

# Sisters' Class 3 - Allah's Perfect names and attributes

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## Introduction

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

يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ الأعراف: ١٨٠

“And to Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.” [Al-A'raaf 7:180]

## The virtues of knowing Allah's names & attributes (1)

- The best of knowledge is knowing Allah's Perfect names and attributes.
- This leads the Muslim to worshipping Allah as He deserves to be worshipped. Allah said: “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.”
- When a person knows Allah's infinite power and Allah's severe punishment, they fear Allah more.
- When a person knows Allah's mercy, which has encompassed every single thing, even the non-Muslim, they increase in their hope in Him.

## The virtues of knowing Allah's names and attributes (2)

- When a person knows that Allah hears and sees everything, it makes them stand straight upon the religion. Aa'isha – may Allah be pleased with her –said: “Glory be to the one who's hearing reaches every sound!” She was sitting in her tiny room when the woman came to the Prophet regarding her husband and yet Aa'isha couldn't hear everything the woman said to him. Then Allah sent down His statement: “Certainly has Allah heard the speech of the one who argues with you, [O Muhammad], concerning her husband and directs her complaint to Allah . And Allah hears your dialogue; indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing.”
- When a person knows that “if Allah touches you with harm, none can remove it but He, and if He touches you with good, then He is Able to do all things”, their heart becomes free of relying upon anyone except Allah. When they are in need they turn to him alone, and when they are touched by hardship, they know that nobody can remove their hardship except Him.

## The virtues of knowing Allah's names and attributes (3)

- When a person knows that Allah accepts the tawbah (repentance) of everyone who turns back to Him, it makes them sincere in turning back to Allah. The Messenger of Allah – peace and blessings of Allah be upon him – said: “Verily, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than a person who has lost his camel carrying his food and drink in a waterless desert. He, having lost all hope, lies down in shade and with no hope of finding his camel again; when all of a sudden he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of its reins and then out of boundless joy blurts out: 'O Allah, You are my slave and I am Your lord'. He makes this mistake out of extreme joy.”
- When a person knows that “Allah is Shy when His servant raises his hands to Him to return them empty”, they never ceases to call upon His Lord, “even for a shoelace”, as the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said. And he continues like this until his relationship with His Lord means more to him than Allah giving him what he wants.
- Knowing them a key to Jannah: “Indeed Allah has 99 names, whoever [learns and acts] upon them, will enter Jannah”

## The basic principles

- These are the most important part of the lesson – if you understand them, then you have completed what is required of you. The rest of the lesson is an expansion of these principles:
  - We affirm what Allah affirmed for Himself, and what His Messenger affirmed for Him
  - We negate what Allah negated regarding Himself, and what His Messenger negated regarding Him
  - We do this without changing their meaning, or denying them, without asking ‘how’, and without comparing Allah to His creation

## The proof

﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾ (الشورى: ١١)

“There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing” [Ash-Shuraa’ 42:11]

- Where are the basic principles in this aayah?

## The statement of Imaam Maalik

- Imaam Maalik was asked how Allah rises above His throne. He replied:
  - “The [meaning of] rising is not unknown”
  - “How [He rises] cannot be comprehended”
  - “Belief in it is obligatory”

- “Asking about it is an innovation”
- We should bear in mind the following points:
  1. Imaam Maalik confirmed that the meaning is known, he did not say that we do not know what ‘rising’ means
  2. Imaam Maalik said that we cannot comprehend how Allah rises above His throne, he didn’t say that Allah does not know. In fact Allah knows how He rises above His throne

## Golden rules for understanding Allah’s names & attributes

### Al-Qawaa’id Al-Muthlaa (The Lofty Principles)

- A book written by Shaykh Uthaymeen, comprising three types of principles that help us to understand Allah’s names & attributes
  - Principles that relate to Allah’s names
  - Principles that relate to Allah’s attributes
  - Principles that relate to the proofs of Allah’s names & attributes
- This book serves as an introduction to Allah’s names & attributes
- Parts of the book are available in English, under the title: “Exemplary Foundations Concerning the Beautiful names and attributes of Allah” – the translation is difficult to understand
- I have only included some of the principles in this presentation but have kept the number which the Shaykh gave each principle

## Principles that relate to Allah’s names

### 1. All of Allah’s names are the pinnacle of perfection

- Every single one of Allah’s names represents the pinnacle of perfection
- No aspect of Allah’s names has any form of imperfection in it
- This perfection is present in every single name on its own, as well as when the names are joined together

“Allah is the Exalted in Might, the Wise”

- Both of these names represent perfection in themselves
- When they are joined together, their joining is also perfection
- So Allah’s perfect wisdom does not come with weakness, and Allah’s perfect power does not come without wisdom

### 2. Allah’s names are both names and attributes

- Every one of Allah’s names is both a name, in the sense that it represents Allah, and an attribute, according to the meanings that it holds
- Every one of Allah’s names represents a single entity: Allah

- So Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem, Al-Malik, Al-Quddoos, As-Salaam...all of them represent a single entity: Allah
- Having said that, every single name represents a different meaning
- So Ar-Rahmaan is different to Ar-Raheem, and Al-Malik is different to Al-Quddoos

## The proof for rule no.2

﴿ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ ١٠٧ يونس: ١٠٧

“And He is the Forgiving, the Merciful” [Yunus 10:107]

﴿ وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ﴾ ٥٨ الكهف: ٥٨

“And your Lord is the Forgiving, full of mercy” [Al-Kahf 17:58]

- The second aayah shows us that ‘the Merciful’ is the one who is ‘full of mercy’
- The scholars of the Arabic language are agreed upon the fact that you cannot say ‘All-knowing’, except for one who has knowledge, and you cannot say ‘Forgiving’, except for one who forgives, and so on.
- Some of the people of misguidance and deviation said this about Allah; that He is All-Knowing without knowledge, All-Seeing without sight. High is Allah above what they say about Him!

## 3. Every name is one of two types

- A name which has an aspect that affects something else, eg: the Forgiving, the Merciful
- A name which does not have such an aspect, such as: the Ever-Living
- In the first type of name we learn three things:
  - We affirm the name as being from Allah’s names (eg. the Forgiving)
  - We affirm the attribute which relates to that Name (eg. Allah’s forgiveness)
  - We affirm what that name implies (that Allah forgives His servants)
- In the second type of name we learn two things:
  - We affirm the name as being from Allah’s names (eg. the Ever-Living)
  - We affirm the attribute which relates to that Name (eg. that Allah is alive)

## 5. Allah's names are taken as they come, there is no place for the intellect when discussing them

- Our intellect is not able to give Allah what He deserves with regard to His names

﴿ قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ الأعراف: ٣٣

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know." [Al-A'raaf 7:33]

## 6. Allah's names do not have a fixed number

- Many people are under the false impression that Allah's names have a fixed number: 99.
- Their proof for this is the hadith: "Indeed Allah has 99 names..."
- The answer to this is:
  - This hadith does not say that Allah has **only** 99 names
  - The number of names in the Qu'raan and the authentic Sunnah exceeds 130, by agreement
  - Allah taught His Messenger (peace be upon him) a prayer: "O Allah! We ask you We by every Name that is Yours, that You named Yourself, or sent down in Your book, or taught any of Your servants, or kept in Your knowledge"
  - In the hadith of the intercession of the Prophet (peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgement, Allah will teach him a form of praise that he didn't already know
- The names which are mentioned in the above hadith are not authentic – neither are any of the '99 names' posters. For an authentic source of Allah's names, refer to the back of the book by Shaykh Uthaymeen "Exemplary Foundations Concerning the Beautiful names and attributes of Allah"

## 7. Deviation with regard to Allah's names is of different types:

- Denying a part of Allah's names, including denying the associated attribute, or denying the implication of the name, such as saying that Allah does not hear, or see
- Making the associated attribute similar to Allah's creation, such as saying that Allah sees in the way that we see
- To call Allah by a name that He did not call Himself and His Messenger did not call Him
- To make idols' names from Allah's names, such as Al-Uzzaa, from Al-Aziz

## Principles that relate to Allah's attributes

### 1. All of Allah's attributes are the pinnacle of perfection

- There is no aspect of imperfection in any of Allah's attributes
- The proof for this is found in the Qur'aan, our intellect, and our *fitrah* (natural inclination)

﴿ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوِّءِ ۖ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾ ﴾

النحل: ٦٠

“For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the description of evil; and for Allah is the highest attribute. And He is Exalted in Might, the Wise.” [An-Nahl 16:60]

- As for our intellect, we know that everything that exists, must have some kind of attributes – either attributes of perfection, or imperfection – and we know that Allah is free from all imperfection
- Does Allah plot?
  - If we were to say that Allah schemes and plots, this would be imperfection. However, if we say that Allah plots in response to the plots of His enemies; so that everything they plot and plan, Allah renders it useless by His perfect plot – this is perfection
  - Thus Allah is not called “The Plotter” but we affirm that He plots, as a punishment and a response to the plots of the disbelievers

### 2. There are more attributes than names

- This is because every single name of Allah, has an attribute that is associated with it, but not every attribute of Allah, has a name that is associated with it.
- From the attributes are Allah's actions – which have no limit to them:

﴿ وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَمٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفَدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ ﴾ لقمان: ٢٧

﴿ لَقَمَانَ: ٢٧ ﴾

“And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.” [Luqmaan 31:27]

### 3. Allah's attributes are of two types

- Those attributes which Allah and His Messenger affirmed for Him
  - And so we must affirm them, in the way which suits Allah's majesty
- Those attributes which Allah has negated about Himself
  - All of them are attributes of imperfection, like ignorance, sleep, and rest

- And so we must negate them **and affirm the opposite for Him**
- Therefore we say: Allah is not ignorant and unaware **and** we affirm that He has perfect knowledge

## 5. Those attributes which we affirm for Allah are of two types:

- attributes which relate to Allah
  - They are constant; they always exist and they always will, such as His knowledge
- attributes which relate to Allah's actions
  - Allah does them whenever He wills, such as His rising above His throne
- attributes may be from both categories in different ways, such as Allah's speech
  - He has always been described with speech
  - He speaks when He wants, to whom He wants

## 6. Two great sins must be avoided with regard to Allah's attributes:

- Comparing Allah to His creation
- Asking 'How'

## 7. Allah's attributes are taken as they come, there is no place for the intellect when discussing them

- Our intellect is not able to give Allah what He deserves with regard to His attributes, just as in His names

## Principles that relate to the proofs for Allah's names & attributes

### 1. There are only two ways of affirming Allah's names & attributes:

#### The Qur'aan & the Sunnah

- Both of them are revelation from Allah
- Anything else is speaking about Allah without knowledge
- Thus whatever is found from Allah's names & attributes in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, must be affirmed – as it is found
- And whatever is negated in them, must be negated – as it is found
- Anything for which we do not find affirmation or negation in the Qur'aan or the Sunnah, we stop and we neither affirm it, or deny it – unless it has a meaning of imperfection, in which case we deny that imperfect meaning

#### Words with ambiguous meanings

- Some words have ambiguous meaning
- We demand clarification and we do not affirm them or deny them for Allah, without specifying what we are affirming or denying
- For example: 'Direction'
  - If by the word 'Direction', you mean to affirm that Allah is above His throne, which is above the heavens – then we affirm that 'direction' for Allah

- If by the word 'Direction', you mean that Allah is contained within the human understanding of direction; north, south, east, and west – we negate that direction when referring to Allah

## 2. It is obligatory to understand Allah's names & attributes by their apparent meaning

- We know this by the Qu'raan, and by our intellect

﴿ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾ ﴾

الشعراء: ١٩٣ - ١٩٥

“The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down \* Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners \* In a clear Arabic language.” [Ash-Shu'araa 26:193-195]

- Our intellect tells us that Allah knows more about Himself than anyone else knows about Him, and that He has revealed to us the Qur'aan in clear Arabic – because of this we are obliged to understand His names & attributes the way they are found in the Qur'aan & The Sunnah

## 3. The meaning of Allah's names & attributes have two aspects:

- An aspect which is known to us: The meaning
- An aspect which is unknown to us: The 'how'

### Misguidance with regard to Allah's names & attributes

- Denying Allah's names & attributes
- Comparing Allah to His creation
- Changing the meaning of His names & attributes
- Asking 'How'

### Every person who compares Allah to his creation has denied an aspect of Allah's names & attributes, and vice-versa

- Every person who denies one of Allah's names & attributes, only did so because they first of all compared Allah to His creation
- Every person who compared Allah to His creation, denied a part of Allah's names & attributes in a number of ways:
  - They denied the text when they said that it is comparing Allah to His creation
  - They denied every single text in the Qur'aan & Sunnah which tells us that Allah is not similar to His creation
  - They denied Allah's perfection