

Chapter 59, Verses 21-24: The Beautiful Names of God (part 1 of 2)

Description: These verses explain what kind of God He is, what are His attributes, Who has sent the Quran, and before Whom you have to render an account of your deeds in the end.

By Imam Mufti (© 2015 IslamReligion.com)

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"If We had sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and shatter out of fear of God. Such are the parables which We put forward to mankind that they may reflect. He is Allah, there is no deity but He. He is the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is *ar-Rahman* (Most Compassionate), *ar-Raheem* (Most Merciful). He is Allah besides Whom there is no deity. He is *al-Malik* (Sovereign), *al-Quddus* (Most Pure), *as-Salaam* (Giver of peace), *al-Mumin* (Giver of security), *al-Muhaiman* (Vigilant), *al-Aziz* (Mighty), *al-Jabbar* (Overpowering), *al-Mutakabbir* (Glorious). He is pure from whatever they ascribe to Him. He is Allah, *al-Khaliq* (Creator), *al-Bari* (Perfect Maker), *al-Musawwir* (Fashioner); to Him belong the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is *al-Aziz* (Mighty), *al-Hakeem* (Wise)." (Quran 59:21-24)

God describes the power of the Quran with the illustration of a mountain. The mountain is high and massive; climbing it is a test of the human spirit. God has described it in some verses as pegs of earth. What would have been the response of this mountain to the Quran? The Quran has such power that if the mountains had hearts and could display their reactions, then we would have witnessed them turn into rubble out of their



humbleness to God. Similarly the true believers of Allah are those who absorb the truth of the Quran in their hearts so much, that all negative feelings, like arrogance and self love, are broken down and the only thing which remains is the love and fear of God. The Quran transforms them into humble and polite people who are conscious of their accountability. It is as if the mountain says, "Yes, I am a mighty mountain, but God is greater than I, God is the one who created me. My message to you is to humble yourself in front of God's Book. That's how amazing the Book of God is." These examples are given to make us think.

Who is the magnificent God whose speech can crumble a mountain? How do we know

Him? Our primary source of knowledge about our Creator is His names and attributes. Although we cannot see Him, He sees us. We know God through His beautiful names and sublime attributes. Names and attributes of God are important because:

- They are fundamental building blocks of faith (*imaan*).
- Every exhortation, command and prohibition, and story in the Quran is tied to His names and attributes.

1. "Allah"

- Three meanings of 'Allah':
 - o One Only Worthy of worship.
 - o One who hearts long and love.
 - o One of utmost greatness and grandeur.
- "Al" (the) + "ilah" (deity) = "Allah".
- God's Proper Name in Arabic.
- Greatest of all divine names.
- No plural or feminine.

2. "Knower of the unseen and the seen"

- Examples of God's perfect knowledge:
 - o Allah knows the past, present, and future.
 - o He also knows that which will not happen. Were it to happen, He knows how it would happen and what would happen if it happened.
 - o God even knows that which will not and CANNOT happen, if it were to happen what would happen. That which CANNOT happen, CANNOT. Certain things simply cannot occur. Yet, God knows, IF they were to occur, what would happen if that which is impossible to happen, happens. THAT is divine knowledge.

3. "ar-Rahman, ar-Raheem"

- Ar-Rahman and Ar-Raheem come from the same Arabic root, *rahima*, which means to show mercy, to be compassionate. Both names emphasize divine mercy that surrounds everything.
- Difference between ar-Rahman and ar-Raheem:

- o Ar-Rahman characterizes God's mercy as it relates to His divine essence. God is merciful by nature, whereas Ar-Raheem characterizes God's mercy in relationship, not to His essence but to His actions. So His actions are merciful. Therefore, He can choose to be extra merciful to certain people. "God is Ar-Raheem to the believers."
- o People cannot be named ar-Rahman or Rahman, whereas people can be named Raheem.
- o Since God is Ar-Rahman, even the disbelievers are given food, water, and life despite their rejection of God and His prophets.
- o He is not Raheem to everyone, but to the believers only.

4. "al-Malik"

- Means "The King" or "The Ruler".
- A king is an authority or a sovereign over a land and a people. He is the one who owns everything in that he is the one who tells people what they can do and they cannot do. So when we say Allah is "The King", it means that God is the one, true King over all of creation. God owns everything in the heavens and the earth and only God has the absolute right to tell the creation what they can and cannot do.

5. "al-Quddus"

- This word comes from a root word that means "far". So in essence it gives the meaning that God is far away from weakness or imperfection. It means that God is far exalted that He should have a fault or defect or demerit: He is the purest, no evil can be imagined about Him. All of the creation has some flaw or weakness.
- Also translated as The Blessed and The Holy.
- Because He is al-Quddus, He has no partners, children, or ancestors.
- Every created being has limitations, the eye can see so far, the mind can grasp so much, the muscles can lift so much weight; God is not limited by human boundaries and weaknesses.

6. "as-Salaam"

- Means:
 - o He from whose oppression the creations can feel secure.
 - o God is the source of all peace. All of the peace in the heavens and the earth comes from God. Allah is the One who brings peace and security to all of the chaos and disorder in the universe.

- *As Salaam Alaikum*, the Muslim greeting, means may no harm come from me to you, may peace always be around you, and you shall not see evil from me.
- Paradise is called *Dar us-Salaam* (The Abode of Peace) because when you enter Paradise, no harm shall come to you after that.

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7. "al-Mumin"

- The word generally means believer, but not here.



- The root of the word comes from the word which means:
 - o "security".
 - o "trust".
- Thus, God is the source of all security. For any fear that you have you should think about this Name of God and remember that He is the source of safety and security.
- God is the "Most Trustworthy," therefore, God is the One Who will keep all His promises.
- God is also the "Guardian of Faith (*Imaan*)".

8. "al-Muhaiman"

- "The Protector." We ask God to grant us His protection because we are helpless and

vulnerable without it.

- "The Witness." God records the good of those who do good and He records the evil of those who do evil. So the believer increases in faith and he realizes that no matter how small of a good deed he does, al-Muhaimin shall record that deed and reward him for it. And the sinner becomes scared, and realizes that there is not a single thing that he has done except that al-Muhaimin has recorded it and will be brought forth on the Day of Judgment.

9. "al-Aziz"

- Means:
 - o The Mighty.
 - o The All Powerful.
 - o The Glorious.
 - o The Majestic.
- Aziz means that God is so powerful that He can do whatsoever that He wants. In addition to describing the Power of God this name also has the meaning of the One that deserves all of the respect and authority because of that power.

10 . "al-Jabbar"

- *Al-Jabbar* means:
 - o One who can force His will and decisions on His creation.
 - o The Compeller.
 - o The Dominant.
 - o The Undefeated.
 - o One who fills up any deficiency like healing the broken bone and feeding the hungry.
- Does not mean oppressor (Arabic *dhalim*).
- The servant is weak, he wants to do something but he does not have the power to do it, or the capability to do it, al-Jabbar can give him that capability. He will fill up any weakness and allow him to achieve that goal.

11. "al-Mutakabbir" (similar to al-Kabeer - the Great)

- The word al-Mutakabbir has two meanings:

- o The one who is not actually great but poses as great.
- o The one who is actually great and sets himself up as such:
 - Someone or some being who refuses to submit to another.
 - One in whose greatness everyone else fades because He is their Master (*Rabb*).
- Whether it is the human being, Satan, or another creature, greatness does not belong to it, thus posing as great and claiming superiority over others is a false claim.

God, on the other hand, is truly Great and magnificence actually belongs to Him. Everything in the universe is insignificant in front of Him, therefore, His greatness is not a false claim but actual reality. From God's perspective, it is not an evil quality but a virtue which no one else possesses but God.

12-14. "al-Khaliq, al-Bari, al-Musawwir"

- al-Khaliq means the Creator who made without a prototype or former example based on His ever-existing knowledge.
- al-Bari means after creation, the created beings are not left alone, He created each individual out of nothing and had the power and ability to execute His creative will; He brought them into being from nothingness.
- al-Musawwir means the One who grants different attributes, forms, and characteristics to His creation (hearing, skin color, memory, height, emotional intelligence, strength).
- When Khaliq is used with Bari and Musawwir it means measuring and determining only, Bari means creating out of nothing, and Musawwir means granting forms and shapes as He wishes. Al-Khaliq measured and decreed everything and Al-Bari brings what He measured and decreed into existence.

That is, the whole world and everything in it, from the initial plan of its creation till its coming into existence in its final, finished form, is entirely divine work of creation. Nothing has come into existence by itself or is a result of an accident, nor has anyone else the least share in its creation and development. Here, divine act of creation has been described in three separate stages, which take place one after the other.

First is the stage of *khalq*, which means to ordain, or to plan. It is like an engineer's conceiving the design of a building, which he intends to build for a specific purpose and draws out its detailed diagram and model.

The second stage is *bar'*, which actually means to separate, to cut, to split asunder. The Creator has been called *Bari* in the sense that He enforces the plan He has conceived and brings out the thing from non-existence into existence. It is analogous to the engineer's putting marks on the ground of the full measurements of the building according to the plan,

digging the foundations, raising the walls and completing all the practical preliminaries of the construction work.

The third stage is *taswir*, which means to give shape; here it implies giving something its final complete shape.

In all these three stages there is no resemblance whatsoever between divine work and human works. None of human plans is such as may not have been derived from previous models and plans. But each plan of God is unique and His own original creation. Human creation is a combination of materials created by God; he does not bring anything into existence from nothing, but puts together the already existing building blocks. Contrary to this, God has brought everything from non-existence into creation, and the substance itself of which He has made the universe is created by Him. Likewise, in the matter of giving shape the human being is not the inventor but an imitator. The real Maker of forms and shapes is God, Who has given a unique and matchless shape to every specie and individual and has never repeated exactly the same shape or form.

15. "al-Hakeem"

- Means "The Wise".
- His wisdom shows itself in what He has created.
- His wisdom also manifests in His commands and prohibitions.

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