

Allah has Beautiful Names

By Dr. Mohammad Shafi

First written for Dar al Islam Teachers' Institutes Alumni News Letter, Fall 1999

In Islam, God is Allah, The One other than whom there is no God. He is *Al Ahad*, The One, Absolute Unity. He is *Al `Ali*, the Most High; *Al `Aziz*, The Mighty; and *Al Jabbar*, The Irresistible. Gai Eaton writes that "in Islam, God does not embody Himself in any human being or make Himself accessible through idols and images". "But", Eaton continues, "He does make Himself Accessible through His Revealed Names. We, in our small way, can exemplify these qualities and attributes in our daily lives. Inspired and aided by The Most Merciful, we can show mercy. Inspired and aided by the One Who Creates Guidance we can guide our fellow men and women. Through His Light our lives may be illuminated. ... We love those who are kind to us, and God is Kindness itself. We love generosity when it is directed toward us, and He is The Selflessly Generous One. We are irresistibly drawn towards beauty, and He is the Source of All Beauty. Above all, we love Perfection, and we seek it in vain in this imperfect world. We find it in God, Who alone is perfect. And the Qur'an tells us that 'the believers are strong in their love of God'. At the end of the road, sign-posted by the divine Names, the Muslim rejoices in an overwhelming love for the One who awaits us at journey's end".

The holy Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, is reported by Abu Huraira as saying "God has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one. The one who enumerates them enters Paradise".

The Qur'an describes God by His attributes and names, and calls these The Beautiful Names (Al Asma' ul Husna). This expression occurs in the Qur'an at least four times:

1. Surah Al A'raaf (7), Aayah 180:

The most Beautiful Names belong to Allah; so call Him by them. But shun such men as distort His names; for what they do, they will soon be requited.

2. Surah Al Asraa' (17), Aayah 110:

Say: "Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman; by whatever name ye call Him (it is well); for Him belong the most Beautiful Names. Neither speak thy Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek ye a middle course between".

3. Surah Taha (20), Aayah 8:

Allah, there is no god but He! To Him belong The Most Beautiful Names.

4. Surah Al Hashr (59), Aayah 24:

He is Allah, The Creator, The Originator, The Fashioner; to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names; whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare His Praises and Glory; and He is Exalted In Might, The Wise.

Aayat 22 and 23 of Surah Al Hashr (59) contain the following additional names:

The Sovereign, The Holy One, The Source Of Peace, The Guardian Of Faith, The Preserver Of Safety, The Irresistible, The Justly Proud.

Based on a tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace, ninety nine (99) names and attributes mentioned in the Qur'an have been selected and are in common use by the world Muslim community. It might be of interest to mention that the personal name of God in Arabic, Allah, is mentioned in the Qur'an some 2317 times. The name Rabb (The Nourisher and Sustainer) in its various conjugations appears about 978 times. Raheem (The Merciful) occurs 97 times, Rahman (The Most Gracious) appears 58 times. Other words related to Mercy and Compassion are used about 157 times. The generic "god" (Ilaah) and its various conjugations occur 147 times (only once does it occur in the form of "our god" and that in Surah 29, Aayah 46, where it says that "Our God and your God are one and the same").

An excellent work on this subject is *The Attributes of Divine Perfection*, an exceptionally beautiful work of art sponsored and published in a limited edition by Xenel Ltd, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This work translates the ninety-nine names from the Arabic words into English as given below.

1. God, The One other than whom there is no God.
2. The Most Merciful.
3. The Most Compassionate.
4. The Sovereign Supreme.
5. The Most Holy One.
6. The Sound One with whom all salvation rests.
7. The Giver of Faith, Safety and Security.
8. The Protector and Guardian.
9. The Incomparable and Unparalleled One.
10. The One Who Compels His Creatures to Do as He Wills.
11. The One Supreme in Pride and Greatness.
12. The Creator.
13. The Executive and Maker.
14. The Fashioner.
15. The Very Forgiving One.
16. The Dominating One.
17. The One Who Gives Freely, without Thoughts of Compensation.
18. The One Who Provides All Sustenance.
19. He Who Opens All Truth.

20. The Omniscient One.
21. The One Who Takes Away.
22. The One Who Gives Abundantly.
23. The Abaser.
24. The Exalter.
25. The One Who Raises to Honor.
26. The One Who Humiliates.
27. The All-Hearing One.
28. The All-Seeing One.
29. The Arbiter Supreme.
30. The Just One.
31. The One Who is Extremely Subtle and Unfathomable.
32. The All-Cognizant.
33. The Non-Precipitate and Forbearing One.
34. The Greatest in all Realms.
35. The Utterly Forgiving One.
36. The One Who Expresses Thankfulness by Rewarding Bounteously.
37. The Most High One.
38. The Truly Grand.
39. The Preserver.
40. The Nourisher and The Watcher.
41. The Sole Reliance.
42. The Sublime One.
43. The Selflessly Generous One.
44. The Ever Watchful over everything.
45. The Responder.
46. The One Whose Capacity is Limitless in All Realms.
47. The Ultimately Wise One.
48. The Objectively Loving One.
49. The Most Glorious One.
50. The Resurrector.
51. The Witness.
52. The Ultimate Truth.
53. The Ultimate Trustee.
54. The Perfectly Strong.
55. The Firm One.
56. The Patron.
57. The Ultimately Praiseworthy One.
58. The Absolute Reckoner.
59. The Originator.
60. The Restorer.
61. He Who Grants Life.
62. He Who Brings Death.
63. The Ever-Living.
64. The Self-Subsisting One.
65. The Founder Who Has No Needs.

66. The Glorified One.
67. He Who is Uniquely One.
68. The Eternally Besought in Every Exigency.
69. The All-Powerful.
70. The Bestower of Power upon Things.
71. The One Who Causes Advancement.
72. The One Who Causes Retardation.
73. The First, before Whom there is Nothing.
74. The Last, after Whom there is Nothing.
75. The Manifest.
76. The Hidden One.
77. He Who has Charge Over All.
78. The Highly Exalted One.
79. The Beneficent One.
80. He Who Accepts Repentance.
81. The Avenger.
82. The One Who Erases Sin.
83. The Most Compassionate.
84. Lord of All Dominion.
85. Lord of Majesty and Bounty.
86. The Upholder of Equity.
87. The Gatherer of Whatever He Wishes, Wherever He Wishes.
88. The Independently Rich.
89. The Enriching One.
90. The Unconquerable One.
91. The Creator of Harmful.
92. The Creator of the Good and Beneficial.
93. The Light of the Heavens and the Earth.
94. The One Who Creates Guidance.
95. The Originator of Creation.
96. The Everlasting One.
97. The Ultimate Inheritor.
98. The Absolutely Judicious Guide Who ordains rationally.
99. He Who Times All Things Perfectly.