

Allah is the self-designated name of God as known to Muslims and Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians. It is a proper noun that compounds *al*, meaning 'the', and *ilah*, meaning 'object of worship', 'deity' or 'god'. So, *Allah* means 'The (One True) God.'

Say: You dispute with us about Allah while He is our Lord and your Lord? (Quran 2:139)

To maintain the Oneness of Allah's Lordship is to recognise Allah as the one, absolute and unchallenged universal power. He caused all things to exist when there was nothing; thus He is The Creator. He nourishes and sustains all life, causing it to grow, develop and decay; thus He is The Lord and Cherisher. Nothing happens except what He allows to happen;¹ thus He is The Sovereign Master of all that is.

Allah creates everything and He has charge over all (that He creates). (Quran 39:62)

The pagans of pre-Islamic Arabia affirmed this aspect of Islamic monotheism or *tawhid*; that is, the Oneness, Unity and Uniqueness of Allah. They had always recognised Allah to be the One God of their ancestor, Prophet Abraham, and believed that He (Allah) was the supreme Creator and Sustainer of life. They never denigrated Allah in the form of an idol or image because they understood He was beyond representation. This is acknowledged in the Quran when Allah instructs Muhammad to challenge the idol-worshippers:

Say: 'Whose is the earth and whosoever is therein, if you know?' They will say: 'Allah's!' Say: 'Will you not then remember?' Say: 'Who is Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Great Throne?' They will say: 'Allah!' Say: 'Will you not then fear (Him)?' Say: 'In Whose Hand is the sovereignty of everything and He protects (all) while against Whom there is no protector, if you do know?' They will say: 'Allah!' Say: 'How then are you (still) deluded?' (Quran 23:84-9)

To the learned Jew also, the name 'Allah' is not something foreign. The Hebrew noun for God is 'Elah', sometimes written in its polite-plural form: Elohim. *Elah* is derived from the Hebrew noun 'Alah' (אלה), which shares a common sound, root and meaning with the Arabic name for the One God. For Christians too, God's name is the same as that recognised by Muslims. In Arabic Bibles, the name of 'God the Father' is 'Allah'. While in Aramaic, God is called 'Allah' (ܐܠܠܗ) — the proper noun by which Jesus referred to God in his native tongue. So, Jews, Christians and pagans had been calling God "Allah" centuries before Muhammad was even born.

Verily, I am Allah! There is no god besides Me. (20:14)

1. Though Allah has given each person a mind with the power to think of evil and a body with the ability to do evil, it is *we* who *choose* to put our evil ideas into practice. So while it is indeed true that: 'Allah created you and all that you do' (Quran 37:96), it is also true that 'whatever of evil befalls you is from yourself' (Quran 4:79).

Hence, the mission of the Prophet Muhammad was not to inform humanity that Allah is the Almighty Lord, Creator and Sustainer, as this is something creation instinctively recognises and people already believed in. Rather, the call of all the Prophets was to instruct humanity to direct all their worship² to Allah alone, maintaining the Oneness of His Exclusive Right to be Worshipped.

And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) except We (also) inspired him (to say): 'There is no deity but I (Allah) — so worship Me alone.' (Quran 21:25)

Allah, there is none worthy of worship but He. The Ever-Living, The Self-Subsisting. Neither slumber nor sleep overtake Him. To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and on Earth. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows the past and the future and they can encompass nothing of His Knowledge except what He wills. His Chair extends over the heavens and the earth and He feels no fatigue in guarding them. And He is The Highest, The Mighty. (Quran 2:255)

In truth, Allah is the only One Who can respond to worship and answer supplications. The believer prays to Allah sincerely:

You alone we worship, You alone we ask for help. (Quran 1:5)

Some say that prayers have a greater chance of being answered if the intercession of the pious is sought. But such beliefs liken Allah to humans who require intermediaries. Allah is different, unique, greater than all besides Him. He hears and knows all and can be approached directly by humans. Nor is Allah's benevolence constrained by superstitious notions like luck and astrology.³ Allah controls all that happens, good and bad, and bestows His grace and mercy on His creatures as He justly pleases. To avert evil or receive good, we must turn to Him alone

Call upon Me (alone) and I will answer you. (Quran 40:60)

In reality, to call upon or pray to the righteous, like Jesus, Mary and Muhammad, or to place faith in icons, talismans, amulets and lucky charms, is to elevate them to Allah's status and worship them in derogation of Him. To worship anything besides Allah is to ascribe partners to Him and this is the crime of *shirk*, the greatest of all sins. If a person knowingly dies upon *shirk* without having had repented for it, they will never be forgiven.

2. In Islam, worship is an all-embracing concept which, as well as ritual acts like prayer, encompasses all goodness, decency and devotion expressed through obedience, sacrifice or humility. In short, any feeling, speech, or action that emanates from a genuine love, hope and fear of Allah, sincerely seeking His pleasure and adhering to the *Sunna* (i.e. the Prophet's inspired practice), constitutes worship in Islam.

Say: Truly, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah, Lord of the worlds. (Quran 6:162)

3. When Muhammad's son died, an eclipse occurred and rumours of Allah's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human being.' (Bukhari)

Verily, Allah forgives not *shirk* (to worship/associate others) with Him, but He forgives (anything) less than that to whoever He pleases. And whoever makes *shirk* with Allah has invented a tremendous sin. (Quran 4:48)

Allah is the One Who, in His divine wisdom, perfect knowledge, absolute justice and boundless mercy, legislated through His Messengers, laws by which humanity could govern itself. To obey Allah's laws is to worship Him. To obey those who allow what Allah has forbidden or forbid what Allah has allowed is to worship *them*. Once, when the Prophet recited:

They (Jews and Christians) have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah. (Quran 9:31)

Adi b. Hatim, a former Christian, said: '(But) we didn't worship them!' The Prophet asked: 'Did they not forbid what Allah had allowed and you also forbade it; and they allowed what Allah had forbade and you also allowed it!' Adi replied: 'Certainly!' The Prophet said: 'That was your worship of them.' (Tirmidhi). Likewise, to blindly follow people's opinions on matters divine without understanding or seeking evidence from Allah's Revelation is to worship such people. Fallible human opinion, no matter how pious or informed, can never rival the authority of Allah's infallible knowledge.⁴

Say: The things that my Lord (Allah) has forbidden... that you speak of Allah without knowledge (Quran 7:33)

According to what Christians call the Old Testament and Jews call the Torah, Allah rested on 'The Seventh Day' of creation. Hence, Jews take Saturday and Christians Sunday as a day of rest wherein work is considered a sin. In the same book we read: 'The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them."' (Genesis 6:6-7) Two chapters later, God, convinced He over-reacted, decides: 'never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.' (Genesis 8:21)

Fatigue, ignorance, grief, regret — far removed is God from such earthly attributes. Deficiency is a quality of the creation, not the Creator. By likening Allah to humans who tire and then rest, err and then regret, and know after not knowing, the Bible's authors have compromised His *Tawhid* (i.e. Oneness, Unity and Uniqueness) and thus committed *shirk*.

"The god who presides over the Judeo-Christian belief system bears a disquieting resemblance to those imperfect creations known as human beings. This suggests that either He really did fashion us in His own image or we fashioned Him in ours." (American academic, Dr. Michael Parenti)

4. We access divine knowledge through Allah's Book, the Quran, and its explanation in the words and deeds of His Prophet, the Sunna. Moreover, in the understanding of the Prophet's Companions and their followers, Islam's true application has been forever preserved for us.

And so, neither Allah nor His creation is to be described with the others' qualities. To maintain the Oneness of Allah's Names and Attributes is to describe Him only with qualities befitting His Majesty; qualities with which He has described Himself in the Quran or taught to His Prophet:

Allah – there is no deity but He. To Him belong the most beautiful (descriptive) names. (Quran 20:8)

We may show mercy but Allah is **The Most Merciful**. We may possess some might but Allah is **Almighty**. Human vision is limited in range and colour and can focus only superficially at one object at any one place and time. Allah however, can see all things everywhere, independent of space and time. So although we see, Allah is **All-Seeing**; likewise we hear, but Allah is **All-Hearing**, and so in. Thus, Allah's Names and Attributes are unlike those of His creation

There is nothing comparable to Him. And He is The All-Hearing, The All-Seeing. (Quran 42:11)

Christianity teaches that Prophet Jesus, the Messiah and son of Mary, was really a God incarnate so that He (i.e. God as His own son) could sacrifice Himself to atone for the sins of man – despite Christianity also teaching that God Himself creates all as 'born sinners' in the first place.

And they say: 'The Most Merciful (Allah) has begotten a son.' Indeed, you have brought forth a heinous thing.

The heavens are almost torn apart, the earth split asunder and the mountains felled in utter ruin that they (dare) ascribe a son to The Most Merciful. It is not befitting (the Majesty of) The Most Merciful that He should beget a son. There is none in the heavens and the earth except that it comes before The Most Merciful as a slave. (Quran 19:88-93)

The Prophet said: *'Allah says: "The son of Adam lies against Me while he has no right to do so, and he abuses Me while he has no right to do so. As for his lying against Me, it is his claim that I cannot recreate him as I created him before; and as for his abusing Me, it is his saying that I have a son. Nay! Glorified am I (above such blasphemy)! I am far from taking a wife or a son."*' (Bukhari)

Blessed is He who has sent down (this Quran as) the Criterion to His Servant (Muhammad) that it may be an admonition to all creatures. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. No son has He begotten, nor has He any partner in His dominion.

And He created all things and gave them their due proportions. Yet they have taken besides Him objects for worship that can create nothing but are themselves created. And neither do they control harm or benefit for themselves. Nor do they control death nor life nor resurrection. (Quran 25:1-3)

Because Islam contends that Jesus was never crucified, those who hail it as the ultimate act of God's love to His servants will often claim that the 'Muslim God' is impersonal and indifferent to His creation. 'Allah,' they say, *'is an all-judging (as opposed to an all-loving) God, high above and far removed from His servants.'*

Allah is indeed Most High above His creation, both physically and in His Holiness, but He is also The Most Merciful, Loving, Forbearing and Compassionate, and it is due precisely to His forgiving that there was no need for Him to become a man and die to atone for others' sins. [Besides, Allah is immortal. He cannot be killed by His creation. Nor does He commit suicide to negate His own eternal existence.] Islam teaches that humans can have a personal and fulfilling relationship with Allah that does not compromise the transcendence of His Divine Majesty.

And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) concerning Me, then (tell them that) indeed I am close. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls Me. Let them then respond to Me and believe in Me that they may be guided (and walk aright). (Quran 2:186)

The Prophet said: *'Allah the Almighty has said: "Whoever shows enmity to a beloved slave of Mine, I shall be at war with him. My slave does not draw near to Me with anything more loved by Me than what I have commanded him. And My slave continues to draw near to Me by voluntary works till I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask of Me, I would surely give, and were he to seek refuge in Me, I would surely grant it."*' (Bukhari)

And who despairs of the Mercy of their Lord (Allah) except those who are astray. (Quran 15:56)

Thus, there is no ambiguity in divinity. God is God and man is man and there exists a quantum infinite gap between the two. And while almost all people acknowledge some supernatural force greater than themselves, only the true Muslim believes in and worships that Supreme Being with perfection and due reverence. Others either disbelieve in the Creator entirely or compromise His monotheism, His *Tawhid*, by degrading Him; confusing His Divinity with what is other and lesser than Himself.

And most of them do not believe in Allah except that they (also) ascribe partners to Him. (Quran 12:106)

So do not be of those who commit *shirk*, worshipping false gods or holding false ideas about the One True God. For,

(Allah is) Lord of the heavens, the earth and all that is in-between. So worship Him (alone) and be steadfast in His worship. Do you know of any equal to Him! (Quran 19:65)



He is Allah, there is nothing worthy of worship but He. He knows all things - hidden and revealed. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah, there is no deity but He. The Sovereign, the Holy, the Sublime, the Guardian of (True) Faith, the Watcher (over His creation), the Mighty, the Irresistible, the Supreme. Glory to Allah (High is He) above what they ascribe to Him! He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Bestower of Forms. To Him belong the Most Beautiful of Names. All in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the Almighty, the Wise.

﴿Quran 59:22-4﴾