people who emigrated from Mecca) and the *ansar* (the helpers), and the beautiful *du`a`* that they make. They ask Allah (swt) to not allow any resentment in their hearts towards others. Knowing that Allah (swt) is *al-Shafi* is turning to Him first in our quest to purify our hearts.

Many scholars have enumerated the diseases of the heart, and to go through that would entail a whole separate series.¹ The diseases of the heart can manifest themselves in many ways, such as arrogance, envy, following base desires, miserliness, ostentation, heedlessness and others. The cure is in seeking knowledge – because knowledge empowers us to identify these diseases; remembering and returning to Allah (swt) frequently – as that connects us to Him, reminding us of our love for and fear of Him; and finally obeying Allah (swt) and good deeds – as they give us a spiritual light and teach us discipline.

What is beautiful is that there is a relationship between the healing of the hearts and the healing of the body. Related to following desires and discipline, for example, an article in the Journal of Personality found that exerting self-control can make you happier

both in the long-term and in the moment, because disciplined people are able to avoid situations of temptation. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ taught us:

“There lies within the body a piece of flesh. If it is sound, the whole body is sound; and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted. Verily this piece is the heart.” (Bukhari)

Healing Body and Soul

1. *Seek cures for your illnesses.*

Pay attention to both the diseases of the heart and the body, and seek the appropriate cure.

2. *Pray to Allah for healing.*

Remember that He is the *al-Shafi* and that healing starts with Him.

3. *Remember the du`a's of the Prophet ﷺ.*

In addition to what was mentioned above:

i) When visiting a sick person:

أَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ الْعَظِيمَ رَبَّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ أَنْ يَشْفِيكَ

“I ask Allah the Mighty, Lord of the Mighty Throne that He cures you.” (Ahmad, Tirmidhi)

ii) Reciting Surat al-Fatiha seven times. (Tirmidhi)

iii) Aishah (ra) said, “When a member of the Prophet’s family got ill, the Prophet would blow over his body by reciting the two protective surahs (Al-Falaq [113] and An-Nas [114]) and would rub him with his hand.” (Muslim)

iv) A`udhu bi `izzati Allahi wa qudratihi mimma ajidu wa uhadhir.

“I seek refuge and protection in the august might and power of Allah from the pain and illness I am suffering from and I am afraid of.” (Ibn Majah)

4. *The Qur'an is a healing.*

Allah (swt) says about the Qur'an:

“And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers...” (Qur'an, [17:82](#))

The Qur'an is a physical healing and is an ultimate spiritual healing for our hearts.

May Allah al-Shafi heal our hearts and bodies. Ameen (Amen).

cures.



The Protective Wing

“He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer (*al-Muhyamin*), the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.” (Qur’an, [59:23](#))

The last three verses of Surat al-Hashr (Qur’an Chapter 59) have been my favorite verses to recite for a while because they are the only consecutive verses in the Qur’an that list some of Allah’s Names one after the other. Throughout this series, we have covered all of the Names in these verses except one: *al-Muhyamin* (the Overseer). *Insha’Allah* (God willing) today’s discussion will be on this beautiful Name of Allah, *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He). If you can, try to memorize verses 22-24 of Surat al-Hashr and see how amazing it is to recite these Names of Allah (swt) while understanding them and connecting to Allah!

The Overseeing Guardian

I have translated this Name as the Overseeing Guardian, but *insha’Allah* understanding the root will give us a more holistic understanding.

Al-Muhaymin comes from the root h-m-n (ح-م-ن) (although there is a longer discussion on its root being a-m-n, I will not go into it here). The root can be used in the context of a bird that *haymana* over its chicks, meaning it extended its wing over them, protecting them. If a soldier *haymana* over a city, it means he took control of it and watches over it. In modern Arabic, we say “*al-haymana*,” meaning hegemony¹. Allah (swt) also describes the Qur’an as *mu-haymin*, meaning that it will dominate over all the other books.

So *haymana* is complete control, and when it comes to Allah (swt), one that is accompanied with protection. If you mess up at work, and someone tells you, “Everything is going to be ok;” it is not always reassuring. The person might mean well, but you know that they have no power over the situation, so their reassurance does not really help. But if your boss tells you, “Don’t worry about it;” then you are at peace. Why? Because you know that he is the one with ultimate control over the situation. If he tells you, “Don’t worry about it,” you know you don’t have to worry. You know you can be at ease.

Allah (swt) is *al-Muhaymin*. He is the One in total control who protects.

Worry and the Protective Wing

Connecting to this Name is the ultimate antidote to excessive worrying and stress. We all worry a little: about the future, about things that we want, or about our fate. But this Name is a call to internal calm because we know Allah (swt) is in control. He is *al-Muhaymin*.

As the Arabic word indicates, when a hen covers her chicks with her wings, that is *haymana*. That is the complete protection and comfort that Allah (swt) gives us. And just like the chicks feel protected and at peace because of the knowledge of this complete

control and protection, our knowledge of *al-Muhaymin* should afford us even more peace.

Connecting to al-Muhaymin

1. Supervise, take control over and protect your inner state

Al-Ghazali counsels: “Every servant who watches over his heart until he supervises its depths and its secrets, and also takes possession of reforming his inner states and attributes, and undertakes to protect it continuously according to the requirements of reform, will then be ‘guardian’ in relation to his heart.”

2. Memorize these verses from Surat al-Hashr

“He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer [al-Muhaymin], the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (Qur’an, [59:22-24](#))

1. dominance, esp. of one over a group

الجَوَادُّ الْمَنَّانُ

Pouring Blessings: What Is Your Greatest Blessing?

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: “Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* [exalted is He] is *Jawad* and He loves those who are magnanimous in giving. He loves excellent moral character and detests meanness.” (Bayhaqi)

Today I am going to be talking about two of Allah’s Names that focus on different aspects of His Generosity. The first is His Name *al-Jawad* and the second is His Name *al-Mannan*.

Al-Jawad comes from the root j-w-d (ج-و-د) and it means something plentiful or magnanimous. *Jawad* is the name given to a strong and fast horse, and *jawd* is heavy, pouring rainfall. The Prophet ﷺ taught us that, “Allah’s Hands are full, and that fullness is not diminished by His giving day and night...” (Muslim)

Just like a heavy rain that falls and nourishes everything, Allah’s giving is like that and more. Blessings rain on us every single day and we do not even notice. *Al-Jawad* is the One who is magnanimous in spirit and magnanimous in giving.

Something happened to me a few years back, when I visited Boston, which highlighted to me how Allah manifests His Names in

our lives. I was taking the underground, called the “T”, with a friend. The way the system operates is that you need a card to touch in, but you do not need it to leave, so you only pay a flat rate upon entry. My friend touched in, and as I tried to, it turned out that my card did not have enough money in it. As I turned around to top-up my card, out of nowhere, a stranger came and used her card to let me in. I was startled, and she gave me a big smile and left.

The funny thing is that, in that period in my life, I was not in the best spiritual state. So I could not view it as a reward or appreciation for any good I may have done; that is Allah *al-Jawad*, who rains His blessings down even on sinners. He is Magnanimous in spirit and Magnanimous in His giving. We all breathe in air out of His magnanimity, whether we are good or bad people. Allah gives freely, as we are told in the Qur’an:

“Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills.” (Qur’an, [5:64](#))

The Greatest Blessing

One of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ once called to Allah (swt), saying:

“O Allah, I ask you as all praise is Yours. There is no god except You, You are *al-Mannan* [the Bestower], the Originator of the Heavens and Earth, Possessor of Majesty and Honor. O the Ever-Living, O Self-Subsisting.”

The Prophet ﷺ heard him and said: “He has supplicated to Allah using His Greatest Name; when supplicated with this Name, He answers, and when asked with this Name, He gives.” (Abu Dawud)

Recently, I bought something really beautiful. I was not sure if I

was going to buy it, but somehow, I got it just before `Eid. Whenever I see it, I smile because I feel like it was an `Eid gift from Allah (swt).

It is always nice to look at the things that you have – from something as small as a bag, to the family and friends you have—and know that their ultimate source is Allah (swt), and be grateful to Him for His gifts.

Previously in this series, we have talked about Allah the Giver of Gifts and the Provider. This Name shows us a different form of His giving: it is Allah *al-Mannan*. I will translate it for ease as the Bestower, but *insha’Allah* (God willing) we will delve deeper into its meaning here.

The word *mann* (مَنَّ) comes from the root m-n-n (ن-ن-ن) and is an intense form of the word, which means to cut something and leave with it. Allah (swt) says in the Qur’an:

“And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted.” (Qur’an, [68:3](#))

The word *mamnoon* has been translated as uninterrupted, meaning a reward that is not ‘cut off’. *Al-Mannan* is an intensified form of the root and means to give freely or liberally.

At the surface, this Name may not seem any different from His Name the Most Generous (*al-Kareem*), who gives much more than expected or deserved. What is interesting though is how Allah (swt) uses the verb form of the word in the Qur’an:

“Certainly did Allah confer great favor [manna] upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.” (Qur’an, [3:164](#))

Allah (swt) reminds us of the status of the Prophet ﷺ by using the word “*mann*“. When we look at the world around us, we realize that in terms of material things, Allah (swt) has given things to different categories of people. Some of the most corrupt people are extremely wealthy, and so are some generous philanthropists. Material wealth, which we understand as ultimately from God, does not reflect one’s spiritual standing with Him.

When Allah (swt) refers to His favors in the form of *mann*, an intense giving, He talks about those favors related to the Hereafter. He tells us that he has favored us by giving us a messenger who is from us, who purifies us and teaches us (Qur’an, [3:164](#)). In another verse, Allah (swt) says:

“They consider it a favor to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, “Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful.”” (Qur’an, [49:17](#))

It is easier to remember to be grateful for material and emotional blessings because we reap the benefits in the present. But Allah (swt) reminds us of everything He gives us, and particularly the gifts related to our connection with Him in this life that lead to being with Him in the Hereafter. It is a blessing we sometimes take for granted. The ability to turn to Him, to seek wisdom and comfort from the Qur’an, and to learn from the example of the Prophet ﷺ; these are all great gifts from *al-Mannan*.

Allah (swt) also tells us in the Qur’an about people on the Day of Judgment:

“They will say, “Indeed, we were previously among our people fearful [of displeasing Allah]. So Allah conferred favor (fa manna) upon us and protected us from the punishment of the Scorching Fire. “” (Qur’an, [52:26-27](#))

The greatest *mann* from Allah (swt) is ultimately Paradise. For the very little that we do, we are given something that no language has the words to describe. May Allah (swt) make us all of the people of Paradise.

Connecting to al-Jawad and al-Mannan

1. Be Magnanimous.

It was said about the Prophet ﷺ that “when it came to doing good, he was the most magnanimous (*ajwad*) of people, and he was at his utmost magnanimity during the month of Ramadan,” (Bukhari). Be magnanimous in spirit, and be magnanimous in giving. Nothing you give is ever lost.

2. Reflect on the material gifts and emotional gifts, but also reflect on and be grateful for the spiritual gifts.

The greatest gifts we have been given are the spiritual gifts. Wealth may or may not be accompanied by peace of mind in this world, and ultimately, we will be asked about what we spent our wealth on. But the gifts of closeness to Allah (swt) are truly the ones to be cherished. Reflecting on these blessings is one of the ways to increase our love for Allah (swt).

3. Ponder over the gift of the Prophet ﷺ.

Allah reminds us that one of His gifts to us is the Prophet ﷺ. Learn from the Prophet’s ﷺ character and study his seerah (biography) to understand why Allah (swt) told us that the Prophet ﷺ was given to us as a favor from the Most High.

4. *Do not be a person that constantly reminds people of the favors that you have done for them.*

There are two types of *mann*: in action and in speech. *Mann*, as an action from Allah (swt), has a sweetness to it because its Giver is the One who gives freely and is the most generous. Moreover, His reminders cause us to return to Him, and returning to Him results in more blessings. This *mann* as an action is specific to Allah (swt) because of the perfection of His gifts. Then there is the *mann* of speech, when people remind you of their favors upon you. Allah (swt) tells us, “*Do not invalidate your charities with reminders (mann) or injury,*” (Qur’an, [2:264](#)). When you give, remember that your intention is for Allah (swt), and do not remind people of the things you have done for them.



What Passed You By Was Never For You

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: ‘Indeed, Allah is the Arbitrator (*al-Hakam*) and to Him is the judgment.’ (Abu Dawud)

Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) is *al-Hakam*. The root of this word is the three-letter root h-k-m (ح - ك - م), which also gives rise to His name *al-Hakeem*. The root means ‘to prevent’ or ‘to restrain’ (المنع), and it is linked to preventing oppression; *hikma* (wisdom) also means ‘the prevention of ignorance’ (*maqayis al-lugha*).

Hukm is not only knowledge, but understanding and execution of that knowledge; it can therefore mean ‘decree’ or ‘judgment’. In Arabic, the referee in a sports match is called a *hakam*, and a *hakim* is a ruler.

Thus, Allah’s (swt) Name *al-Hakam* means that He is the ultimate arbitrator and judge, Whose rulings no one can overturn, as al-Ghazali points out.

Al-Hakam in this world

On Decree

The Prophet ﷺ said in a hadith (narration):

‘The reality of faith is knowing that what has passed you by was not going to befall you; and that what has befallen you was not going to pass you by.’ (Tabarani)

He ﷺ also said:

‘Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if Allah had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if Allah had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages are dry.’ (Tirmidhi)

One of the basic tenets of our faith is belief in “*qadar* (predestination), both in its good and in its evil aspects” (hadith reported by Muslim). But what does *qadar* mean and how do we balance it with planning and action?

Allah has decreed certain things, and those things cannot be overturned. He has also decreed other things which He allows to be changed, as the Prophet ﷺ told us: “Nothing can change the Divine decree except *du`a`* (prayer),” (Ahmad). Moreover, he ﷺ also tells us “*Du`a`* is beneficial with regard to what has been decreed and what has not been decreed. The *du`a`* meets the calamity that has been decreed and wrestles with it, until the Day of Resurrection.” (Tabarani)

The truth is that we do not know Allah’s (swt) decree – those things that cannot be overturned – and we will not be asked about His decree. We will be asked about our responsibilities. Allah (swt) teaches us this through the example of the Prophet ﷺ. The Quraysh tribe was plotting to assassinate the Prophet ﷺ so he planned with `Ali and Abu Bakr *radi Allahu `anhumaa* (may God be pleased with them both). `Ali (ra) would take the Prophet’s ﷺ

place in his bed to buy time, while the Prophet ﷺ escaped with Abu Bakr (ra).

At the same time, the would-be assassins planned too. They all planned to attack the Prophet ﷺ in his bed at the same time and murder him, so that the blame would be shared equally between all the tribes, and no one individual would be responsible. Allah (swt) says of this in the Qur’an:

‘And [remember, O Muhammad], when those who disbelieved plotted against you to restrain you or kill you or evict you [from Makkah]. But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.’ (Quran, [8:30](#))

In the end, it was Allah’s (swt) plan that won; indeed, it is always His plan that wins: the Prophet ﷺ escaped safely to Medina.

We forget that the point of Islam is submission to Allah. Part of submission is working with the means – because we have been commanded to do so and given certain means – as well as understanding that He ultimately decides what He allows to pass. We make the mistake of seeing planning and relying on Allah as opposites, whereas they are complementary when viewed under the umbrella of submission to Him.

Sometimes, Allah (swt) shows us the larger picture through the everyday and the mundane. We all have days in which things seem to be going according to plan, yet somehow they get messed up. You might leave the house early enough to get to work, then remember that you forgot something important and have to go back. You might then get into your car and find that traffic is terrible, or get on the train and find that there are delays.

Throughout it all, you are annoyed, wondering why this is happening to you—especially since you put effort into being on time—and

wondering what you could have done differently. Yet somehow, you find that you make it just in time; or maybe you do end up being late, but your boss is too, so everything is fine. Or perhaps you are late, and you are reprimanded by your boss.

Delays and detours are an inevitable part of life, both literally and metaphorically. Many times, our planning ahead helps us, but there may be times when it does not. Yet Allah (swt) shows you that He will always get you where you need to be, thought it may not be where you want to be at that time. It may not happen how you envisaged it, but there is always a lesson to be learned from the Most Wise. Focus on what you can control, and leave what you cannot.

We should learn from these daily lessons and have trust in the Most High. What is best will come, whenever He wills. Allah (swt) tells us:

‘...Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.’ (Quran, [65:3](#))

On His rulings

According to Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr, Allah’s (swt) rulings and decrees are part of His *hukm*. Allah says:

‘Then is it the judgment of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who are certain [in faith].’ (Quran, [5:50](#))

Allah (swt) has put upon us certain responsibilities. We are commanded to commit to the pillars of Islam: testimony of faith, prayer, fasting in Ramadan, zakat (almsgiving) and Hajj (pilgrimage). We must strive to perfect our character, work for justice and remove oppression; we are commanded to invite people to the

beauty of our religion and to seek knowledge—all in submission to the Most High.

Part of believing in Allah as al-Hakam is to know that these rulings came from the Most Wise and the Most Just, committing to them to the best of our ability even when we do not understand them or when we feel down. It is easy to say ‘I am not feeling my prayer’ and succumb to the urge not to pray; it is easy to think, ‘I am in love with someone, but we can’t get married right now. Why should we deny ourselves things when are in love?’; yet we must strive to uphold His rulings.

Of course, this does not mean that we do not seek to understand Allah’s (swt) rulings, nor am I speaking about matters in which there is a considerable difference of opinion and there is more than one possible ruling to take. Rather, I am speaking here about the established responsibilities Allah (swt) has decreed upon us.

Al-Hakam on the Day of Judgment

‘Say, “O Allah, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, You will judge (tahkumu) between your servants concerning that over which they used to differ”.’ (Quran, [39:46](#))

We all know that we will return to Allah (swt). On the Day of Judgment, He will be the ultimate Judge. He will judge between us regarding that upon which we used to differ, and everyone will receive their just reward. Knowing this should inspire hope and vigilance – hope, because we know that Allah (swt) will rule according to wisdom, justice and mercy; and vigilance, because we will be asked about what we used to do, and so we should ensure that we take care of our responsibilities and avoid oppressing others. Allah (swt) reminds us:

'And Allah decides; there is no adjuster of His decision.' (Quran, [13:41](#))

Connecting to al-Hakam

- *Lessons, not regrets*

The Prophet ﷺ reminded us:

'If something befalls you, do not say, 'If only I had done otherwise,' but rather say, 'Allah's Will be done,' for 'if only' opens the door to Satan's mischief.' (Bukhari)

Our duty is to work to the best of our ability, utilizing the means around us and ultimately having trust in Allah (swt). Sometimes this will require us to pursue something and never give up, and sometimes it will require us to take a different route. How do we know which is the 'correct' way?

Sometimes there is no way to know, and there is no point in beating yourself up about what you assume 'could have' or 'would have' been. Allah (swt) will not ask us about the unseen world, which only He knows. We judge things according to our limited ability, do the best we can, and ultimately leave the outcome to Allah (swt).

And sometimes Allah addresses this mentality in the things that happen to us. I recently signed up for something that I thought would be beneficial. When I weighed the pros and cons, what pushed me to sign up was the thought: 'What if I regret not doing it?' The experience turned out to be terrible. However, had I not signed up, I would have assumed that I would have benefited, and regretted my decision!

This does not mean that our actions have no effect. Allah (swt)

wills that that our actions, or inactions, have a certain consequence. So, deciding not to study for an exam because 'Allah's decree will pass' will most likely cause us to fail. Allah (swt) has created certain laws in this universe which link causes and effects.

If we find that we were in fact lacking in effort or lacking in our actions, we must take those lessons and apply them to future experiences, but not regret the past. Knowing that Allah (swt) is al-Hakam is to know that His decree cannot be overturned.

- *How should you judge?*

'Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing.' (Quran, [4:58](#))

In a famous story, when the great companion and nephew of the Prophet ﷺ, `Ali ibn Abi Talib, was the Caliph, a non-Muslim man stole `Ali's armor. `Ali took the matter to Shurayh, the judge. As the non-Muslim man had the armor in his hands, the burden of proof was on `Ali; Shurayh asked `Ali if he had a witness to the theft, but `Ali only had his son al-Husayn. Shurayh therefore ruled in favor of the non-Muslim, because a son cannot be a witness in favor of his father.

The Prophet ﷺ also taught us that our state matters when we are making a judgment: *'A judge should not judge between two persons while he is in an angry mood,'* (Bukhari). He reminds us that emotions influence our judgments.

Finally, we should ask: how would we like Allah (swt) to judge us? The mercy and understanding that we hope from Allah (swt) is what we should give to other people when making a judgment.

المُبْدِيُّ الْمُعِيدُ

Do You Think You Can't Come Back?

One pair of the Names mentioned in the famous *hadith* (narration) of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) is *al-Mubdi'*, *al-Mu'id*: the Beginner, the Restorer—although they are not specifically found in the Qur'an or other *hadith*. According to Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi, some Names must be paired together (such as *al-dharr al-Nafi'*), and this is one of those pairs. He also states that some Names are not explicitly mentioned, but they are implied in the Qur'an:

“The Day when We will fold the heaven like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records. As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. [That is] a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, We will do it.” (Qur'an, [21:104](#))

Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), also says:

“Indeed, it is He who originates [creation] and repeats.” (Qur'an, [85:13](#))

The apparent meaning of this Name is, as al-Ghazali says, that “God – may He be praised and exalted – initiated the creation of mankind and He is also the One who will restore them.”

It is a reminder for us that Allah (swt) began everything, and He can restore it after it is gone, and so we should be mindful of the fact that we will return to Him.

There is another aspect to His Name *al-Mu`id* that is related to our hearts. Some of us may have gone through years of being on an “eman (faith) high.” Our acts of worship were improving and submission to Allah (swt) was easier.

But somewhere along the way, something was lost. Slowly, our faith chipped away; things that we would never dream of doing before became acceptable.

And the worst part? We went so far we couldn’t even imagine that we could go back.

If this is what is going through your mind, you are negating Allah’s power to bring up and restore—to bring you back. When Jonah *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) left his people out of anger, Allah (swt) caused him to be swallowed by a whale.

Imagine this: from being an honored prophet, to the belly of a whale. How many of us have felt like we were in that dark place, like Jonah (as)?

Instead of turning away from Allah (swt), instead of believing that there was no hope for him, instead of believing that he could never be brought back, he turned to Allah (swt). In the midst of all the darkness he was in, he called out to God with these famous words:

“There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers.” (Qur’an, [21:87](#))

And Allah (swt) brought him back. But the way Allah brings back your heart is not that it will necessarily be the same as before; it

can be even better. We are told: *“And his Lord chose him and made him of the righteous,”* (Qur’an, [68:50](#)). What else happened? *“And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more. And they believed, so We gave them enjoyment [of life] for a time,”* (Qur’an, [37:147-148](#)).

Al-Mubdi, al-Mu`id

1. Remember that the One who began everything will also bring it back again, so hold yourself accountable.
2. Don’t give up on yourself. We all mess up and sometimes it lasts for a while, but Allah (swt) can bring you back. The companion Handala told the Prophet ﷺ that he felt like a hypocrite because he could not maintain his levels of faith when he was away from the Prophet ﷺ. But the Prophet ﷺ told him that that was normal, and fluctuations in faith do not make one a hypocrite. The important thing is to keep up our good deeds and stay away from the bad.
3. Like Prophet Jonah (as), take the practical steps that are within your control to make your situation better. If you feel like you do not connect to your prayers, then work on that first. If you find that life is too busy for you to reflect, make a commitment to have five minutes a day in which you reflect on Allah and reflect on your blessings; these small steps help. Remember that Allah does not reject those who seek Him.
4. Pray to Allah. Your *du`as* (supplications) are powerful. The Prophet ﷺ said, *“Faith wears out in your heart as clothes wear out, so ask Allah to renew the faith in your hearts.”* (Tabarani) If you can, make it a point to wake up before the fajr prayer, even if it is just for five minutes, and talk to Allah and ask Him. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, *“Our Lord descends to the heaven on the last third of every night, and he says: Who is*

calling upon me that I may answer him? Who is asking from me that I may give him? Who is seeking my forgiveness that I may forgive him?" (Bukhari). If that is too difficult, then some prayers before you sleep or before you start your day.



Knowing What is Hidden: Why Can't I Just Do What I Want?

We have probably all been there at some point: a big celebration where everyone is hugging, and you feel slightly left out because you cannot hug the opposite gender. Or maybe you are awkwardly praying in a corner, and someone walks in on you, asks you what you are doing, and you cannot even answer because you are praying!

Why does it have to be so complicated?

For some of us, the feelings described above may be fleeting because we understand the bigger picture and the meaning behind our actions. But for others, these feelings grow into resentment. Why all these rules?

One of Allah's beautiful Names is *al-Khabir*. The root of this word is kh-b-r (خ-ب-ر), which means 'to know', or 'to be aware of the real inner nature of something', or 'to be an expert in something because you know both the inner and the outer'. In Arabic if I say someone is *khabir*, I mean that he is an expert; he knows all there is to know about his field.

Al-Ghazali states that when knowledge ('ilm) is related to hidden

secrets, it is called awareness (*khibra*). Thus Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) is *al-Khabir*, whose knowledge encompasses both the inner and outer nature of things. He not only knows our actions, but He knows the state of our heart. He knows the outward actions that He has ordained and their hidden benefits, which only those who are aware will truly appreciate.

This Name has been mentioned 45 times in the Qur'an, sometimes alone and sometimes with another Name:

"Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle (Al-Latif), the Acquainted (al-Khabir)." (Quran, [6:103](#))

Allah (swt) also says:

"But does he not know that when the contents of the graves are scattered, And that within the breasts is obtained, Indeed, their Lord with them, that Day, is [fully] Acquainted (khabir)." (Quran, [100:9-11](#))

So what does this mean for us?

When it comes to Allah's (swt) rules, He is the expert because He knows us and the nature of this world.

Allah (swt) created us. We mentioned elsewhere in this series that He is close to us, and He hears us whether we speak or not. And Allah's Name *al-Khabir* lets us know something else: what Allah (swt) has ordained for us benefits us, and what He has prohibited is harmful.

When we use terms like '*haram*' (forbidden) and '*fard*' (obligatory), divorced from any context and, more importantly, divorced from the One who has decreed, we only see the actions in a superficial way: 'This is prohibited; this is forced upon me.' When something happens that we cannot understand – 'Why did Al-

lah (swt) not respond to my *du'a'* (supplication)?' – we cannot see from where we are standing that while something may have looked good to us, He knew its internal reality, which would not have been good for us. Allah is *al-Khabir*.

Moreover, what we fail to see is that what is prohibited is necessarily bad, and what has been made obligatory is necessarily good – even if we do not understand the reasoning at that particular point in time. We treat Allah (swt) like He is an old-fashioned parent who needs to 'get with the times', but in truth, we do not realize that when we took the time out of a hectic schedule to pray, we were enveloped by the angels. We do not comprehend that those supplications and tears in the night averted harm from befalling us, and opened a door to a greater good. We are oblivious to the fact that those restrictions we complain about, which mean we cannot go to certain places or do certain things, have actually protected us. Allah tells us that *"...man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty," (Qur'an, [17:11](#))*. And it is our haste that sometimes prevents us from seeing the realities.

Allah (swt) is aware and is the expert of the hidden things.

We can put up a front to people. Even your best friend may not know your intention behind an action, whether good or bad. She may assume you hurt her because of some malicious intent, or she may assume a gift was out of kindness – but only Allah (swt) truly knows. People may see that our prayer is perfect in its form, but the reality could be that our mind was elsewhere.

When the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) informed the Companions *radi Allahu 'anhum* (may God be pleased with them) that they were going to see a man from the people of Paradise, they all wanted to know what he did to earn him such a station. One companion even slept over in his house to find out, but he did not see anything that was out of the ordinary. He later found out that

it was because that man did not sleep at night except that he let go of any grudge he held against people and forgave them for any wrongs. Similarly, we are told that Abu Bakr (ra) was elevated not due to a formidable number of extra prayers and fasts, but because of something that settled in his heart. Allah (swt) sees your heart and He wants to see it beautiful. Whether you beautify it is your choice.

A note here is that those Companions did not ignore what was obligatory upon them with the excuse that their heart was sound; that statement is actually a sign of an ill heart. Those Companions prayed, sacrificed their worldly possessions and always strived to be better, but the state of their heart gave life and true meaning to their external actions.

Connecting to al-Khabir

1. *Know yourself and work on your heart*

Al-Ghazali says: “Man’s share in this name lies in his being aware of what goes on in his world. His world is his heart, his body, and the hidden things by which his heart is characterized: deception and treachery, preoccupation with earthly things, harboring evil intent while putting on a good front, or adopting a decorous show of sincerity while being devoid of it. Only one who is extremely experienced knows these characteristics.”

2. *Trust in His Knowledge of the hidden things*

One of the authors on self-development whose work I love reading is Shawn Achor. He has spent years researching happiness, and focuses on small, actionable things we can do that will improve our overall happiness, which in turn has a positive effect on the other aspects of our lives. He backs up his assertions with many studies. I have read enough of his work that, if I were to

hear a two-minute podcast in which he gives five tips for increasing productivity without citing studies, I would take what he says at face value and assume that his suggestions are beneficial. We may all have people like that, in whose expertise we trust.

Allah (swt) is far above any analogy, but He is the expert and the only One who has knowledge of the things that are not apparent to us. Hajar, the wife of the Prophet Ibrahim *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him), knew she could trust in Allah (swt) because He knows the hidden realities.

When Ibrahim left her, she asked him whether this was from Allah. When he responded in the affirmative, she knew that Allah would only decree something for a benefit. Although being left in a desert with your infant child is possibly one of the worst things a person can be faced with, she did not despair – and Allah (swt) showed her how trusting in His knowledge benefited her in the long run.

3. *Understand the inner meanings of outer actions*

One of the reasons why we do not comprehend the inner realities is that we focus on the form to the exclusion of the spirit. Prayer is tiring to us because we do not turn fully nor do we connect to Allah (swt). Fasting is burdensome because it becomes restricted to fasting from food and drink. Zakat is annoying because we are losing materially. But what happens when we emphasize both equally?

Let us use the prayer as an example: When we say, “Allahu akbar” (God is greater) in prayer, our heart is at rest because we remember that He is greater than all our worries and other priorities; when we are in prostration and we remember that we are at the closest we can be to Him; and when we realize that

we have been given a living link to the Prophet ﷺ in the salaam (greeting of peace). So make it your aim to understand the internal dimensions of the actions of worship. Imam al-Ghazali has a very beneficial book that explains these internal dimensions.

الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Who is the Greatest?

“There are two statements which are light on the tongue, heavy on the scales [on the Day of Judgment], and beloved by the Most Merciful: ‘*Subhan Allahi wa bihamdih, subhana Rabby al-`A-zeem*’ (exalted is Allah, and praise be to Him; exalted is my Lord, the Most Great).”

– hadith (tradition) of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) narrated by Muslim.

In a previous article, we talked about how Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He) is the Knower of the Unseen and the Witnessed. We exist and function in the realm of the witnessed – the physical world that we can perceive with our senses and faculties – and we are also aware that there is an unseen realm that we cannot access using those same senses. Some things from that realm have been revealed to us, such as the fact that when we pray and recite Surat al-Fatiha (the Opening), it is a conversation between Allah (swt) and us, because He responds to our words.

Despite knowing this, we often forget, and behave in a way that assumes this is all there is – that the world of the ‘witnessed’ is the only thing that exists. When that happens, our priorities get

mixed up and we fail to see things as they really are, but rather only as they appear. Things that are seemingly ‘great’ easily impress us, and we elevate those things.

So we elevate money and status, but the Prophet ﷺ reminds us that what is underneath is what truly matters. We seek approval from people and society, forgetting that it is Allah’s (swt) approval that matters most. We raise things up to stations that they truly do not deserve. Empires founded on injustice have been called ‘great’, and people who have committed massacres have also been referred to as ‘great’.

Fame, too, becomes a standard for greatness; we pursue and elevate it, and we see people as great just because they are famous. Alternatively, we view ourselves as great because the standards of this world tell us that we are: for our beauty, our educational achievement, our ethnicity and skin tone, or our wealth.

And so Allah (swt) reminds us that He is *al-`Aliyy*, *al-`Azeem* – the Most High, the Most Great. It is a reminder for us not to be duped by the standards of this world for greatness. Allah’s Name *al-`Aliyy* is from the root ‘a-l-w (ع - ل - و) which means ‘to be high and exalted’, while *al-`Azeem* means ‘to be imposing and great’.

These Names are general enough that, as Ibn Al-Qayyim says, they encompass all kinds of greatness and all sorts of elevation. And so these Names of Allah (swt) shift our attention: do not be distracted by the shiny lights, and do not forget that the real standards for greatness are those set by Allah (swt).

Qarun was of the people of Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him), and he was given great wealth, but he tyrannized his people. Allah (swt) tells us that “he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, ‘Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qarun. Indeed, he is one

of great (*`azeem*) fortune,” (Qur’an, [28:79](#)). Despite his tyranny, they saw that he was great because of his wealth. But Allah (swt) “caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves,” (Qur’an, [28:81](#)). Allah (swt) reminds us:

“That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness (`uluwwan*) upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.”* (Qur’an, [28:83](#))

So when you begin to be overtaken by worldly standards of greatness, remember who is truly Great and Most High, and derive your standards from Him. He tells us that the best outcome is for those who are righteous, so honor the things that He honors. Allah (swt) tells us:

*“And whoever honors (*yu`azzim*) the symbols of Allah—indeed, it is from the piety of hearts.”* (Quran, [22:32](#))

That is when you can be, in a human sense, ‘great’. We all remember the boxer Muhammad Ali’s famous words about being the greatest, but we forget that he also said:

“Allah is the Greatest. I’m just the greatest boxer.”

Rukoo` (bowing) and Sujood (prostration): Reminders

In the [Sweetness of Prayer series](#), we talked about the internal dimensions of rukoo` and sujood. When we bow to Allah (swt), we say:

سبحان ربي العظيم

“How Perfect is my Lord, al-`Azeem” (Ahmad, Abu Dawud)

We bring together the physical act of bowing to the Most Great, with a verbal reminder of who He is, in the hope that our hearts also bow in awe of Him. This happens even more so when we prostrate to Him: we are at our physically lowest point, but we are praising He who is far elevated above everything. We say:

سبحان ربي الأعلى

“How Perfect is my Lord, al-A`la [the Highest]”

The Prophet ﷺ also taught us that:

إن أمتي يومئذ غر من السجود محجلون من الوضوء

“My ummah (community) on that day [the Day of Judgment] will surely have bright faces because of sujood [...]” (Ahmad)

As these meanings permeate in our hearts, we have to then remember that our hearts should not bow or prostrate except to Him: al-`Aliyy, al-`Azeem. This is why prayer is so important. We not only take the time out to connect to Allah (swt), but we are also reminded of His attributes at least five times a day, and thus reminded of true reality.

Connecting to Allah al-`Aliyy, al-`Azeem

- Check yourself

A recurring lesson for us is to always check our ego. Whenever you feel that you are ‘great’ or ‘higher’ than other people because of worldly standards, remember that it is only Allah (swt) who is Great and High. Accordingly, He raises people and abases others. The Prophet ﷺ told us:

من تواضع رفعه الله

“Whoever humbles himself to God, Allah will raise him.” (Muslim)

This does not conflict with feeling a sense of accomplishment when you achieve something, or feeling pleased when you do something good. The Prophet ﷺ taught us: “When a good deed becomes a source of pleasure for you and an evil deed becomes a source of disgust, then you are a believer,” (Tirmidhi).

These things should cause us to return to Allah (swt) and thank Him for what He has enabled us to do. The Prophet ﷺ defined arrogance as “rejecting the truth and looking down on people” (Muslim). Indeed, the latest research shows that humility is one of four critical leadership factors.

Remember that Allah (swt) loves great character, so work on yourself for Him.

- Re-orient your standards

When we view something as great, our natural inclination is to elevate it, desire it and even emulate it. Do not elevate things more than they are, and do not be deceived by worldly standards. More and more, we are being sold on impossible beauty standards, making money no matter what the means, and flaunting what we have.

The Most Great is the One who defines for us the meaning of greatness. A person can be ‘great’ according to human standards. A person can be great and elevated through their ethics, character and manners. The best way to be great in the Eyes of Allah (swt) is to follow His beloved Messenger ﷺ.

- Be reminded through your prayers

The prayer is a world unto itself. In the [Sweetness of Prayer](#) series, we tried to understand in depth the meaning behind all of our actions. The prayer is a sanctuary because through it we turn completely to Allah (swt) and remember our purpose. It reminds us of His attributes, and when we truly reflect, gives us insight into the world around us.



“Do Not Leave Me To Myself For The Blink
Of An Eye...”

One of the purposes of this series is to help us understand Allah; to bring us closer to Him, and see the world in light of His divine Names and attributes. While it is difficult to write about any of Allah’s Names because each Name is a world unto itself, I found it even more difficult to write about these Names of Allah: *al-Hayy, al-Qayyum*.

According to some opinions, these are the greatest Names of Allah *subhanahu wa ta`ala* (exalted is He). It is apparent from the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ that he loved to call on Allah by these Names. For example, when the Prophet ﷺ felt any distress, he would say:

“Ya Hayy Ya Qayyum, bi-Rahmatika astagheeth.”

‘O Ever-Living, O Sustainer, in Your Mercy I seek relief.’ (Tirmidhi)

Once a man prayed to Allah, saying, “O Allah, I ask you as all praise is Yours. There is no god except You, You are *al-Mannan* (the Bestower), the Originator of the Heavens and Earth, Possessor of Majesty and Honor. O Ever-Living (*Hayy*), O Self-Subsisting (*Qayyum*).”

The Prophet ﷺ heard him and said: “He has supplicated to Allah using His Greatest Name; when supplicated with this Name, He answers, and when asked with this Name He gives.” (Abu Dawud)

Moreover, the Prophet ﷺ advised his daughter, Fatima *radi Allahu `anha* (may God be pleased with her), to say in the morning and in the evening:

“Ya hayyu ya Qayyum, by Your Mercy I seek help, rectify for me all of my affairs and do not leave me to depend on myself, even for the blink of an eye.” (Hakim)

Why is this Name so special? And why do we ask the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of all, not to leave us to ourselves, not even for the blink of an eye?

Sheikh ash-Sha’rawy said that *al-hayy* – which comes from the root that means life – brings together all perfect qualities because there cannot be a good quality before there is life. When we call on Allah *al-hayy*, we are recognizing Him as the absolute source of life and thus the source of all perfect qualities.

Al-Qayyum comes from the root ‘to stand up or to stand aright’, and thus Allah *al-Qayyum* is the One by whom all things are eternally managed aright. He gave us a brain and then a body and limbs to give action to the thoughts in our heads. He is the source of everything needed by the worshipper from the One s/he worships. Allah tells us in the famous verse:

“Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living (al-hayy), the Sustainer of [all] existence (Al-Qayyum). Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His

knowledge except for what He wills. His kursi [throne] extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.” (Qur’an, [2:255](#))

Al-Qayyum is also an intense form of q-a-m (ق-ا-م), which is the continuous self-subsisting sustainer. You are asking Him because He is the source and He is, in every second, sustaining this world. You are asking Him not to leave you to yourself because you know that when you are with Him, your affairs are okay.

You might misjudge, or be led by your desires, or lack wisdom, so you ask the One who constantly manages the affairs of the world not to leave you to yourself: you are asking for His care.

This is why you call on Allah (swt) when you feel defeated. Even if you do not call on Allah with these Names in particular, you know that He has these attributes.

When Noah (peace be upon him) said to Allah, “I am defeated, so help me,” his words may not have included Allah’s Names *al-hayy al-Qayyum*, but they imply them. After being abused and rejected for 950 years, he felt defeated and he knew he had nowhere to go but to Allah.

And He knew that Allah (swt) is the One who the whole world relies on for everything. Allah brought forth a storm to the place where this kind of rain was not normal, because everything is under His control.

1. Hold on to the Source of Life

Remember that Allah (swt) came before everything, and He is the Living who is also the source of life. Everything goes back to Him, and so will we.

2. Have trust in Him

Al-Qayyum encompasses all of His other attributes that pertain to managing the affairs of His creation, such as being the Trustee, the Protector, and the Most Wise. When you feel you are unable, call on Allah al-Qayyum, like the Prophet ﷺ did when he was under distress.

الْبَرُّ الطَّيِّبُ الْمُحْسِنُ

Pay It Forward: God's Goodness

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) has three beautiful Names that relate to His Goodness, but with some nuances. Allah (swt) is *al-Barr*, *at-Tayyib* and *al-Muhsin*. We will explore these nuances here. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"Indeed, we used to supplicate Him before. Indeed, it is He who is the Beneficent (al-Barr), the Merciful." [Quran, [52:28](#)]

Al-Barr, according to Al-Ghazali, is the Doer of Good, the One from Whom every good deed and beneficence comes, and this Name brings together all kinds of goodness at the very highest level. Ibn al-Qayyim says that one of the signs of Allah's *birr* is that He covers your mistakes from people.

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) also told us about Allah (swt):

"O people! Allah is Tayyib (Good) and He only accepts what is good. He has commanded the believers as He has commanded the Messengers: 'O Messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness,' [Quran, [23:51](#)]. And He says, 'O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you

and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him you worship,' [Quran, [2:172](#)]." (Muslim)

Because Allah (swt) is good, He expects us to be good. Additionally, the Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah is Muhsin and He loves those who exhibit excellence,"* [Tabarani].

Allah (swt) tells us that He is the One *"who perfected (ahsana) everything which He created and began the creation of man from clay,"* [Quran, [32:7](#)].

We can see the signs of His excellence in His creation. One only needs to step out into nature to be completely in awe of its beauty; that is from Allah's (swt) *ihsan*, because He is *al-Muhsin*.

He is Good, His Actions are Good and He Accepts Only Good

Allah (swt) is essentially Good – in His essence, in His actions and in what He accepts from us. Allah (swt) tells us about the things that He wants for us in the Qur'an:

"Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship."
[Quran, [2:185](#)]

"Allah wants to make clear to you [the lawful from the unlawful] and guide you to the [good] practices of those before you and to accept your repentance. And Allah is Knowing and Wise. Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow [their] passions want you to digress [into] a great deviation. And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak." [Quran, [4:26-28](#)]

Allah (swt) also tells us what He does not want. He says:

"These are the verses of Allah. We recite them to you, [O Muhammad], in truth; and Allah wants no injustice to the worlds."
[Quran, [3:108](#)]

Throughout this series, we have been introduced to Allah's (swt) love, His generosity, His mercy, and His wisdom. Allah (swt) leaves no room for doubt; He encompasses all forms of goodness at their very highest levels. This is why thinking well of Allah is considered an act of worship; you are affirming these attributes of goodness in your heart and in how you interpret events. Thinking well of Him is having hope that He will accept you when you mess up, that He will overlook your faults, that He will help you overcome, and that He teaches you through hardship. This is what all the Prophets and the righteous knew about Allah, and this is why they persevered. Jonah *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) turned to Allah in the belly of a whale; Hajar accepted that there was good in her being left in the desert with her son; and Moses *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) could say with utter certainty while being chased by Pharaoh and his army, *"No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me"* (Quran, [26:62](#)).

Moreover, He expects us to be good. That is why Allah (swt) addresses both our inner and outer state. He tells us to purify our hearts and purify our actions. He tells us to have faith in our hearts and live that faith in what we do.

Pay it Forward

Sometimes the best way to understand Allah's (swt) attributes is to see how beautiful they are when expressed by human beings, and then remember that whatever good we exhibit is nothing compared to Allah's (swt) goodness. So as Muslims, we are encouraged to have *birr* (piety), *ihsan* (excellence) and *teeb* (goodness). Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an that He is *"[He] who created*

death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best (ahsanu) in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.” [Quran, [67:2](#)]

Ihsan (Excellence)

If we talk about ihsan outside of its religious context, its basic meaning is ‘to do something to its best’. If an event organizer consistently organizes something to the highest standards, some might describe that as ihsan. In a famous hadith (narration), the Prophet ﷺ teaches us the motivation behind doing things to their best, which is knowing that Allah (swt) sees you. When you know that Allah (swt) sees you, no deed is too small and every act can be decorated with excellence and perfection. While religiously ihsan is an internal state, there are external signs. Moreover, Allah (swt) tells us that He loves those who show ihsan. He speaks about those *“who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people – and Allah loves the doers of good (al-Muhsineen),”* [Quran, [3:134](#)].

Even if we feel that our efforts are in vain, Allah (swt) assures us that they are not. Prophet Joseph `alayhi as-salaam (peace be upon him) spent years in hardship, but never compromised his integrity. Allah (swt) says of him:

“And thus We established Joseph in the land to settle therein wherever he willed. We touch with Our mercy whom We will, and We do not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good (al-muhsineen).” [Qur’an [12:56](#)]

Birr (Piety)

Allah (swt) also tells us:

“O you who have believed, when you converse privately, do not converse about sin and aggression and disobedience to the Messenger

but converse about righteousness (al-birr) and piety. And fear Allah, to whom you will be gathered.” [Qur’an [58:9](#)]

Birr is a type of goodness that is accompanied by gentleness. Allah (swt) tells us to have *birr* towards our parents. He shows us that *birr* is not easily attained unless you give from what you love. He says:

“Never will you attain the good [reward] (al-birr) until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love. And whatever you spend – indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.” [Qur’an [3:92](#)]

Thus, in our relationship with our parents, having *birr* is not simply a case of ‘obedience versus disobedience’. It is much more nuanced than that. *Birr* with our parents is about being good to them and having some sort of companionship, as Allah (swt) tells us to *“accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness,”* [Quran, [31:15](#)].

Teeb (Kindness)

Finally, Allah (swt) tells us:

“O you who have believed, spend from the good things (tayyibat) which you have earned...” [Quran, [2:267](#)]

Teeb in regular parlance is also used for ‘kindness’ or purity of heart, and what is *tayyib* is also something good or pure. Before the Prophet ﷺ received revelation, Quraysh had rebuilt the Ka’ba. They were adamant to only use money from good or pure sources – e.g not from usury or gambling – and so the Ka’ba was built in the cube shape we know today because they did not have enough money from pure sources. Originally, it also encompassed an area called “Hijr Ismail”, which today is a small area

outside the Ka'ba. The point is, the Ka'ba was so sacred to them that they knew they could only give for Allah (swt) what was good and pure.

In the Qur'anic context, it is frequently used in relation to the food we consume. As we mentioned above, Allah (swt) is good in His essence and in His actions, and He commands that from us as well. When we think of '*halal*' (permissible) meat, we often only measure it by how the animal is slaughtered. But as Dr. Tariq Ramadan shows us, the way in which the animal is treated in its life is important as well. We may be missing the point when we focus on the technicalities of the law to the exclusion of its spirit.

Allah (swt) loves for us to try to emulate His characteristics of mercy and beauty. Elsewhere in this series, we have mentioned that if we want Allah's (swt) infinite mercy, then we need to have mercy towards people. If we want Allah's (swt) vast forgiveness, then we must forgive others. If we want to be a recipient of Allah's (swt) good, then we should do good to others.

Connecting to the One who encompasses all forms of goodness

1. Reflect on Allah's (swt) goodness in His creation and His actions.
2. Pay it forward: Give from the good that you have been given.
3. Do things with *ihsan* by seeing whatever you do as a transaction with God. How do you want your deeds to be presented to Him?
4. Beautify your relationships with goodness. Be good to people, good to animals and good to the environment.



Stand Firm

“Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength.” (Qur'an, [51:58](#))

Previously in this series, we talked about Allah's Name *al-Samad*, which means the Eternal Refuge. This Name relates to *al-Samad* in that it means the One who is firm in strength. Linguistically it also means something that rises and stays, as well as the hard or apparent part of something.

Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He) reminds us He is *al-Mutayyin* to address any trepidation we might have. We all have worries and fears, and we might even consider giving up on our values and principles for worldly gain. But Allah (swt) reminds us that He is Firm in strength.

Whenever you feel your resolve wavering, hold on to Him. When you feel weak, seek strength from the One who is the Most Strong. When you feel that you cannot be steadfast, hold on to the One who is Firm so you do not slip. Allah (swt) reveals His Names to us so that we can turn to Him in every situation and be reassured no matter what troubles there are around us.

Whenever you feel unsure, turn to Him and understand His Names and attributes so that you can have certainty that Allah can address all your fears and hesitation.

Allah's Plan is Firm

Allah (swt) says:

“And I will give them time. Indeed, my plan is firm (mateen).”
(Qur'an, [7:183](#))

When the world gets too hard to bear and all we see and hear are stories of injustice and pain, remember this verse: “Allah’s plan is firm.” No one will escape His justice. He (swt) gives everyone time, and He gives everyone an opportunity to turn back.

But if people persist with injustice, they will not escape the plan of Allah (swt) and will ultimately be brought to justice. No one, no matter how untouchable they might seem in this world, will escape the plan of Allah (swt).

Pharaoh was a tyrant. He oppressed people for years, and even murdered newborn babies. In all that time, there may have been people who wondered how Pharaoh could be allowed to do such a thing.

There may have been people who passed away before they saw Pharaoh and his armies destroyed. But Allah (swt) gave them time, and finally justice caught up with them.

Even if it appears that someone has escaped justice in this life, remember that that is why there is an afterlife. So never forget that Allah’s plan is firm, and no one can escape it.

Connecting to al-Mateen: Stand Firm

- Stand firm

It can be hard to stick to principles. But remember that those principles are the foundation, and we are commanded to stand for justice. Allah is *al-Mateen* to remind us that when we feel weak, we can hold on to Him to stay firm and steadfast.

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) knew to compromise when there was a greater good at stake, and knew when to stand firm when justice would be violated.

He refused to be give in to wealth or power at the expense of leaving the message of justice for all, yet he compromised with Qureish when they wanted to forbid them from entering Makkah to perform *`umrah* (the lesser pilgrimage).

He knew that to enter by force might cause bloodshed; and the treaty was supposed to ensure at least 10 years of peace. So he agreed to their conditions.

It may have seemed disadvantageous at the time, but in fact it enabled the Muslims to enter Makkah the following year because the Qureish violated the terms of the treaty, without any blood spilt. That is wisdom.

- Do not forget gentleness

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, *“Verily, this religion is mateen, so enter its depth with gentleness,”* (Ahmad).

While it is important to stand firm, remember to be gentle. Standing firm is not synonymous with being stubborn or harsh, as the example above showed.

The Prophet ﷺ told us, “Show gentleness, for if gentleness is found in anything, it beautifies it and when it is taken out from anything it damages it.” (Abu Dawud)

الظَّاهِرُ الْبَاطِنُ

When You See Allah’s Attributes In Everything, You Crave Closeness To Him

Previously in this series, we discussed how Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) is the First and the Last. This article will be a continuation of that as these four Names are mentioned together in the Qur’an:

“He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant (al-Zahir) and the Intimate (al-Batin), and He is, of all things, Knowing.” (Qur’an, [57:3](#))

This verse is so powerful because it comes in the context of telling you who Allah (swt) is. Imagine that you do not know who God is, or what His attributes are. This chapter starts by telling you that *“Whatever is in the heavens and earth exalts Allah, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. His is the dominion of the heavens and earth. He gives life and causes death, and He is over all things competent,”* (Qur’an, [57:1-2](#)).

Reciting this may make one feel that Allah (swt) is far. He is so Grand and Great, does He even understand us? Do we have a relationship with Him? Does He understand what goes on in our hearts and our world?

Then, in the following verse, Allah (swt) addresses these very

thoughts: we are told that He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate. Seemingly divergent qualities come together in a beautiful way, as though Allah (swt) is telling you that there is nothing, not big nor small, that escapes His knowledge. He is the First and the Last, and thus He encompasses time, and He is the Ascendant and the Intimate, encompassing all forms of space.

These are the pillars of knowledge and knowing. These Names cover everything. He is First before everything, and the Last, after everything, the Manifest who is above everything and the Intimate who is close. They combine His attributes of greatness and closeness, cutting across time and space. In a *du`a`* (supplication), the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) says:

“He is the First, nothing is before Him, the Last, nothing is after Him, the Ascendant, nothing is above Him, and the Intimate, nothing is nearer than Him.” (Muslim)

When you worship Allah (swt) through His Names *al-Zahir al-Batin*, you become more conscious of both your internal and external. We fluctuate between two extremes: one that focuses solely on the external, where we forget the spirit of the law. On the other hand, there is the trend of “only Allah knows what is in my heart” and forfeiting all forms of the external. But Allah sees our external and our internal. They are both important, and both part of our submission to Him.

That is why, in one incident, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ pointed to a man three nights in a row saying that that person was of the people of Paradise. The companion Abdullah bin Amr, *radi Allahu `anhu* (may God be pleased with him), was adamant to find out what was so special about that man, so he stayed over at that man’s house for a few nights. Now, when we think of a pious person, we usually think only of extra prayers, fasts and charity, which are commendable. This is what Abdullah thought, and he did not

see anything special about that man, so he decided finally to ask him. The man himself said that all he did was what Abdullah saw, then added that he never allowed himself to carry any grudge in his heart against anyone, and would empty it of envy every night. Abdullah bin ‘Amr said, “This is what you have achieved and it is something we have not accomplished.” (Ahmad)

Yet that does not mean that actions are not important. Allah (swt) praises those who do over those who do not do. The Prophet ﷺ would pray long devotional prayers in the night. Indeed, the Prophet ﷺ reminds us that the prayer is the foundation of every other deed. Moreover, we are told that actions are judged according to their intention, but an intention alone does not suffice. Sincerity is doing one’s utmost to fulfill that intention.

Ibn al-Qayyim stated that when one worships Allah by His Name *al-Zahir* (the Ascendant), the person knows where to direct his prayers, because there is no one above Allah. Worshipping Allah while knowing that He is *al-Batin* (the Intimate) is something that you have to taste, because it is something that words cannot describe. That is why Ibn Abbas (ra) advised someone who was afflicted with paranoia with regards to the prayer to recite the verse cited, because it reminds you that Allah (swt) is the Intimate. He knows what is in your heart, so let go of the anxiety that you feel.

Connecting to the Names of Allah

1. See how Allah manifests His attributes in everything

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr said that in order to connect to Allah’s Name *al-Zahir*, you have to see Allah’s attributes as they reflect in this world. *Al-Zahir* also means something that is manifest, so take the time to go out to nature to see how Allah (swt) is the Creator, while contemplating His beauty and the beauty of what He created. Remind yourself of the times Allah (swt)

responded to you, because He is *al-Mujeeb*. Reflect on the times that something was denied to you, and then you actually saw the wisdom later on. Only once you realize that Allah (swt) is with you—He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate—can you actually gain closeness to Him (see point 3).

2. Direct everything to Him

Ibn al-Qayyim stated that knowing that Allah (swt) is above everything means that you know where to direct yourself—your prayers, your hopes, your goals and your fears. There is nothing above Him, so why turn to what is below Him?

3. Crave intimacy with Allah

Ibn al-Qayyim said that this attribute of Allah—*al-Batin*—cannot be described, only felt. The interesting thing is that when you start to see Allah’s attributes as they manifest in the everyday and the mundane, as well as in the extraordinary, your heart naturally moves closer to Him. You realize how close He is, and the fruit of this realization is that you work to purify your heart, as well as praying more because you know that those are your moments with Allah (swt). That is why the Prophet ﷺ would pray in the night even though it was not obligatory: he loved doing so, because he loved being with Allah (swt).



What Do You Want To Leave Behind?

In this journey through Allah’s Names, we have sought to go beyond an academic reading of His Names and attributes to see how Allah’s attributes manifest around us, and what it means for us to truly know Him. Our relationship with Him should feel like a relationship, and He invites us to strengthen that connection and love by revealing to us His Names and attributes. If you are ever feeling lost or confused, turn to Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) knowing that He hears and sees all. Read through the articles to remind yourself that Allah is always with you.

In this article, we will focus on Allah’s Name *al-Warith*—the Inheritor. Allah says in the Qur’an:

“And indeed, it is We who give life and cause death, and We are the Inheritor.” (Qur’an, [15:23](#))

Allah (swt) is the Inheritor, who remains after all is gone. Al-Ghazali states that Allah (swt) is the one to whom possessions return after the owner passes, as He is the One who remains, so everything returns to Him. So what does this mean for us?

1. *Everything is Allah's, and all will return to Him. We are temporary possessors.*

Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

"The Day they come forth nothing concerning them will be concealed from Allah. To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing." (Qur'an, [40:16](#))

This verse reminds us that ultimately the true Possessor is Allah, and everything we have returns to Him. Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi states that knowing that Allah (swt) is the Inheritor changes our relationship with what we perceive to be 'ours'; it ceases to be a relationship based on ownership but rather one of responsibility and trusteeship. In this way we are not 'entitled' to our possessions, doing with them what we please, but rather we have to see what we have as things entrusted to us. A Bedouin was leading a camel, and was asked who the owner of the camel was. He replied, "It is Allah's, in my hands." Anything that we have is Allah's, simply in our hands for the time being.

Imagine treating all your transactions as transactions with Allah (swt). How would that impact how you conducted yourself? What about seeing your own body as a gift from Him, would you take care of it better? Would you be as possessive with the cash in your pocket? Would it be so hard for you to give something away?

2. *What do you want to leave? Know that the best thing that you can leave is your good deeds.*

Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Bader says that every believer should know that his good deeds are the best things he can leave behind, because that is the true inheritance that actually remains. The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) gave us some examples of

those things that remain:

"The good deeds that will reach a believer after his death are: knowledge which he learned and then spread; a righteous child whom he leaves behind; a copy of the Qur'an that he leaves as a legacy; a mosque that he built; a house that he built for wayfarers; a canal that he dug; or charity that he gave during his lifetime when he was in good health. These deeds will reach him after his death." [Ibn Majah]

The Prophet ﷺ also said, *"Whoever gives charity and that is the last of his deeds will enter Paradise."* [Ahmad]

If you focus on planting the good wherever you are, you can be of the people Allah speaks about in this verse: *"That is Paradise, which We give as inheritance to those of Our servants who were fearing of Allah."* (Qur'an, [19:63](#))

3. *Al-Warith can allow you to inherit, if you are righteous*

"And verily we have written in the Scripture, after the Reminder: My righteous slaves will inherit the earth." (Qur'an, [21:105](#))

There are implications for the *dunya* (this life) in this Name as well. Allah reminds us that, ultimately, those who inherit the earth are not the powerful. He shows us the opposite: while they may have temporary power, they eventually fall, as many seemingly great but unjust empires did in the past. He reminds us to stick to the lofty characteristics of this religion, because injustice never wins. In the Qur'an, Allah (swt) tells us about a conversation between Moses `alayhi as salaam (peace be upon him), and his people:

"Said Moses to his people, "Seek help through Allah and be patient. Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it

whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous.” (Qur’an, [7:128](#))

The counsel of Moses is important. He is speaking to the Children of Israel in a difficult time, a time in which they are being oppressed. He reminds them to seek help through patience and prayer, and that this earth ultimately belongs to Allah (swt). The oppressors will not last, so never take your cue from them.

That is why the Prophet ﷺ also reminds us, “*Do not be imma’a (imitators)... One who says, ‘I am with the people. If they do good, I do good also; and if they do evil, I also do evil.’ Rather, train yourselves to do good when others do good, but if they do evil, to refrain from their evil.*” (Tirmidhi)

May Allah make us all of the righteous.



According To Your Circumstance

We have already spoken about Allah’s attributes of justice in a previous article, and today’s Name is *al-Muqsit*. *Al-Muqsit* comes from the word *qist* and means the scale or balance. *Taqasatu* means to split something up fairly (Lisan al-Arab). Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) says in the Qur’an:

“*And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance (bilqistas al-mustaqim). That is the best [way] and best in result.*” (Qur’an, [17:35](#))

Allah commands us to be balanced, and He is *al-Muqsit*: the One who is most equitable, balanced and just. In some translations of the Qur’an, *`adl* and *qist* are both translated as justice, but I will be using the term “equity” here so we can understand the difference.

The Even Balance

We envision justice in many different ways. For some, justice is treating people the same. We expect that, if two people commit the same crime, they should receive the same punishment. Similarly, if two people do the same good, they should receive the same reward. Likewise, all people should be given the same rights. Some

of us may define that as justice.

But equity allows for more nuance and greater justice. Testing two people the exact same way because they share, for example, the same age and gender ignores crucial differences they may have.

I can ask two 22-year-old men to do 100 press ups, and this might be regarded as fair because they both share similar characteristics. But would it be fair if one of them was recently getting over an injury in his wrist? Most of us would say no; the ability to see that is equity.

If we look at stealing in Islam, we might think that the punishment applies simply for the act of stealing, regardless of who stole and what they stole. But anyone versed in jurisprudence (fiqh) knows this is not the case, and this is why `Umar suspended that punishment when there was a famine; the circumstances matter.

This is why our understanding in Islam is that a person may give something that is seemingly small, but be rewarded greatly for it, and vice-versa. We are told of a prostitute who gave a dog water and was given Paradise, but of an ostentatious, wealthy philanthropist who was punished.

To an outsider, it might not make sense; the philanthropist gave so much more than the prostitute! But Allah (swt) knows the individual circumstance of each person, and judges accordingly. The prostitute was sincere, and the philanthropist was not.

Also, it could be that Allah (swt) tests you with loss, but He tests others with wealth. Perhaps He blesses you with giving you, and He blesses others by taking away. He may delay something for you, and hasten it for other people. It may take you years to get something that you want – blood and sweat and tears – and for someone else, it requires no effort at all. But if you knew all that

Allah (swt) knows, you would understand that His decree is ultimate justice and mercy that is specific to you and your circumstance. Indeed, this is why Allah (swt) tells us:

“Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity.” (Qur’an, [2:256](#))

Moreover, in a hadith qudsi (narration), it is reported that Allah (swt) says:

“Verily, from amongst My slaves is he whose faith cannot be rectified except by being inflicted with poverty, and were I to enrich him, it would surely corrupt him. Verily, from amongst My slaves is he whose faith cannot be rectified except by wealth and affluence, and were I to deprive him, it would surely corrupt him.” (Tabarani)¹

When you are tested with an affliction, and yet you see someone else who may have sinned worse than you seem to get off easy, remember that Allah is *al-Muqsit*. This will make sense some day.

Justice for the Wronged

Al-Ghazali says that *al-Muqsit* is the One who delivers justice to the wronged from the wrongdoer, and only Allah (swt) is capable of that. In a hadith recorded in Hakim, two people are brought forth before Allah on the Day of Judgment.

One of them says to Allah, “O Allah, let this person compensate me for how he has wronged me!” And Allah orders that of that person. The wrongdoer then says he does not have any good deeds left to compensate the one he had wronged. The wronged then asks to be relieved of his sins by the one who wronged him.

Allah (swt) then asks the wronged person to look up and see Paradise, and proceeds to tell him that it is only for those who are

willing to pay the price. When the wronged one asks how to pay such a price, Allah (swt) responds: “By forgiving your brother.”

After recounting this, the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said: “*Fear God and make peace among yourselves, for God – may He be blessed and exalted – will make peace among the faithful on the day of resurrection,*” (Hakim).

Connecting with Allah al-Muqsit

1. *Remember that Allah will not test you with more than you can bear*

This is a principle: Allah (swt) tests you to build you, because you have potential. In the grand scheme of things, His decree is most equitable and therefore the most just.

2. *Think well of Allah, and work with what you have*

Some of us adopt a very fatalistic attitude. We hear that Allah (swt) may choose to test us with poverty, and then assume that that means we are destined to be poor for all of our lives. The only certainty we have is that we do not know: perhaps you are tested with poverty now in order that you work hard to come out of it.

It may be as a result of an economic system that collectively we have allowed to thrive, and we must work collectively to end it. It could also be that Allah blesses you in other ways. The point is, we do not know. Our individual responsibility is to think well of Allah and work with what we have.

3. *Understand people's circumstances*

It is, at the same time, reassuring that Allah (swt) looks at our

individual circumstances. Just as we love that from Allah, try to afford people the same gesture. That person who does not pray regularly may not have a deficiency in their iman (faith), but is going through difficulty. Reach out.

4. *Those with the greatest share of this Name*

Al-Ghazali says only Allah (swt) is capable of true justice, but we can emulate this characteristic partly by insisting on justice from ourselves for others, and being forbearing with other people.

1. This hadith has been classed as weak, but some scholars permitted using the hadith because the meanings align with what we understand of Allah's justice and mercy. Ibn Taymiyya alluded to the meanings found in this hadith in Majmoo' al-Fatawa, where he states that, “It could be that, for some people, poverty is more beneficial than wealth, while wealth is more beneficial for others...”

المُبِينُ

Making it All Clear

“On that day Allah will pay them their just due, and they will know that Allah, He is the Truth, the Evident.” (Qur’an, [24:25](#))

There are some things that are crystal clear and evident to us. According to some scholars, one of Allah’s Names is the Evident—al-Mubin, as seen in the verse above. Others have looked at this verse and interpreted it as Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He) being the Evident Truth (i.e. the word for ‘evident’ is a description of Him being The Truth), but here I will be relying on the opinions of those who see Allah’s Name as *al-Mubin* (Sheikh Ratib al-Nabulsi, Sheikh Salman al-Odah, Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Bader).

Allah (swt) uses this word in its verb form many times in the Qur’an. Allah (swt) says:

“Thus does Allah make clear (yubayyin) to you His verses that you might use reason.” (Qur’an, [2:242](#))

Allah then tells us the purpose in this verse and in many others: That we might use reason, that we might reflect, that we might be guided, and that we might be grateful.

The Evident

Sheikh Ratib al-Nabulsi says that Allah's Name *al-Mubin* shows us two things: one is that He is evident in His essence, similar to His Name *al-Zahir*. Moreover, Allah (swt) makes Himself evident by revealing His Names to us so we may know Him. Whatever misconceptions one may have about God, they are dissipated by Him showing us and making clear to us who He is—and this has been the focal point of this whole series. Whoever may have thought that Allah (swt) has anthropomorphic qualities only has to understand that Allah is *al-Quddus* (the Pure); whoever thinks that tyrants have escaped justice only needs to understand that Allah is *al-'Adl* (the Just) and *al-Muqsit* (the Equitable); and whoever believes that Allah is far from us, Allah contradicts that by letting us know that He is Near.

Evident in His Actions

The other part to this Name is that He makes things evident. Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Bader explains that *al-Mubin* comes from the root ba-ya-nun (ب-ي-ن), which means to make something separate. From it comes the word *mubin*, which means to make clear. And thus *al-Mubin* is the One who makes everything clear, and bayyinah is the clear and evident proof.

We are constantly told to reflect on God's signs. In the Qur'an, what we translate as a 'verse' is actually the word for 'sign' – *aya*. Thus Allah's signs are His Words (i.e. the Qur'an), as well as what He has created: from the universe, to the sun and the stars, to trees and the mountains, to our very own selves – and all of these require our reflection. Once we ponder over these things, the natural conclusion is to see Allah's attributes in everything, and internalizing that Allah (swt) is the Evident Truth.

Moreover, Allah makes clear to us the way through His rules. He

establishes the rules for justice, the imperative for compassion, how to pray, and our general conduct on this earth. We have been given it all, and more importantly, the way to Him. He has made it all clear through Qur'anic injunctions and the example of the Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him), and thus we seek closeness to Him by those means.

He will show you

The verse cited in the beginning of this article shows that Allah (swt) will make everything clear for all those who doubt on the Day of Judgment. There is something else I reflected on. Many times, we may not see the wisdom in a certain action. We might wonder why we did not get what we specifically asked for, or that thing we worked hard for. The wisdom is actually not evident, at least in our limited view.

Knowing Allah is *al-Mubin* actually enables us to ask Him to show us. There are times in my life when I felt like I did not understand, and in those moments, I put my trust in Allah (swt) and ask Him to show me the wisdom. So many things have become clear to me, and I end up being more grateful that my life took an unexpected route. Sometimes these things take time, but be certain, Allah will make evident the wisdom, either in this life or the next.

The Prophet's ﷺ wife Aisha *radi Allahu 'anha* (may God be pleased with her) was slandered and talked about by her own community. She must have wondered why this was happening to her, what was the wisdom in it, and when people would see the truth. When she was declared innocent, the Qur'an made sure to teach people the lessons from this incident. After admonishing the believers (Qur'an, [24:11-20](#)), Allah says: "*And Allah makes clear (yubayyin) to you the verses, and Allah is Knowing and Wise.*" (Qur'an, [24:28](#))

And sometimes the wisdom is for you to take responsibility. Oftentimes we act as though our actions have absolutely no relevance, but Allah teaches us that they do. Yusuf *`alayhi as salaam* (peace be upon him) had things that were within his control and things that were not. When his brothers threw him in the well, and when he was sold as a slave, there was nothing he could do. These were outside of his control. But when he was in prison, he interpreted the dreams of his cellmates, and then told the one he knew would go free to talk to the King about him. He could have waited in prison and prayed to see God's wisdom in it, but he did not rely on that solely. He knew that he had to move. And Allah (swt) made clear that all these things—what happened to him and what he made happen—add up. And this is the reality for all of us.

Lessons

1. *Reflect*: Allah exhorts us in the Qur'an to reflect on His signs. Ponder over Allah's signs in the universe, and over His Names and their manifestations in the world around us.
2. *Ask Allah*: Remember that you can—and should—ask *al-Mubin* to show you. Allah (swt) says "Call upon Me; I will respond to you." So ask Him to make things clear for you. And remember that it may not be a simple case of "why did this happen to me"; Allah (swt) might show you that your actions have consequences and what happened was as result of what you yourself did. The wisdom in that is the lesson we learn.
3. *It will be made clear*: Have certainty that the One who makes it all clear will clarify every single thing on the Day of Judgment, leaving no one in doubt. Allah (swt) says: "And He will surely make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection that over which you used to differ." (Qur'an, [16:92](#))



Everyone Needs Direction

Every time I go back to California, I rent a car. As I drive to Ta'leef in Fremont or WVMA in Saratoga, I always have to use some kind of navigation system, otherwise I am completely lost (despite driving to those places numerous times!) If you were to ask me the way, I would not be able to help you. Thank God for Google Maps!

The first article in this series was about Allah *subhanahu wa ta'la* (exalted is He) *al-Hadi*, who is the Guide. *Hidaya* comes from inclining towards something, which is why one of the words in Arabic for gift is *hadiyya*, because it makes the hearts of those whom you gift incline towards you.

Thus guidance to Allah (swt) is a gift from Him that makes our hearts incline towards Him, and it encompasses all types of guidance. Allah (swt) says:

"He said, 'Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it].'" (Qur'an, 20:50)

Ar-Rashid: He who Directs us to the Right Path

According to Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Ghazali, *ar-Rashid* is one of the Names of Allah (swt). In Lisan al-Arab, it states that “*Ar-Rashid* is the one who directs His servants to what is beneficial for them i.e. He guides them and shows them the way.”

Thus *ar-Rashid* refers to being directed to the right path, knowing what the intended outcome is. Allah (swt) tells us in the Qur’an that our destination is to Him and Paradise, and He shows us the way.

The difference between *rushd* and *hidaya* is that *hidaya* is also guidance along the path. Moreover, there are levels to *hidaya*, which is why we constantly ask Allah (swt) for guidance in Surat al-Fatiha:

“Guide us (*ihdina*) to the straight path.” (Qur’an, [1:6](#))

You can be guided because you are now cognizant of Allah (swt); then you can be guided further to better deeds and closeness to Him; and ultimate guidance comes in following the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ in the most excellent manner. *Hidaya* is also something that penetrates the heart.

Rushd has two elements to it: One is being able to direct someone, but that needs a prerequisite, which is actually knowing and being able to discern the right way from the wrong way. Al-Ghazali states that *ar-Rashid* is the One who directs you without needing signs.

If I use Google Maps to direct someone, I cannot say that I have this attribute, because I am seeking help to direct someone to the way.

In the Qur’an, the words *rushd* or *rashid* are used in the following

contexts:

“They said, ‘O Shu’ayb, does your prayer command you that we should leave what our fathers worship or not do with our wealth what we please? Indeed, you are the forbearing, the discerning (*rashid*)!’” (Qur’an, [11:87](#))

Allah (swt) also tells us that He has made clear the right path from the wrong one:

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course (*ar-rushd*) has become clear from the wrong.” (Qur’an, [2:256](#))

So Allah (swt) is the One who directs us to the destination because He is the One who knows the way the best, without needing directions or signs from any other.

If you are lost and seeking directions, you would seek it from someone you know who will direct you not simply to the way, but to the best way to the ultimate destination.

Just like we may have downloaded the ‘Waze’ app to guide us to the best route home, we should recite the Qur’an and seek to understand the sunnah to find out which way to Allah (swt) is best!

Allah (swt) directs us to what is best for us in this religion

Allah (swt) has told us that the destination is to Him and to Paradise. He has not only directed us to the ultimate destination but also shown us how to get there.

The Qur’an and the sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ teach us to pray and how to pray; to speak well; to fast and how to fast; to help others; to give charity and the best way of giving charity; to establish jus-

tice; and so on.

We must remember that the Prophet's ﷺ way was the way of moderation. When some Companions came to the Prophet ﷺ to inform him of their acts of worship – praying all night and not sleeping; fasting every single day without a break; never getting married – the Prophet ﷺ corrected them.

Putting effort for the sake of Allah is commendable, but not to the extent where you forget your humanity and do not give your body or your family their due rights.

In Surat al-Kahf, the youths of the cave make the following *du'a'* (supplication) to Allah (swt):

“[Mention] when the youths retreated to the cave and said, ‘Our Lord, grant us from Yourself mercy and prepare for us from our affair right guidance (rashada).’” (Qur'an, [18:10](#))

They were being persecuted for their beliefs and had nowhere to turn for refuge but the cave. There, they ask Allah (swt) to show them the best way out of their predicament. In that story, Allah (swt) causes them to sleep for over 300 years, and then shows them that they were on the right path.

The tyrant dies and the people were then able to follow their example without fear. Thus, remember that sometimes wisdom and direction are not rewarded or appreciated by people, but the fruits will show later, insha'Allah (God willing).

Be wise, follow the way, and direct others

Ibn al-Qayyim says, “Allah (swt) is *rashid* and He loves *rushd*, and so He makes whom He loves like that [i.e. gives them this quality].” Allah (swt) tells us that He gave the Prophet Abraham *`alayhi*

as-salaam (peace be upon him) the gift of discernment:

“And We had certainly given Abraham his sound judgement (rushdahu) before, and We were of him well-Knowing.” (Qur'an, [21:51](#))

The Prophet Abraham (as) was given wisdom and direction, and thus he was able to direct others in the way that suited them best. He knew how to make his people think when he destroyed all of the idols (Qur'an, [21:51-67](#)), and he was able to debate the tyrant in a way that was suitable to him (Qur'an, [2:258](#)).

A person can have this quality in its limited human form by asking Allah (swt) and seeking knowledge in order to gain wisdom (and not simply to 'know a lot').

Sheikh Ratib an-Nabulsi stated that the closer a person is to Allah, the more likely he is to have this attribute of *rushd*. Allah (swt) says in the Qur'an:

“Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided (rashidin). [It is] as bounty from Allah and favor. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.” (Qur'an, [49:7-8](#))

May *ar-Rashid* direct us to the best path to Him, and give us the quality of *rushd*!

النَّصِيرُ

“Know That Victory Comes With Patience...”

“So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector, and excellent is the helper (*an-Nasir*).” (Qur’an, [22:78](#))

We mentioned at the start of the series that Allah (swt) knows us and knows our needs, and thus He reveals from His Names those which fulfill our needs. We need provision; He is *al-Razzaq*. We need to feel safe; He is *al-Hafiz*. We need love; He is *al-Wadud*. Allah shows us that whatever our needs, they are sufficed when we know Him and turn to Him. Indeed, He is Sufficient for us.

This is a Name for anyone who feels embattled, physically or emotionally. Allah’s Name *an-Nasir* comes from the root n-s-r (ن-ص-ر) and means helping the oppressed (إعانة المظلوم). Thus the word for victory is also *nasr*. Allah says:

“... And victory (*nasr*) is not except from Allah , the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (Qur’an, [3:126](#))

Nasir is an aggrandizement of the root word and thus means help that spans both quality and quantity – Allah (swt) helps us repeatedly and with both big and small things. He reminds us that true

help and victory are only from Him. God tells us:

“If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you...” (Qur’an, [3:160](#))

Upon hearing this Name, many of us might be comforted. Some of us might have questions: What help? When does this help come? Will victory actually be given to the oppressed?

Types of Victory: the External

There are different types of victory and aid. Allah (swt) gives us examples in the Qur’an that can very clearly be classed as victories and help from Allah (swt). For example, God tells us:

“And already had Allah given you victory [nasarakum] at [the battle of] Badr while you were few in number. Then fear Allah; perhaps you will be grateful. [Remember] when you said to the believers, “Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down?” Yes, if you remain patient and conscious of Allah and the enemy come upon you [attacking] in rage, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand angels having marks [of distinction]. And Allah made it not except as [a sign of] good tidings for you and to reassure your hearts thereby. And victory (an-nasr) is not except from Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”

(Qur’an, [3:123-126](#))

During the Battle of Badr, the Muslims were few in number. They prepared as best they could and put their faith in God as a much larger army was ready to attack them. Allah (swt) tells them He is helping them by sending down Angels – though He reminds the Muslims that the Angels are just there for reassurance because victory and help are only from Allah (swt).

The beautiful thing about the Qur’an is that it talks about reality. It tells us about when a manifest victory occurred and then shows

us instances of what would appear to be a loss.

For example, Allah (swt) tells us in Surat al-Buruj of a people who were thrown into a fire for no reason except that they believed in One God (Qur’an, [85:8](#)). So some might ask, where was the help? Where was the victory? Allah (swt) tells us:

“Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the great attainment.” (Qur’an, [85:11](#))

It may sometimes appear that injustice has won. But Allah (swt) gives victory in this life to whom He wills and gives victory in the Hereafter for those who live in accordance with their faith with dignity. Allah (swt) tells us:

“Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand – The Day their excuse will not benefit the wrongdoers, and they will have the curse, and they will have the worst home.” (Qur’an, [40:51-52](#))

Injustice and oppression will never have the ultimate victory, and as Muslims we are commanded to defend the oppressed against any and all forms of oppression. There are many lessons in the story in Surat al-Buruj, but one is for us never to allow oppression to flourish. Oppression that has deep roots is much harder to uproot. While the general rule is that Allah will help the oppressed – even in this world – examples like this remind us of our responsibility and of the hope in ultimate justice.

The Prophet ﷺ (peace be upon him) said, *“Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or is being oppressed.”* It was said, *“O Messenger of Allah, we help the one being oppressed but how do we help an oppressor?”* The Prophet ﷺ said, *“By seizing his hand.”*

(Bukhari, Muslim)

Help over the internal

Just like Allah (swt) helps us to overcome the external enemies, He helps us to overcome the internal ones too, such as our lower selves and Satan. In Surat *Al-Nas*, this is what we ask Allah (swt) for:

“Say, ‘I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, The Sovereign of mankind. The God of mankind, From the evil of the retreating whisperer – Who whispers [evil] into the breasts of mankind – From among the jinn and mankind.’” (Qur’an, [114](#))

The Prophet ﷺ would say the following supplication in the mornings and evenings:

“O Allah, Knower of the unseen and the evident, Maker of the heavens and the earth, Lord of everything and its Possessor, I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship but You. I seek refuge in you from the evil of my soul and from the evil of Satan and his helpers. (I seek refuge in You) from bringing evil upon my soul and from harming any Muslims.” (Abu Dawud)

Remember that when you are having trouble with even yourself, Allah can help you. If you are battling sadness, Allah can help you overcome. If you are having difficulty battling your own demons, Allah is there. When you are not able, seek help from the One who is able. Part of seeking Allah’s help is using the external means available to you.

When does Allah’s help come?

Victory requires three things:

1. Faith
2. Action
3. Patience and perseverance

As people of faith, we almost expect miracles to happen without hard work. We look at the story of Musa (Moses) *`alayhi as-salaam* (peace be upon him) and wish that the sea would part for us. We read the trials of Maryam *`alayha as-salaam* (peace be upon her) and see that she was given a child as a virgin, and we know that miracles are easy for Allah (swt).

We focus on the miracle but forget that they came after much effort. So when things do not go our way and we feel that we have not been helped, we give up. But in the stories of the Qur’an, Allah shows us something amazing. It is when the righteous exhaust all the means does the help of Allah come. When Musa (as) does everything he can with Pharoah, and is being literally chased by an army, that is when Allah splits the sea (Qur’an, [26:63](#)).

When Maryam is at the point of wishing she were dead (Qur’an, [19:23](#)), she is given help. When Hajar (as) runs seven times back and forth looking for help, Allah gives her the well of Zamzam.

The Prophet ﷺ reminds us: *“Know that victory comes with patience, relief with affliction, and hardship with ease.”* (Tirmidhi)

Moreover, the seerah (life) of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is full of examples of working within the means. Miracles came to support, but never changed events, and in that is a lesson from us. The Prophet ﷺ planned his escape from Makkah.

The Prophet ﷺ prepared for battles. He spent years in Makkah calling people to Islam and to justice in society. He did not expect that things would just happen.

Finally, Allah giving His help does not mean that there will not be hardships, as the examples above clearly show. Allah asks this question in the Qur'an:

“Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such [trial] has not yet come to you as came to those who passed on before you? They were touched by poverty and hardship and were shaken until [even their] messenger and those who believed with him said, ‘When is the help [nasr] of Allah ?’”

Allah then answers at the end of that verse: “Unquestionably, the help of Allah is near.” (Qur'an, [2:214](#))

Remember that tests and hardships are coming to you from the Most-Wise, the Equitable and the Most-Merciful.

Connecting to an-Nasir

1. Have faith

Always have faith in an-Nasir, and be mindful of Him wherever you are. The Prophet ﷺ teaches us:

Be mindful of God, and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Him, and you shall find Him at your side. If you ask, ask of God. If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you, they would not be able to help you except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you, they would not harm you except if God had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages are dry. (Tirmidhi)

2. Do not be lazy and work until the very end

The Prophet ﷺ sought refuge from laziness every day (Bukhari).¹

Remember that help came to the righteous when they exhausted any and all means.

3. Remember that your efforts will never go to waste

Whatever good you do, Allah (swt) records it for you. Your effort could be the seed that helps future generations. Even if you feel that you were not victorious in the life, remember that your effort counts for the ultimate victory in the Hereafter.

4. Allah (swt) aids the oppressed, whomever they may be, so do not be an oppressor

Never ever oppress people. The Prophet ﷺ tells us to “Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, even if he is an unbeliever, for there is no screen between it and Allah,” (Ahmad). Allah does not discriminate between oppressed people, and your professed faith – if you are an oppressor – will not help you.

5. Help others

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah helps the servant as long as he helps his brother.” (Muslim) If you want Allah's help to come, then help others. Be there on the front lines in the battle against injustice for everyone. Justice is not ‘just us’.

1. ‘O Allah, I seek refuge in You from weakness and laziness, miserliness and cowardice, anxiety and sorrow, and I seek refuge in You from the torments of the grave, and I seek refuge in You from the trials and tribulations of life and death.’ [Bukhari]



Allah – No God But He

After reflecting on many of Allah’s Names over the past four years, we finally arrive at the Name that is most commonly on our tongues: Allah *subhanahu wa ta’ala* (exalted is He).

This Name brings together all of His attributes such that when you call on Him by this Name, you are bringing together all of the attributes we talked about and more. When we say “*Allahumma*” (اللهم), we are calling out to Allah (swt). In Arabic, when you call out to someone you say “*ya*” (يَا), and here, the ‘*m*’ (م) at the end takes its place. Ibn Al-Qayyim says that when someone calls to Allah (swt) saying, “*Allahumma* I ask you...” the person is saying, “I am asking Allah who possesses the Best Names and the Highest attributes by those Names and attributes.”

So when you say ‘Allah’, know that you are calling the One who possesses all the greatest attributes – everything that we talked about in this series and more.

This Name is unique because it is Allah’s alone (swt). His other Names are also attributes by which people are sometimes described, but this Name can only refer to Him. According to al-Ghazali, this is the greatest of Allah’s (swt) Names. It is the

Name most mentioned in the Qur'an, and it is the Name that is mentioned in every *hadith* (tradition of the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him) that talks about God's greatest Name.

The Beauty of Allah (swt)

Just hearing this Name of Allah (swt) should change something in us and soothe our hearts. Ibn al-Qayyim quotes Ibn Forak, who says that the Name 'Allah' starts with the 'a' sound, which originates in the chest, and ends with the 'h' sound which goes back to the chest. The chest contains the heart, and thus the Name 'Allah' begins in the heart and ends there.

I met a woman during `Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage) a few years ago, and she was talking about her journey to Islam. She said she had always been a spiritual person, and she happened upon a talk by a Muslim *sheikh* (scholar). Up until that point, she had never heard the Name 'Allah' before. She said that what stuck out for her during his talk was the beauty of the sound of Allah's (swt) Name. That planted the seed in her heart and began her journey to learning about Islam.

So who is Allah (swt)?

Allah (swt) is the One whom we worship: the One to whom we go with hope, reverence, and love. He is the Lord, the Sustainer and the Originator of this whole universe. If you want to feel in awe of Allah (swt), go out somewhere in nature and just be with yourself. Reflect on the vastness of this universe and its beauty, and our small place in it.

Even though the world appears to be so much greater, Allah (swt) created each soul personally. He knows you better than your parents, your spouse, or your best friend. He hears you before you speak. He knows everything you have been through and every-

thing you are going through. His door is always open to you no matter your state. The Prophet ﷺ tells us:

"Allah is happier with His servant who turns back to Him than the happiness one of you would feel if he was wandering in a barren wasteland to find his steed had wandered off with all his food and provisions. Then, after the heat and his thirst become severe, he falls asleep in the same place and wakes to find his steed standing before him, so that he grabs its reigns and says: "O Allah! I am your Lord and You are my servant," mixing up his words on account of his extreme joy." (Muslim)

He is greater than any of our problems, our fears or worries. This is why we say, "Allahu Akbar!" (Allah is greater) at the start of every prayer to remind ourselves: He is greater. He gifted the daily prayers to us so that we can be brought back to our center and purpose at least five times a day, remembering that He sets the standards for greatness and loftiness as we recite these attributes in our bowing and prostration.

Our hopes and dreams are not too big for Him. He says in a *hadith qudsi* (narration of the words of Allah via the Prophet ﷺ):

"O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to rise up in one place and make a request of Me, and were I to give everyone what he requested, that would not decrease what I have, any more than a needle decreases the sea if put into it." (Muslim)

He is Vast, and so encompasses all of us, with our mistakes and brokenness. Don't ever believe that you are too broken for Him. Don't ever think that there is no room for you. When Allah (swt) tells you to turn back to Him and seek forgiveness, it is because you have the potential to be better. You are not defined by your mistakes. The Prophet ﷺ tells us: "Allah extends His hand at night

to give forgiveness to those who sinned during that day, and He extends His hand during the day to give forgiveness to those who sinned during the night. This will continue to be the case until the Sun rises from the west,” (Muslim).

Knowing that instructions may be theoretical, He sent us a Messenger who is from amongst us to teach us and show us the way. Allah (swt) says about the Prophet ﷺ:

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Qur’an, [21:107](#))

He embodied in the Prophet ﷺ the perfect example: Worshipping Allah (swt) with love, hope and fear; kindness and compassion to everyone; communal and individual responsibility; and justice in society. Knowing that we might sometimes feel that it is all too much, the Prophet ﷺ advised his daughter, Fatima *radi Allahu `anha* (may God be pleased with her), to say in the morning and in the evening:

“Ya Hayyu ya Qayyum (O Ever-Living, O Sustainer), by Your Mercy I seek help, rectify for me all of my affairs and do not leave me to depend on myself, even for the blink of an eye.” (Hakim)

By reminding us that Allah (swt) is at every moment sustaining this world, we realize how fragile we are and how much we are in need of Him, and thus we ask Him not to leave us for even a second.

Allah (swt) sent us to know Him and to experience His attributes through the good and what we perceive to be bad. He knows of our efforts and assures us that they never go to waste, thus teaching us to be ambitious. Tests and hardships may come our way, but they come to alert us, strengthen us, elevate us and teach us. With His wisdom, justice and mercy, the whole world moves. He com-

mands us to do things because He is our Creator, but in the end all of the things commanded of us to do or prohibited of us benefit us in the long-term. He is the Acquainted One – who knows the inner and outer realities – and the Most Wise.

He reveals to us that He is the source of Peace, so we can turn to Him to be at peace, and emulate His attributes by being agents of peace in this world. He is so Generous that He prepared for us a paradise that not only satisfies our material wants, but our emotional wants and needs. It is a place in which we can be with those we love, where our hearts know no pain, and where we will finally be with Allah (swt).

He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate. Once we realize that, we can start everything with His remembrance and understand that it will all go back to Him; we can start to see His attributes in the minutiae of our everyday.

He is Allah (swt).

“To God Belong The Best Names, So Call On Him Using Them...”

This series began on the 29th of December 2011, and last week was its final article. Elsewhere I have written about *al-Jameel*, *al-Jabbar*, and *al-Majeed*; in total this adds up to a little over 99 Names.

The Names that I have written about here do not follow the ones that we know conventionally, which are based on a famous, albeit weak, *hadith* (narration of the Prophet ﷺ, peace be upon him). ‘Weak’¹ does not necessarily mean wrong, but some scholars contest some of the Names contained therein and have devised other ways to ascertain which of these are authentic. All of the Names discussed here are considered Names and/or attributes by at least some reputable scholars, and are found in the Qur’an and/or *hadith*.

If there is a difference of opinion on the Names, then how do we know which Names were meant in the *hadith* that encourages us to learn the Names of Allah as a way of entering Paradise? The *hadith* states:

“Allah has ninety-nine names and whoever preserves them will enter Paradise.” (Muslim)

One might say that we should just stick to the list as found in Tirmidhi; however, in the Qur'an Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* (exalted is He), tells us that the Prophets call on Him numerous times with *Rabby*, and that Name is not found in that hadith. Moreover, there are many supplications from the authentic *sunnah* (traditions of the Prophet) in which the Prophet ﷺ (peace be unto him) calls on Allah with other Names not found in the Tirmidhi *hadith*, such as *al-Mannan*. The other opinion is to use the Names found in the Qur'an and the authentic *sunnah*, yet those amount to more than ninety-nine.

Thus, what al-Khattabi and others have said is that Allah (swt) has more than 99 Names, and the proof of this is in the Prophet's ﷺ *du'a'* (supplication):

"...I ask You by every Name that You have named Yourself, revealed in Your Book, taught any one of Your creation or kept unto Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen that is with You..." (Ahmad)

By saying that whoever memorizes 99 Names will enter Paradise, the meaning is whoever memorizes any 99 of His many Names will enter Paradise. If I tell you that I am going to give you 1000 of my dollars, it does not necessarily mean that I only have 1000 dollars. It means I have more, but I am going to give you 1000 of them. Similarly, Allah (swt) has many Names, some which we do not know, but if we learn 99 of them, then we will attain *Jannah* (paradise), *insha'Allah* (God willing). While a few have interpreted 'learn' to mean simply memorize, other scholars have said that this cannot be. A good person can memorize these Names, as can a bad person, a Muslim and a non-Muslim, one who understands and one who does not. Ibn al-Qayyim stated that preserving them means three things:

1. Knowing the Names and the number of Names

"TO GOD BELONG THE BEST NAMES, SO CALL ON HIM USING THEM..."

2. Understanding what they mean (in their many meanings) and what they indicate
3. Calling Allah using them, as He says in the Qur'an: *"To God belong the Best Names, so call on Him using them..."* (Qur'an, [7:180](#)) Calling on Allah can be simply for praise and worship, as well as for asking for one's needs.

Thus it is the person who learns them, implements their understanding and connects to Allah through them; this has been the purpose of this series. As Ali bin Abi Taleb *radi Allahu 'anhu* (may God be pleased with him) taught us:

"The basis of this religion is knowing Him."

You may see my name as the author of these articles, but know that they are simply a collection of thoughts and really a summary from far more majestic sources. I would like to acknowledge these sources:

- The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God by Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (English)
- Asma' Allah al-Husna by Sheikh Muhammad Ratib al-Nabulsi (Arabic; some articles translated into English)
- Sharh Ibn al-Qayyim li Asma' Allah al-Husna – a compilation by Dr. Omar Suleiman al-Ashqar on Ibn Al-Qayyim's sayings on the Names of Allah (Arabic)
- Fiqh al-Asma' al-Husna by Sheikh Abdulrazzaq al-Badr (Arabic)
- Asma' Allah al-Husna: Jalalaha wa Lataif Iqtiraniha wa thamaratiha fi daw' al-Kitab wal-Sunnah by Sheikh Maher Muqaddim
- "Bismika Nahya" by Dr. Amr Khaled (Ramadan TV series on the Names of Allah, Arabic)
- Audio lectures by Sheikh Salman al-Odah (Arabic)

- Audio lectures by Sheikh Waseem Yousef (Arabic)
- Notes from classes with Sheikh Alaeddine el-Bakri and Sheikh Akram Nadwi

Hours were spent reading books and PDF files, attending classes, listening to lectures, and reflecting on these Names. It is virtually impossible to extract all of the secrets behind Allah's beautiful Names, but my intent here was merely to open a door to connecting to Allah (swt) through knowing Him. In this regard, I know there are many shortcomings and I take full responsibility for them.

Jazakum Allah khairan (may God reward you with good) for reading through this series, I truly pray that it has been of benefit. Any good is solely from Allah (swt), the One whose Names we have experienced through this journey. Any and all mistakes are from myself.

Please pray for all the teachers above who have taught us and helped us to understand His Names. I am indebted to them.

1. There are conditions to using weak hadith. For more, please click [here](#)