

IMAN/FAITH IN ALLAAH aka *Tawheed*

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If Islaam is surrender to the will of Allah, it befits us to first know more about Allah. And by doing so, we have greater appreciation for the fact that Islam is the true religion of God and is based on pure unadulterated monotheism as is known from the Prophets of God throughout the ages. We may call this study “the concept of God in Islam” or the “doctrine of monotheism” but to avoid theoretical terms and to respect Allah’s Majesty, it is better to say this is the study of *how to properly acknowledge our Creator*.

Allah says in the Quran:

{ وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ (106) } سورة يوسف

“And most of them do not believe in Allah except that they are *associationists* [make shirk with Allah in what is beyond their right and knowledge]” [12:106]

Thus, it serves us well to understand the kind of faith Allah seeks from us so that we do not succumb to the deviances of the rest of Adam’s progeny.

To make teaching this pure monotheism easier, scholars have arranged the articles of faith in Allah in a two or three category system known as *tawheed*. The word *tawheed* comes from the root w-h-d [و ح د] which means *to make into one or unify*. What it means here is ***to acknowledge Allah’s sovereignty over all things with His Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes and thus, exclusive right to devotion***. This explanation is inspired by Allah’s saying,

{ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا (65) } سورة

مريم

“Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, so worship Him and be constant and patient in His worship. Do you know for Him any equal?” [19:65]

So Allah is the sole sovereign creator and sustainer of all that exists, and thus is the only being deserving of servitude and devotion, and there is nothing that shares with Him any of His Divine qualities, attributes or rights. These are the two or three categories of *tawheed*. One being acknowledging Allah’s exclusive right to worship, and the other(s) are believing in Him as He is, His sovereignty, Names and attributes.

Acknowledging first that there is a God

Before continuing, *how does Islam seek to prove the existence of God in the first place?* Really, it doesn't seek to do that *in the first place*—since the mission of the messengers was *always* to call people to single out Allah for their worship and abandon self-destructive social practices—so Islam instead seeks to bring people to realize what they may be in denial of if they refuse to acknowledge God's existence. Allah created the recognition within people *before* they even started thinking.

It's natural

The natural disposition or innate recognition of God's existence, highness, and nearness by knowledge is called the *fitrah*. Allah says,

{فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (30)} سورة الروم

“So set your face to *the* religion as a true monotheist, Allah's *fitrah* that He created humanity upon. No change will you find in Allah's creation. That is the upright religion, but most of mankind knows not.” [30:30]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ [explained](#) further, “Every child is born upon *the fitrah* but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.” Similarly, the Prophet ﷺ [said](#) that Allah said, “I created my slaves *hunafaa'* [possessing a natural instinct to turn to Allah], all of them, so the devils came and turned them from their deen, and forbade for them what I allowed and commanded them to associate partners with Me by what I never revealed any authorization for.”

The *fitrah* has been proven time and again by scientists who have come to grips with the fact that human beings are *wired* for faith in God, and generally live happier lives as faithful believers. Psychologists and neurologists have finally stated that if a child was raised by itself on a desert island, it would be a believer in God, like it who likes it, hate it who hates it. One of the consequences of this *fitrah* is the inclination—indeed, *instinct*—to invoke God

during times of extreme emotional discharge, whether that be joy and happiness, or frustration and anger, but especially *fear* that life may *suddenly* end with great pain and trauma,

{هُوَ الَّذِي يُسَيِّرْكُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ وَجَرِينِ بِهِمْ بِرِيحٍ طَيِّبَةٍ وَفَرِحُوا بِهَا
جَاءَتْهَا رِيحٌ عَاصِفٌ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْمَوْجُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ أُحِيطَ بِهِمْ دَعَوُا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ
الَّذِينَ لَنْ نُجِيتَنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (22) فَلَمَّا أَتَاهُمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغَيْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَنُنَبِّئُكُمْ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (23) سورة يونس

“He it is Who enables you to travel through land and sea, till when you are in the ships, and they sail with them with a favorable wind, and they are glad therein, then comes a stormy wind and the waves come to them from all sides, and they think that they are encircled therein. Then they invoke Allah, making their Faith pure for Him Alone, (saying): ‘*If You deliver us from this, we shall truly, be of the grateful.*’ But when He delivers them, behold! They rebel in the earth wrongfully.” [10:22-23]

{قُلْ مَنْ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْ ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً لَئِنْ أَنْجَانَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الشَّاكِرِينَ (63) قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ (64) سورة الأنعام

“Say: ‘Who rescues you from the darkness of the land and the sea, (when) you call upon Him in humility and in secret: ‘*If He only saves us from this (danger), we shall truly, be grateful.*’ Say: ‘*Allah* rescues you from this and from *all* distresses, and yet you worship others besides Allah.’” [6:63-64]

And this brings us to another “proof” of Allah’s existence:

Experimenting through invocation

{ إِذْ تَسْتَغِيثُونَ رَبَّكُمْ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَكُمْ ... (9) سورة الأنفال }

“When you sought help from your Lord and He responded to you...” [8:9]

{ أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ أَلِلَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَا }

تَذَكَّرُونَ (62) سورة النمل }

“Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations? Is there any ilaah with Allah? Little do you remember!” [27:62]

Many people have stories, and believers themselves have many stories, of when they were in a very pressing situation, prayed sincerely for Allah’s Help, and either something supernatural happened or a string of “coincidences” suddenly tipped the situation in their favor.

Observation through history

A third great demonstration of Allah’s existence comes from history, seeing the lives of the Prophets, their followers, the miracles they performed, prophecies they made which came true, and victories they and their followers were Given against all odds. Also, the grand and wise legislation that their revelations contained on a personal and communal level. By following the guidance therein, people’s lives are filled with tranquility and purpose, so society functions most harmoniously. This is especially true to the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his followers.

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ (7) } سورة محمد

“O you who have believed! If you give victory to Allah, He will make you victorious, and plant firm your feet.” [47:7]

Simple and logical responses to doubts

{ وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ (24) } سورة الجاثية

“And they said *there is nothing but the life of this world, we die and we live, and nothing ends us except time.* But they have no knowledge of it, and they are only speculating.” [45:24]

They can never disprove and discredit Allah or Islam in any manner that would end its existence.

And Allah says:

{ أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ (35) أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ (36) } سورة الطور

“Or were they created by nothing? Or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, they have no firm Belief.” [52:35–36]

And,

{ كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (28) } سورة البقرة

“How can you disbelieve in Allah? seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then to Him you will return.” [2:28]

The “mystery of life” is still one of the unsolvable by atheist scientists. They admit that life cannot come from nothing, but they dismiss the existence of life, claiming that a billion or so years ago, this rule did not exist, and our presence is the proof of that. That’s quite a gamble to risk eternity in the Fire, simply because you redesigned the rules to be without a creator. But YOU the reader aren’t bound by the rules of those who lost themselves.

Allah appeals to the just among them here:

{أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (30)} سورة الأنبياء

“Have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them? And We have made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” [21:30]

Allah tells us that all these objects floating in vacuous space are floating apart from each other, proving the origin of the universe, and that Allah is the originator. This was proven in the mid-20th century, just as every age brings its own proofs.

{سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ (53)} سورة فصلت

“We will show them Our Signs in the universe, and in their own selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not sufficient in regard to your Lord that He is a Witness over all things?” [41:53]

What is the *real* motivator of atheism?

When looking to atheism as phenomenon, it is never something people choose spontaneously. No one says, “I’m going to investigate all the different beliefs and unbeliefs, looking for the truth,” and then settles on atheism as being the most beautiful and reasonable life pattern to follow with the most backing. Rather, if a person wasn’t raised as an atheist, then they chose it out of rebellion to God out of what they did not feel is right about religion [usually Christianity] or the followers of that religion and their inability to teach it with wisdom. Since atheism is the common thing that discontents turn towards in this era, then they become part of the crowd and take up the slogans the rest have taken up. So that believers do not feel overwhelmed or in doubt when they see atheism on the rise, arrogantly declaring their beliefs with great fervor.

The defenses of atheists boil down to “I have to see it to believe it,” and “the world isn’t perfect and good.” As for the first, Allah says:

{وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ نَرَى رَبَّنَا لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ
وَعَتَوْا عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا (21) سورة الفرقان

“And those who expect not a Meeting with Us said: ‘Why are not the angels sent down to us, or why do we not see our Lord?’ Indeed they think too highly of themselves, and are scornful with great pride.” [25:21]

And as for the imperfections of the world. All of this stems from a misunderstanding about the nature of this life, being a test to worship Allah. So Allah does not have *any* obligation to present Himself today after He has created the heavens and the earth, beautified them and made it possible for us to benefit from. Nor has He promised to present Himself in this life—but rather quite the opposite, as we should assume that anyone who claims to be God, even if they have miracles and can send down the rain, should be denied. Allah is not pandering or begging to be recognized, but rather, Allah designed a test, and inspired a few individuals in the midst of darkness to remind us of His greatness and our need to worship Him.

{وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بَأْذَنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (51) {سورة الشورى

“It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him unless by Revelation, or from behind a veil, or that He sends a Messenger to reveal what He wills by His Leave. Verily, He is Most High, Most Wise.” [42:51]

However, after resurrection, eventually, Allah will come and the believers will see part of Him during each one’s personal account, and when each group follows what they used to worship, and upon entering Paradise they will see Allah’s Face.

{إِنَّمَا تُنذِرُ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ (11) {سورة يس

“You can only warn him who follows the Reminder, and fears the Most Beneficent *unseen*. Give to such person the glad tidings of forgiveness, and a generous reward.” [36:11]

And in some cases, Allah does not appeal to atheism, but merely dismisses their arrogance.

{وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (118) {سورة البقرة

“And those who have no knowledge say: ‘Why doesn’t Allah speak to us (face to face) or why does not a revelation come to us?’ So said the people before them words of similar import. Their hearts are alike, We have indeed made plain the signs for people who believe with certainty.” [2:118]

With this last phrase, Allah clarifies the proper stance of Islam for “demands of proof” for God’s existence. Because the God of the Quran and the God of Muhammad ﷺ is what is *automatically recognized* in the heart of every human being, without any exception, the case has been closed,

and it is upon the rejecter to ultimately justify their stance which they cannot—at least not against the Islamic worldview.

{وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (75) سورة القصص

“And We shall take out from every nation a witness, and We shall say: ‘Bring your proof.’ Then they shall know that the truth is with Allah and the lies which they invented will disappear from them.” [28:75]

Acknowledgement of Allah’s exclusive and complete sovereignty over all things, aka Tawheed al-Ruboobiyyah [Lordship]

What a believer affirms about Allah’s role with His creation is primarily captured in [the faith of *qadar*](#), discussed separately. However, these aayaat, like many others, capture the main aspects of this faith.

{قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (84) سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (85) قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ (86) سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (87) قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (88) سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ

فَأَنبَىٰ تِسْحَرُونَ (89) بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ (90) مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ
 مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ (91)
 عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (92) { سورة المؤمنون

“Say: ‘Whose is the earth and whosoever is therein? If you know!’ They will say: ‘It is Allah’s!’ Say: ‘Will you not then remember?’ Say: ‘Who is the Lord of the seven heavens, and the Lord of the Great Throne?’ They will say: Allah. Say: ‘Will you not then fear?’ Say: ‘In Whose Hand is the sovereignty of everything? And He protects all, while against Whom there is no protector, if you know?’ They will say: ‘(All that belongs) to Allah.’ Say: ‘How then are you deceived and turn away from the truth?’ Nay, but We have brought them the truth, and verily, they are liars. No son did Allah beget, nor is there any deity along with Him. Then each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have tried to overcome others! Glorified is Allah above all that they attribute to Him! All-Knower of the unseen and the seen! Exalted is He over all that they associate as partners to Him!” [23:84-92]

And,

{ أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا آلِهَةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ (21) لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ
 رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ (22) { سورة الأنبياء

“Or have they taken gods from the earth, they are resurrecting [the dead]? Had there been in them twain [heavens and earth] deities instead of Allah then they would both been corrupted. So glory be to Allah, Rabb of the Throne, above what they attribute!”
 [21:21-22]

Multiple subjects of worship. One cannot be a subject of worship having *power* to answer prayers. So if each is answering prayers of their devotees or if each is competing for that, then it would inevitably lead to conflicts. This supports that there is only One Creator.

Acknowledging Allah’s Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes Known as *Tawheed al-Asmaa’* [names] *wal-Sifaat* [and attributes]

This is a continuation of the former point: *believing* in Allah properly in one’s heart and mind.

Allah has given Himself many descriptive titles that are mentioned throughout the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ mentioned others as well. Allah says,

{قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُوا
بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا (110)} سورة الإسراء

“Say: ‘Invoke *Allah* or invoke *al-Rahmaan* [Possessor and distributor of all Mercy],
whichever you invoke, then to Allah belong the most beautiful Names.’ [17:110]

Allah also said regarding His Names,

{وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
(180)} سورة الأعراف

“And to Allah are the most beautiful names, so invoke Him by them. And leave the company of those who belie His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do.” [7:180]

The “ilhaad” spoken of here is denying His Names, or thinking that they are meaningless, or taking those Names, changing them slightly and giving them to idols, like the Arabs did before Islam.

Some of Allah’s Names are exclusively His, so they cannot be used for anyone else.

{الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (3)} سورة الفاتحة

“The Beneficent, the Compassionate” [1:3]

The scholars have said that the name Al-Rahmaan, which is here the “Beneficent”, meaning, the source of ALL mercy that is ever seen or experienced in the universe is by the decree of al-Rahmaan. Similarly, “The Creator” (Al-Khaaliq) and other names which might imply sacrilege, blasphemy or disrespect to Allah if any of His creation was referred to by it without qualifier or context.

Other names may have a shared meaning with some of the creation and can be used with created beings whenever appropriate. All that would preferably be without the proper “al” that suggests that the one described has set the highest level of that attribute, unless grammar dictate. Adding the proper “al” is like turning a little “g” into a big “G” in the word “God”.

{لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ}

{(128)} سورة التوبة

“Verily, there has come to you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious over you; and for the believers kind, merciful.” [9:128]

Here, the Prophet ﷺ is described by Allah as being “ra’oof” which is kind and gentle, and “raheem” which is merciful. Generally, if we said *al-Ra’oof* or *al-Raheem* that would only be Allah.

While there is definitely a limit to the number of names mentioned in the Quran and the Sunnah, there is no *known* limit to Allah’s Names. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “*O Allah, I am Your servant, son of Your male slave, son of Your female slave, my forelock is in Your hand, Your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. I ask You **by every name belonging to You** which You named Yourself with, or revealed in Your Book, or You taught to any of Your creation, **or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You**, that You make the Quran the spring of my heart and the light of my chest, and banisher of my sorrows and release from my anxiety.*” [Ahmad, no. 3583; al-Haakim, no. 1809; ibn Hibbaan, no. 984.]

Are some of Allah’s Names *better* or more virtuous than others? The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ [said](#), “*The greatest Name of Allah, which if He is called by it He responds, is in three surahs: al-Baqarah (2), Aali ‘Imraan (3), and Taha (20).*” There are several other hadeeths that further mention which verses and supplications contained Allah’s greatest name. Scholars have varying opinions over which name is Allah’s greatest. Usually, Allah, al-Rabb (the Lord Sovereign), al-Hayyul-Qayyoom (the All-Living Sustainer and Maintainer of all things), al-‘Aliyyul-‘Atheem (the High, the Great), and al-Rahmaan are all cited as possibilities. The only one present in all is “Allah”.

There are also a number of specific names of Allah that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ mentioned a great benefit for knowing them, [saying](#): “*Truly, Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one; whoever counts them will enter Paradise.*” The word *iHSaa’* [إحصاء] is literally translated as “to count” however, most of the scholars believe more is required here, such as calling Allah by those names from time to time, and pondering over their meanings to live accordingly, and memorize the Names. For example, if someone knows that Allah is Al-Samee’ (the All-Hearing) then they will watch what they say, as well as praise and thank Allah for the gift of hearing.

Lastly, Allah's Names are only known by revelation (wahy),

{قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (33)} سورة الأعراف

“Say: ‘But the things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are all lewdness whether committed openly or secretly, sins (of all kinds), oppression without right, joining partners with Allah for which He has given no authority, and saying things about Allah of which you have no knowledge.’” [7:33]

Allah declared this act to be even greater than shirk because shirk only harms the perpetrator, but speaking about Allah without knowledge harms everyone who hears it, which could be multitudes. Therefore, Allah is a being not to be conjectured or hypothesized about to learn more of, but only studied about with evidence from His revelation. This is just as Allah says, only sanctifying the descriptions given by His messengers:

{سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ (180) وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (181) وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (182)} سورة الصافات

“Glory be to your Lord the Lord of Might above what they describe! And *salaam* be upon the Messengers. And all praise is to Allah Lord of the Worlds.” [37:180-182]

Salaam not only means peace, but safety, as if to say, whatever comes from them is safe.

The Attributes of Allah ﷻ

Allah, the Exalted and Mighty, has described Himself throughout the Quran, and His Messenger Muhammad ﷺ was inspired to mention many descriptive statements about the Creator of humanity to Whom we are to surrender in Islaam. Knowing about Allah's power, characteristics of Mercy and Retribution, and different interactions Allah has with His creation aided us *significantly* in knowing Allah and worshiping Him. Without that knowledge, we would be

worshiping something we didn't know, which might as well be non-existent. But even without the revelation, the most important characteristics of Allah are known innately by the *fitrah*, such as His ability to Hear and Respond to our invocations.

{وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ (186) سورة البقرة

“And when My slaves ask you concerning Me, then I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls on Me. So let them obey Me and believe in Me, so that they may be led aright.” [2:186]

Also, it is known that this being Who can be invoked for any situation is capable of all things, and is such that no greater or more powerful being could ever be conceived of. Thus, when learning about Allah's attributes as they appear in the Quran and Sunnah, it is in that light that we understand their *linguistic* meaning, but know that they are far beyond and more amazing than anything even comparable from His creation—even if similar words could be used to describe the creation.

{قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (1) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (2) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (3) وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (4) سورة
الإخلاص

“Say: ‘He is Allah, One. Allah is al-*Samad* [the One Whom all creatures turn to for provision and help]. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is no equal to Him.” [112]

So whatever image comes to mind when learning about Allah, we must reassure ourselves that Allah is far greater and more splendid than anything we could ever imagine. After all, even the things we imagine are only composites of things we already know from the creation. So we cannot imagine or conceive of a color that we've never seen, except by mixing two we already know. And like that, the human mind is incapable of envisioning Allah.

{ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ (103) } سورة الأنعام

“No vision can encompass Him, but He encompasses all vision. He is the Most Subtle and Courteous, the Well-Acquainted.” [6:103]

Allah is described throughout the Quran and Sunnah with attributes related to His Names, like mercy,

{ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَنْ يَجْدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا (58) } سورة الكهف

“And your Lord is Forgiving, *Owner of Mercy*. Were He to call them to account for what they have earned, then surely, He would have hastened their punishment. But they have their appointed time, beyond which they will find no escape.” [18:58]

And might,

{ مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا ... (10) } سورة فاطر

“Whosoever desires honor, power and glory, then to Allah belong all honor, power and glory.” [35:10]

And attributes denoting movement,

{ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى (5) } سورة طه

“The Most Beneficent, upon the Throne, has risen.” [20:5]

Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “Our Lord, the Blessed and the Exalted, descends every night to the lowest heaven when one-third of the latter part of the night is left,¹ and says: Who supplicates Me so that I may answer him? Who asks Me so that I may give to him? Who asks Me forgiveness so that I may forgive him?”

{هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ ... (158)}

سورة الأنعام

“Do they then wait for anything other than that the angels should come to them, or that your Lord should come, or that some of the Signs of your Lord should happen?” [6:158]

In many authentic hadeeths, the coming of Allah on the Day of Judgment is described as well.

Allah is also described as speaking audibly,

{إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (16) سورة طه

“When his Lord called him in the sacred valley of Tuwaa,” [79:16]

{وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

(31) قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ (32) قَالَ يَا آدَمُ

أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ (33) سورة البقرة

¹ Since the earth is round, as the scholars of Islam agreed to from the earliest centuries, does that mean that Allah is perpetually descending? Not at all. For example, just from our own selves, if I am standing next to a globe of the earth, sticking my hand out towards it, if it rotates while I am staying in a near similar position, with my hand pointing towards it, then continuously, one place after another, the earth would meet my hand. So if I can do this, then Allah is much more able to do so in manner much greater and baffling than I could ever conceive and demonstrate.

“And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful.’ They (angels) said: ‘Glorified are You, we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Verily, it is You, the All-Knower, the All-Wise.’ He said: ‘O Adam! Inform them of their names,’ and when he had informed them of their names, He said: ‘Did I not tell you that I know the *Ghaib* (Unseen) in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing?’” [2:31-33]

Allah also describes Himself with characteristics we might classify as “emotion” but when Allah is described with them, they, like all other attributes are completely without deficiency and in a manner which befits His Majesty.

{وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا (93) سورة النساء}

“And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein; and the **Wrath** and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.” [4:93]

{قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (119) سورة المائدة}

“Allah will say: ‘This is a Day on which the truthful will profit from their truth: theirs are Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise) – they shall abide therein forever. Allah is **pleased** with them and they with Him. That is the great success (Paradise).’” [5:119]

Allah is further described with attributes suggesting form,

{قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإَيْدِي أَسْتَكْبَرْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْعَالِينَ (75)}

سورة ص

“(Allah) said: ‘O Iblees! What prevents you from prostrating yourself to one whom I have created with Both My Hands. Are you too proud or are you one of the high exalted?’” [38:75]

{يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَيُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (42) خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَالِمُونَ (43)} سورة القلم

“Remember the Day when the Shin shall be laid bare and they shall be called to prostrate themselves (to Allah), but they (hypocrites) shall not be able to do so. Their eyes will be cast down and ignominy will cover them; they used to be called to prostrate themselves while they were healthy and good (but they refused).” [68:42-43]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ [said](#), describing some of the events on the Day of Judgment, “*Then the Almighty will come to them in a shape other than the one which they saw the first time, and He will say, ‘I am your Lord,’ and they will say, ‘You are our Lord.’ And none will speak to Him then but the Prophets. And then it will be said to them, ‘Do you know any sign by which you can recognize Him?’ They will say, ‘The Shin,’ and so Allah will then uncover His Shin whereupon every believer will prostrate himself before Him and there will remain those who used to prostrate themselves before Him just for showing off and for gaining good reputation. Such a one will try to prostrate himself but his back will become a single (vertebra) bone.*”

Allah’s self-description in the Quran, and His Prophet’s description of Him in the Sunnah are to be believed in and affirmed as is, according to context as dictated by the Arabic language, beyond our ability to imagine.

{...لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (11)} سورة الشورى

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, All-Seer.” [42:11]

When the Prophet recited this aayah once for his companions and he placed his thumb upon his ear, and forefinger on his eye [ibn Khuzaimah in *al-Asmaa’ wal-Sifaat*, pg. 31, from Abu Hurairah], demonstrating that Allah’s Hearing and Seeing are very real, even though they are beyond our comprehension.

Sometimes, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or preachers to Islam will present an analogy for teaching purposes by comparing Allah’s nature to that of one of His creation. For example, the Prophet ﷺ [said](#) once to his companions, “ *While I was sleeping I had a vision as if Jibreel was at my feet. One of them said to his companion: ‘Make a parable for him’ so he said: ‘Listen so that your ears may hear. Harken so that your heart may understand! The parable of you and your Ummah is but the parable of a king who conquers a land, then he constructs a house in it. Then he places a table-spread in it, then he sends a messenger to call the people to eat from it. Among them are those who answer the call of the messenger, and among them are those who forsake it. **So Allah is the king and the land is Islam, and the house is Paradise, and you O Muhammad! You are the Messenger**, so whoever responds to you he enters Islam, and whoever enters Islam he enters Paradise, and whoever enters Paradise, he shall eat of what is in it.* ” However, all such examples are for teaching purposes, and the true amount of difference between the image and the Real Allah are beyond comparison,

{لِّلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (60)} سورة

النحل

“For those who believe not in the Hereafter is an evil description, and for Allah is the highest example. And He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.” [16:60]

Thus, in keeping proper etiquette with Allah, such examples, while sometimes useful, inevitably fall short of Allah’s Majesty, and to Allah belongs the Highest form of that example. And because the Quran was only sent to be a Book of guidance, allegorical and metaphorical interpretation that

goes against common contextual usage is forbidden just like anthropomorphism without evidence suggesting otherwise.

{فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (74)} سورة النحل

“So put not forward similitudes for Allah. Truly, Allah knows and you know not.” [16:74]

The “howness” of Allah’s nature/essence is unknown, except that Allah Created Adam in His Image [ibn Abi ‘Aasim in *Al-Sunnah*, no. 416 from Abdullah ibn ‘Umar] so there is some shared portion of each attribute but the exact howness for each is according to what befits them. Adam and his children have hands that befit them. Animals have hands and paws and talons that befit them. Allah has Hands that befit Him ﷻ.

But where is Allah?

Directly related to Allah’s attributes is *where Allah is*. The innate disposition directs humans to focus *upward* when calling upon Allah in times of need. Allah’s Highness above all things is also known by His Names. Allah is al-‘Alee (العليّ) and al-Muta’aal (المتعال), which both mean high *in every positive and befitting meaning* that highness possesses, including being above. The Quran also *constantly* and consistently refers to things *rising to* and *descending from* Allah. There is also explicit mention that He is above the 7th heaven, waters, *kursi* (footstool), and ‘*arsh* (throne) in the Sunnah.

Yet, this does not mean that Allah is “distant”, “confined” or “limited” in any way. Allah says,

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ
وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ (67) سورة الزمر

“They made not a just estimate of Allah such as is due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection the whole of the earth will be grasped by His Hand and the heavens will be

rolled up in His Right Hand. Glorified is He and Exalted above all that they associate with Him!” [39:67]

So if you could consider a marble or even a grain of sand in your hand, and then if the nucleus of the innermost atom of that object were like earth, then you may have the faintest idea of how “distant” Allah is from us, and to Allah belongs the Highest Example.

{وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرُّؤْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَخُوفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا (60) {سورة الإسراء

“And (remember) when We told you: ‘Verily, your Lord has encompassed mankind (i.e. they and the rest of the universe are in His Grip).’ And We made not the vision which We showed you (O Muhammad) except a trial for mankind, and (likewise) the accursed tree mentioned in this Qur’aan. We warn and make them afraid but it does not increase them except great transgression.” [17:60]

So while Allah is Above all things, He is also surrounding all things, and we have no conception of how great Allah is.

As for verses that refer to Allah’s “closeness”, then His closeness is by knowledge and ability, and is indicated in every verse that refers to Allah’s presence and nearness,

{هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلْجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (4) {سورة الحديد

“He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days and then rose over the Throne. He knows what goes into the earth and what comes forth from it, and what descends from the heaven and what ascends thereto. And He is with you wherever you may be. And Allah is All-Seer of what you do.”

[57:4]

Likewise,

{وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (115) سورة البقرة}

“And to Allah belong the east and the west, so **wherever you turn there is the Face of Allah**. Surely, Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures' needs, **All-Knowing**.” [2:115]

Acknowledgement of Allah’s exclusive right to worship
(‘*ibaadah*) Known as: *Tawheed al-‘Uboodiyyah* (servitude) or
al-‘Uloohiyyah (divinity)

Allah says in the Quran:

{وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (56) سورة الذاريات}

“**And I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me.**” [51:56]

So Allah ﷻ brought humans into existence for the sole purpose of pleasing Him. As “selfish” as that sounds, let us consider the most prominent “purpose of life” theory that exists: to serve and be kind to others. While being a source of good to those around you is an extremely praiseworthy quality in Islam, it does not make sense that human beings be created, brought into existence from *nothing*, for *their* benefit. What needs did we have before we existed? What discord existed between them before they existed? So would you go to the pet store, buy a goldfish from one store and then buy a goldfish from another store *solely* for them to be good to each other? Not unless you yourself received some satisfaction by doing so. And Allah is satisfied by humans acknowledging their Creator, and following the instructions of those of us whom He inspired to

inform us of that. And Allah loves His worshipers and to demonstrate His generosity to them in the face of those who disbelieved. And to Allah is the Highest example,

{إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (7)}

سورة الزمر

“If you disbelieve, then verily, Allah is not in need of you; He likes not disbelief for His slaves. And if you are grateful (by being believers), He is pleased therewith for you. No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you what you used to do. Verily, He is All-Knower of that which is in (men's) breasts.” [39:7]

Although we ourselves benefit from being created, not only in this life by breathing the air Allah provided us, eating the food Allah provided us, and living with and benefiting from material that Allah provided for us completely without our ability to bring into existence for ourselves. In the Hereafter as well, if we followed the teachings of His prophets and the last prophet Muhammad ﷺ then in the afterlife, we will be subject to great provision and pleasure. Therefore, Allah created us because He could, and He likes to be worshiped and thanked and gave us the provision to thank Him even more and be happy with His creations for us. Knowing that Allah created all of this universe and everything in it and beautified the earth entirely for us to be pleased with our Creator and worship Him produces a couple of feelings: first, humility over our own miserableness as worshipers compared to Allah’s great favors upon us; and second, a bit of realization why worshiping other than Allah or not following His most basic orders is such a great *insult* to Allah and worthy of the most severe punishment—after all, compared to Allah, we are not even like grains of sand compared to one another, and look how little empathy we have for one another, much less the tiniest living things that we step on without the slightest regard.

And this aspect of Allah’s “oneness” or “unity”, the sole right to be worshiped, returns us to the very first half of the *shahaadah*, and it brings us to the next question:

What *is* worship?

Worship is an all-inclusive word encompassing **everything Allah commands and loves of words and actions, inner and outer.**

And that is known through His Messengers.

There are two requirements for any act of worship to be accepted by Allah. The first is sincere intention, known as *niyyah* or *ikhlaas*, whole-heartedness.

{وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ
الْقِيَمَةِ (5) } سورة البينة

“And they were commanded with nothing except that they should worship Allah, and make their religion entirely for Allah Alone, and none else, and perform the prayers and give the obligatory charity, and that is the right religion.” [98:5]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said that Allah [says](#) “*I am the most free and rich of all things associated in worship. If anyone does anything in which he associates anyone else with Me, I shall abandon him with the one whom he involved.*” – In other words, if a person stands to pray, give in charity, dispense knowledge, etc., while part of them is hoping to impress someone else or to become known for righteousness, then Allah will not accept their deeds.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ [said](#), “*Truly, actions are but by intentions; and for every person is only what they intended. So whoever’s hijrah [migration] was to Allah and His Messenger, then their migration was for Allah and His Messenger; and whoever’s migration was to marry a woman or to obtain some worldly benefit, then their migration was for whatever they went for.*”

{مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا (18) وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا (19) كُلًّا نُمِدُّ هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا (20) انظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَلِلْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا (21) {سورة الإسراء

“Whoever desires the quick-passing (transitory enjoyment of this world), We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then, afterwards, We have appointed for him Hell; he will burn therein disgraced and rejected. And whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it, with the necessary effort due for it while he is a believer – then such are the ones whose striving shall be appreciated.

On each – these as well as those – We bestow from the Bounties of your Lord. And the Bounties of your Lord can never be forbidden. Look at how We prefer some of them to others (in this world), and verily, the Hereafter will be greater in degrees and greater in preferment.” [17:18–21]

These verses and prophetic traditions teach us another very important lesson. That is, no one who worked for something will be treated unjustly, and if they did not fulfil the requirements for Allah’s Mercy to be admitted into Paradise, Allah will make sure that they receive some glory and some provision in their lives before they died so that their deeds were fulfilled. Then, on the Day of Judgment, Allah will acknowledge their good works, and recount His Favors upon His slaves in the *dunyaa* (worldly life), so that they realize that they were indeed rewarded from Him and got what they wanted and strove for. However, because they did not believe in Allah as He is, and worship Him according to His Messengers’ guidance—*the whole purpose of their being brought into existence in the first place*—then, they will have nothing of reward in the Hereafter.

So there are **two variables in the salvation equation**: worshiping Allah as He is and wants to be worshiped, and maintaining mercy and justice with His creation. **The greater and more**

important half of the equation is recognizing Allah for who He truly is, and worshiping Him alone. Whoever neglects that, will have no reward from Allah in the Hereafter. **The lesser, but still important, other half** of the equation, is doing well towards others, and recognizing the rights of Allah’s creation. If a person neglects this portion, then they are liable for great and tremendous punishment on the Day of Judgment, and perhaps even in Hell. If however, they were a believer of Allah as He is and a worshiper of Him alone via His messengers’ guidance, they will eventually enter Paradise.

The second requirement of accepted deeds is agreement with the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

{لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا
{(21) سورة الأحزاب

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example to follow for him who hopes for (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.”

[33:21]

{قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (31) قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ (32) سورة آل عمران

“Say (O Muhammad to mankind): ‘If you really love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’ Say: ‘Obey Allah and the Messenger.’ But if they turn away, then Allah does not like the disbelievers.” [3:31–32]

{ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا (65) سورة النساء

“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.” [4:65]

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ [said](#), “*Whoever performs an action that does not agree with our way will have theirs rejected.*”

Thus, Allah did not leave it up to us to rely upon the fitrah alone and do whatever feels good and call it worship. Otherwise, we could not condemn a person for instituting genocide, promoting suicide bombing, human sacrifice, orgies, intoxication, and calling it worship. But rather, Allah gave us a role model and guidelines that clearly define what Allah is pleased with, and *forbidding* all else.

{قُلْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ اللَّهَ بِدِينِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ
{(16) سورة الحجرات

“Say: ‘Are *you* informing Allah of your religion while Allah knows all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and Allah is All-Knowing of everything?’” [49:16]

So Allah does not approve of anything done *with the intention of worship*, if it is not what His messengers taught of how to earn Allah’s Pleasure,

{وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءٌ وَتَصْدِيَةٌ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ (35)
سورة الأنفال

“Their “prayer” at the Sanctuary was nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. Therefore taste the punishment because you used to disbelieve.” [8:35]

Allah enumerates some of the deviations of the pagans of Makkah after the battle of Badr since they changed the religion of Ibrahim, and includes among those deviations, the invention of

different rituals and calling it worship. Similarly, singing and dancing are also un-recognized forms of “worship”.

Examples of worship from the Quran and Sunnah:

Speech, like the testimony of faith, remembrances of Allah, du’aa (invocation), and teaching of the religion,

{وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (33) سورة

فصلت

“And who is better in speech than he who invites to Allah, and does righteous deeds, and says: ‘I am one of the Muslims.’” [41:33]

{قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ (1) مَلِكِ النَّاسِ (2) إِلَهِ النَّاسِ (3) سورة الناس

“Say: ‘I seek refuge with the Lord of mankind, The King of mankind – The God of mankind...’ [114]

{أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ (24)

سورة إبراهيم

“See you not how Allah sets forth a parable? A goodly word is as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach to the sky.” [14:24]

{يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا (41) وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا (42) سورة

الأحزاب

“O you who believe! Remember Allah with much remembrance. And glorify His Praises morning and afternoon.” [33:41-42]

Then, physical actions, such as prayer, charity, fasting, slaughter...

{قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (162)} سورة الأنعام

“Say: truly my prayer and my sacrifice, my live and my dying are for Allah Lord of the Worlds.” [6:162]

{يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ (43)} سورة آل عمران

“O Maryam! Submit yourself with obedience to your Lord and prostrate, and bow down along with those who bow.” [3:43]

One time, a group of the Prophet’s companions came to him complaining that, due to their poverty, they could not give in charity and worship Allah in the same manner that others could. So he said, “*Has Allah not prescribed for you what you can give as sadaqah? In every declaration of the glorification of Allah (i. e. saying Subhan Allah) there is a Sadaqah; and every Takbeer (saying Allahu-Akbar) is a sadaqah, and every praise of His (saying al-Hamdu Lillah) is a Sadaqah and every declaration that He is One (La ilaaha ill-Allah) is a sadaqah, and enjoining of good is a sadaqah, and forbidding of evil is a Sadaqah, and in man's sexual Intercourse (with his wife) there is a Sadaqah.*” They said: Messenger of Allah, is there reward for him who satisfies his sexual passion among us? He said: “*Tell me, if he were to devote it to something forbidden, would it not be a sin on his part? Similarly, if he were to devote it to something lawful, he should have a reward.*”

And as we learned when discussing *iman*, even removing an obstacle from people’s pathways, with good intention to please Allah, is worship.

And among worship is the acquirement of knowledge of the religion,

{شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ}

{(18) سورة آل عمران}

“Allah bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but He, and the angels, and those having knowledge (also give this witness); He is maintaining His creation in justice. None has the right to be worshipped but Him, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.”

[3:18]

Once a man from Madinah came to Abud-Dardaa’ (one of the Prophet’s companions) when he was in Damascus. So the latter said, “What brings you nephew?” He replied, “A hadith reached me which you have narrated from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.” He said, “You did not come for some need?” He said, “No.” He said, “Did you come for business?” He said, “No, I did not come except seeking this narration.” So Abud-Dardaa’ said, “Truly, I heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, ‘Whoever takes a path upon which he seeks knowledge, then Allah makes a path to Paradise easy for him. And indeed the angels lower their wings in contentment to the one seeking knowledge. Indeed forgiveness is sought for the knowledgeable one by whomever is in the heavens and whomever is in the earth, even the fish in the waters. And the superiority of the learned over the worshiper is like the superiority of the moon over the rest of the celestial bodies. Indeed the scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets, and the Prophets do not leave behind dinar or dirham. The only legacy of the scholars is knowledge, so whoever takes from it, then he has indeed taken a grand portion.’” So have no doubt that the learning you’re doing, and the knowledge you keep in mind and believe is something very pleasing to Allah ﷻ. Recalling it and living by it is how we preserve it.

As for *inner and hidden actions*, then these are the deeds and worship of the heart, such as:

Hope *rajaa*’ and desire *raghbah*:

{وَأِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ (8) سورة الشرح}

“And to your Lord alone, turn your desire.” [94:8]

{ ... إِنَّ تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا

حَكِيمًا {سورة النساء (104)}

“...if you are suffering then surely they too are suffering as you are suffering, but you have a hope from Allah that for which they hope not; and Allah is Ever All-Knowing, All-Wise.” [4:103]

Reliance and trust, known as *tawakkul*,

{ وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصْبِرَنَّ عَلَى مَا آذَيْتُمُونَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ

الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ {سورة إبراهيم (12)}

“[The Messengers said] And why should we not put our trust in Allah while He indeed has guided us in our ways? And we shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us, and in Allah (Alone) let those who trust, put their trust.” [14:12]

Reliance, trust and dependency of the heart is one of the only heart feelings that Allah has exclusive right over. In nearly every place that “tawakkul” is mentioned in the Quran, it is mentioned as being conditional of faith. In your day-to-day affairs and life events, you may of course let some of your activities “depend on” the actions of others, but throughout that, your heart’s dependency must be on Allah. Thus, if someone else doesn’t pull through, the believer knows that Allah never intended for it to be, or that it would come about differently than our original plans.

Love, known as *hubb* or *Mahabbah*,

{ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ ...

{سورة البقرة (165)}

“And among mankind are those who take rivals besides Allah, they love them as much as they love Allah, but those who’ve believed are in greater love of Allah...” [2:165]

Dread, known as *khashyah*

{ جَزَاؤُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ
وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ رَبَّهُ (8) سورة البينة

“Their reward with their Lord is gardens of Eden, underneath which rivers flow. They will abide therein forever, Allah will be pleased with them, and they with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord.” [98:8]

Awe or fear that leads to taking precautions, known as *rahbah*:

{ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا
وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ (90) سورة الأنبياء

“So, We answered his call, and We bestowed upon him Yahyaa (John), and cured his wife (to bear a child) for him. Verily, they used to hasten on to do good deeds, and they used to call on Us with hope and **fear**, and used to humble themselves before Us.”

[21:90]

Penitence, or regret over past inequities coupled with desire to improve, known as *inaabah*:

{ وَأَنِيبُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَسْلِمُوا لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْعَذَابُ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (54) سورة الزمر

“And turn in repentance and in obedience with true Faith to your Lord and submit to Him before the torment comes upon you, and then you will not be helped.” [39:54]

Struggling to overcome temptation to indulge in what Allah forbade, known as *mujaahadah* or *jihad-un-nafs*:

{وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ (40) فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ (41)} سورة

النازعات

“But as for him who feared standing before his Lord, and restrained himself from impure evil desires and lusts. Verily, Paradise will be his abode.” [79:40-41]

Patient perseverance and endurance, known as *sabr*:

{فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَا يَسْتَخِفَّنكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوقِنُونَ (60)} سورة الروم

“So be patient. Verily, the Promise of Allah is true; and let not those who have no certainty of Faith discourage you.” [30:60]

{فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا (5)} سورة المعارج

“So be patient, a beautiful patience.” [70:5]

And gratitude, known as *shukr*:

{بَلِ اللَّهِ فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ (66)} سورة الزمر

“Nay, but it is Allah you must worship; and be among the grateful.” [39:66]

{وَكَذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ

بِالشَّاكِرِينَ (53)} سورة الأنعام

“Thus We have tried some of them with others, that they might say: ‘Is it these (poor believers) whom Allah has favored from amongst us?’ Does Allah not know best those who are grateful?” [6:53]

These acts of the heart are the things that make physical worship worth more to Allah the more they are increased. Thus, two people may be praying next to one another, while the difference between the salaah of each one is like the difference between the heavens and the earth. That is because one of them is praying and contemplating on their words, loving, hoping in Allah's acceptance, fearing His rejecting and punishment. As for the other, his mind is elsewhere completely. Also, just like the spheres of *iman*, they influence each other. When you read the Quran, and thus review knowledge, you may feel a fear of Allah, and be motivated to pray and invoke Allah more for safety in this life and the Hereafter, and then feel grateful to Allah for having guided you to His religion, in complete servitude, as a Muslim.

References:

Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles by Muhammad ibn Saalih al-Uthaymeen

Faith in Allah ibn Umar al-Ashqar