

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:
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41003 - The Names of Allaah are not limited to ninety-nine

the question

Are there only ninety-nine names of Allaah, or are there more than that?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Al-Bukhaari (2736) and Muslim (2677) narrated from Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "Allaah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. Whoever learns them will enter Paradise."

Some of the scholars (such as Ibn Hazm - may Allaah have mercy on him) understood this hadeeth as meaning that the names of Allaah are limited to this number. See al-Muhalla, 1/51

But what Ibn Hazm said is not supported by the majority of scholars. Rather some of them (such as al-Nawawi) narrated that the scholars are agreed that the names of Allaah are not limited to this number. It seems that they regarded the view of Ibn Hazm as odd and as something that should not be paid any attention.

In support of the view that the beautiful names of Allaah are not limited to this number, they quoted the report narrated by Ahmad (3704) from 'Abd-Allaah ibn Mas'ood who said: The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "There is no-one who is afflicted by distress and grief, and says: 'Allaahumma inni 'abduka ibn 'abdika ibn amatija naasyati bi yadika, maada fiyya hukmuka, 'adlun fiyya qadaa'uka. As'aluka bi kulli ismin huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw anzaltahu fi kitaabika aw 'allamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw

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ista'tharta bihi fi 'ilm il-ghayb 'indaka an taj'al al-Qur'aana rabee' qalbi wa noor sadri wa jalaa' huzni wa dhihaab hammi (O Allaah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your maidservant; 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 have 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 Qur'aan the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety),' but Allaah will take away his distress and grief, and replace it with joy." He was asked: "O Messenger of Allaah, should we learn this?" He said: "Of course; everyone who hears it should learn it."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in al-Silsilah al-Saheehah, 199.

The phrase "or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You" indicates that there are beautiful names of Allaah that He has kept with Him in the knowledge of the Unseen, and which none of His creation has come to know. This indicates that there are more than ninety-nine Names.

Shaykh al-Islam [Ibn Taymiyah] said concerning this hadeeth in Majmoo' al-Fataawa (6/374):

This indicates that Allaah has more than ninety-nine names.

And he said (22/482):

Al-Khattaabi said: This indicates that He has names that He has preserved with Him, and that indicates that the words "Allaah has ninety-nine names, whoever learns them will enter Paradise" mean that there are ninety-nine of His names which whoever learns them will enter Paradise. This is like saying, "I have one thousand dirhams which I have prepared to give in charity," even if his wealth is greater than that. In the Qur'aan Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allaah, so call on Him by them"

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[al-A'raaf 7:180]

Allaah has commanded us to call upon Him by His names in general terms, He did not say that He has only ninety-nine names.

Al-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) stated in Sharh Saheeh Muslim that the scholars were unanimously agreed on that, and he said:

The scholars are unanimously agreed that this hadeeth does not mean that Allaah has only ninety-nine names, or that He does not have any other names apart from these ninety-nine. Rather what the hadeeth means is that whoever learns these ninety-nine will enter Paradise. The point is that one may enter Paradise by learning them, not that the number is limited to these names.

And Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen was asked about that and replied:

The names of Allaah are not limited to a certain number. The evidence for that is the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) in the saheeh hadeeth: "O Allaah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave... I ask You by every name belonging to You which You have 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."

What Allaah has preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with Him cannot be known and what is not known is unlimited.

With regard to the words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), "Allaah has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one. Whoever learns them will enter Paradise," this does not mean that He does not have any names apart from these, rather it means that whoever learns these ninety-nine of His names will enter Paradise. This is like when the Arabs say: "I have one hundred horses which I have prepared for jihad for the sake of Allaah," which does not mean that the speaker has only these hundred horses, rather these hundred are prepared for this purpose.

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Majmoo' Fataawa Ibn 'Uthaymeen, 1/122.