

*An Introduction to
the Beautiful Attributes of Allah*



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Surely all praise is due to Allah the Lord, Evolver, Maintainer of all that exists. He is the One Who taught the Quran and created the human one. Then He sent the Book down onto the heart of His servant and messenger, Muhammad, so that he would take us from the darknesses into the light, by His permission. We glorify Him with praise and we seek forgiveness from Him. We ask him for all good and we seek refuge with Him from every evil. There is none to be worshipped except Him. Then, we bear witness that there is no god except Allah and we bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

About the Quran

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ
إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاَعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ
الْدِينَ

The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Power, the Wise. Surely, We caused the Book to be revealed to you with Truth, so serve Allah as one with a life devoted sincerely to Him. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 39: ayaat 1 -2)

Commentaries

Abdullah Yusuf ‘Ali: In connection with Revelation two qualities of God are mentioned: (1) That He is All-Powerful and can carry out His will in spite of all opposition. (2) That He is full of knowledge and wisdom. The first answers those who question how God can send revelation to man. The second. Explains that true wisdom consists in carrying out God’s will as revealed to us.

An Enlightening Commentary: The words tanzeel (sending down in portions at certain times) and anzaal (sending down in whole at one time) are both mentioned in these two blessed Verses, opening with the Revelation of the Holy Quran. The former and the latter allude to the Pure Divine Essence as the Origin of the Revelation and the content as well as the final goal of the Holy Quran respectively. The first Verse says that this Book is revealed by God... Any book is known by its revealer or author. Being apprised of the Divine Origin of Revelation of this Glorious Revealed Book ... we come to comprehend the gloriousness of Its (his) contents.

Taking into account the wide range of meaning of the word “religion” (deen)* and its lack of restrictions, one may notice that it signifies a wider range of meaning embracing worship, other deeds, as well as beliefs. In other words, the word “religion” encompasses the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of man. In this vein, sincere servants of God Almighty are supposed to refine all the aspects of life from impurities, reject other entities besides God Almighty from

their hearts, souls, words and deeds, reflect upon Him, love for His sake, speak and act for His satisfaction.

Study Quran: This (first) verse has no verb and can be rendered with an implied demonstrative at the beginning. ... In discussions of the levels of Quranic recitation, Sufis say that one should first hear the Quran as if it were being recited by the Prophet, then as if it were being recited by the Archangel Gabriel, and then as if it were being recited by God Himself. They sometimes cite this verse (39:1) and Surah 40: ayah 2, which differs only in that the last word is the Knower, in support of this third and last level.

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٢﴾

The Revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Exalted in Power, the All Knowing.
(interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 40: ayah 2)

Devoting religion entirely to Him (7:29; 10:22; 29: 65; etc.) indicates sincerity, purification and complete devotion.

Ibn Katheer:

وَإِنَّهُ لَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

And truly this is a revelation from the Evolver of all creatures. (interpretation of Surah 26: ayah 192)

So, once again we emphasize the Creator, the Authoritative Revealer, the Eminent Teacher, who sent this Exalted Recitation to His servant, Muhammad (saw) for us. The more we open our understanding to the value, the beauty, the truth and the importance of the Book that is with us, the more we honor ourselves. And, I am certain that as we humble ourselves and sincerely say, “*I am your student. Teach me.*” that we will grow immensely as individuals and flourish as communities.

An Introduction to the Attributes of Allah – Characteristics of Beauty to Which We Aspire

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
طه ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا تَذِكْرَةً لِمَنْ
يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾ تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾
الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٥﴾ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنْ تَجْهَرُ بِالْقَوْلِ
فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ
الْحُسْنَى ﴿٨﴾

Ta Haa. We did not send this Noble Recitation down upon you to cause you distress, but only as a reminder for whom is reverent (of Allah). (It is) a revelation from the One Who created the earth and the elevated heavens; the Merciful One established on the Throne. To Him belongs what is in the heavens, and what is on the earth and what is between them and what is beneath the soil. And if you speak the word aloud (no matter), for surely He knows what is secret and even more concealed. Allah, there is no deity other than Him; His are the Most Beautiful Attributes. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 20: ayat 1 – 8)

Commentaries

Ibn Katheer: Allah has revealed His message to Muhammad as a mercy to His servants, so that the person who reflects may be reminded. Thus, one will benefit from what is heard of the Book. Ibn Abbas said, “The secret is what the son (children) of Adam hides within himself and the deeds of the son of Adam, which are hidden before he does them. Allah knows all of that. His knowledge encompasses that which has passed and that which is in the future and it is one complete knowledge. In this regard all of the creatures are as one soul to Him.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali: *If things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember that God Who encompasses all Creation and sits on the Throne of Grace and Mercy is in command and our faith tells us that all must be right. God’s authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is “firmly established”.*

What you profess, or say aloud gives no information to God. He knows not only what is secret and perhaps unknown to others but what people take special care to conceal. It does you no good to make insincere profession; your hidden motives are known to Him.

Study Quran: *This verse (ayah 5) is the only instance in the Quran where the Compassionate (الرحمن) is referred to as mounting the Throne. For the special significance of the Divine Name Ar Rahmaan, see what follows:*

قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَلَا
تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُتُمْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, call on Allah or call on Ar Rahmaan. Whichever of these (attributes) you call on, His are the most Beautiful Attributes. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran part of Surah 17: ayah 110)

This verse clearly indicates the close connection between the Names Allah (God) and al Rahmaan (the Compassionate), which in traditional Islamic sources are identified as Names of the Divine Essence.

... since everything belongs to God, one should ask only God to fulfill one's requests. To Him belongs the Kingdom (mulk). So, whoever seeks out a part from the whole from other than Him has sought wrongly. The Prophet is reported to have said, "When you ask, ask only of Allah and when you seek help, seek only from Allah." (Rendered in translation from Tabari)

As you see with these ayaat, Allah speaks about His message and of realities related to His work and ownership before stating that the Beautiful Qualities are His. He introduces Himself as **Allah and as Ar Rahmaan, Ar Raheem** as the Book opens (Surah tul Faatihah) and, yet, does not speak of these as "Names" until Surah 7. This allows the servant, the devotee, the seeker to become aware of and consider these attributes before we are instructed what to do with them beyond the knowing and expansion of the knowing of this One from Whom we came and to Whom we daily and gradually return.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي
أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

And, to Allah belong the Most Beautiful Qualities, so call upon Him by them and leave those who are profane with His Names. They will soon be compensated for what they do. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 7: ayah 180)

The Beautiful Attributes of Allah are throughout the Quran from Surah tul Faatihah to Surah tun Naas and many have appeared before this ayah. Hamza Yusuf states in his Preface to **Pearls of**

the Faith, a poetic text on the Beautiful Names, “*The Names are mentioned in Hadith literature and dispersed throughout the Quran as attributes that serve as edifying endings to verses. They also add subtle nuance to meanings contained in the verses themselves.*” Yet, perhaps the reader and ponderer might not know that they are to be used to invoke. Beyond, way beyond Surah 7, Allah says:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ
عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

And your Guardian Evolver said, “Call upon me; I will answer you. Surely, those who are moved to arrogance regarding worship of Me, soon they will enter the disfiguring fire debased.” (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 40: ayah 60)

Study Quran: Supplication is considered among the most meritorious of acts because in humbly imploring God, one admits to one’s servitude and abasement before Him as well as complete poverty before God and utter need of Him. The verb that translates as “call upon” also means “to supplicate” and is here connected by commentators with the practice of remembering and invoking. This verse is thus one of the scriptural bases for the practice of dhikr. The Names are said to be beautiful to the ear as well as to the heart. The Names are considered to represent Attributes or Qualities of His undifferentiated Essence. These Qualities are then manifested in creation and perceived in the mind of the one who is calling on Him by them. ... Each name is understood to possess a real Divine Presence or Quality, as Tabari notes, “There are no empty titles for God.” ... The Names can be divided into attributes of Essence (Knowing, Seeing, Hearing, etc.) and attributes of action (Creator, Provider, Originator, Forgiver, etc.), though there are some differences in traditional sources regarding which Names belong to which category. ... In Islamic esoterism God and his Names are considered one. God is understood to be present in His sanctified Names, each of which is a ladder leading to Him.

The Names are also commonly divided into those of beauty – *jamal* – (Compassionate, Gentle, Kind, Pardoner, Source of Peace, etc.) and those of Majesty – *jalaal* – (Judge, Compeller, Possessor of Vengeance). Also, the Names have been divided into those that could be manifested in human beings (*Kind, Generous, Thankful, etc.*) and those that belong to God alone (*Sovereign, Sublime, Holy, etc.*).

[From this extensive commentary I have only taken some key information. I encourage you to read the comments in their entirety.]

In one of the texts of the Names it mentions that we, the human creation, can and should have “*traces of the Divine Attributes*”. All Divine attributes are hidden within ourselves, but it is difficult, almost impossible to raise them into our consciousness and live according to them. What we can do is recognize those that are natural to our personality and cultivate them into a fuller expression. Then, we can choose other attributes that we want to have in our character and find ways to bring them forth. One manner of achieving this it to “*magnify the value of the*

Qualities” by memorizing them, reciting them, and reflecting on their meaning. “To endeavor to know Allah if to fulfill the very purpose of our existence,” (Ibn Abbas commentary to Surah 51: ayah 56)

As the Quality Ar Rahman is pervasive throughout the Creation and each of us takes our share of the mercy of Allah, we should then reflect upon this and act, look, speak and think mercifully to each being and each part of creation we encounter.

Assignment: Allah says:

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
مَّوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾

And the earth We have expanded her and established on her mountains firmly fixed and caused to come forth from her of every thing in a balanced state. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 15: ayah 19)

In everything that Allah created He established balance. Surah tul Faatihah is an example of that balance in various ways. One of these is the balance of His Attributes. There are 10 – five that fall under the category of ظاهر – clear and evident – and five that fall under the category of باطن – hidden or unmanifested. List these 10 and think of reasons that Allah chose these particular Names to place in the Opening of the Book.

Concentration of the Beautiful Attributes in the Quran

There are 17 Qualities of Allah mentioned in the last three ayaat of Surah tul Hashr (Surah 59: ayaat 22 - 24), including *Allah* and *Knower of the Imperceptible and the Witnessed* (ayah 22).

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ
الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٢٢﴾ هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ
الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَلِيقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ
لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٤﴾

Duah

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا
رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ
الْأَبْرَارِ

Our Lord, surely we heard a caller calling to al-Islaam (perfection through submission of our wills) by saying, “Believe in your Lord.” So, we have truly believed. Our Lord, then forgive us our sins and remove from us our errors and take us in death with the virtuous. (interpretation of the meaning of Quran Surah 3: ayah 193)