

146569 - The “greatest name of Allah” in the hadith texts and the scholars’ views

the question

It was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) that he said: “Allah has ninety-nine names; whoever memorizes them will enter Paradise,” and one of these names is the greatest name of Allah which, if He is called upon thereby, He will answer and if He is asked thereby, He will give. My question is: what is the greatest name of Allah which if He is called upon by it, He will answer and if He is asked by it, He will give? How can we know it? Did any of the scholars know it? Are the scholars unanimously agreed upon it? May Allah reward you with good.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

A number of hadiths were narrated concerning the “greatest name of Allah,” the most famous of which are the following:

1.

It was narrated from Abu Umaamah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The greatest name of Allah is in three soorahs of the Qur’an: al-Baqarah, Aal ‘Imraan and Ta-Ha.”

Narrated by Ibn Maajah (3856); classed as hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh Ibn Maajah.

2.

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It was narrated from Anas that he was sitting with the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and a man was praying then he said in supplication: O Allah, I ask You by virtue of the fact that all praise is due to You; there is no god but You alone, and You have no partner or associate, the Bestower, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Possessor of majesty and honour, O Ever-Living, O Sustainer. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "He has asked Allah by His greatest name which, if He is called upon thereby He answers and if He is asked thereby He gives."

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (3544), Abu Dawood (1495), an-Nasaa'i (1300) and Ibn Maajah (3858).
Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

3.

It was narrated from Buraydah ibn al-Husayb that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) heard a man saying: O Allaah, I ask You by virtue of the fact that I bear witness that You are Allah, there is no god but You, the One, the Eternal Refuge, Who neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent. The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "He has indeed asked Allah by His greatest name, which if He is asked thereby, He gives and if He is called upon thereby, He answers."

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (3475), Abu Dawood (1493), Ibn Maajah (3857); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This is the soundest of all reports concerning this matter in terms of its isnaad (chain of narration).

4.

It was narrated from Asmaa' bint Yazeed that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon

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him) said: "The greatest name of Allah is in these two verses: 'And your god is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful' [al-Baqarah 2:163] and at the beginning of Soorat Aal 'Imraan: 'Alif, Lam, Meem. Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence' [Aal 'Imraan 3:1-2]."

Narrated by at-Tirmidhi (3478), Abu Dawood (1496) and Ibn Maajah (3855).

This hadith is da'eef (weak). Its isnaad includes 'Ubaydullah ibn Abi Ziyaad and Shahr ibn Hawshab, both of whom are da'eef.

Secondly:

The scholars differed concerning the "greatest name of Allah" and whether there is such name. There are several views:

The first view:

is that there is no such name! Because they believe that none of the names of Allah, may He be exalted, can be regarded as superior to another. These scholars interpreted the hadiths quoted above in various ways:

1. Some said that what is meant by the word al-a'zam (the greatest) is al-'azeem (the great), and that there can be no differentiation between the names of Allah, may He be exalted.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Some scholars - such as Abu Ja'far at-Tabari, Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari and a number of others after them, such as Abu Haatim ibn Hibbaan and al-Qaadi Abu Bakr al-Baaqillaani, rejected that and said that it is not permissible to regard some of the divine names as being superior to others. Some of them attributed that view to Maalik, because he regarded it as disliked to habitually recite or repeat one soorah rather than others, lest it be thought that some parts of the Qur'an are better

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than others, and that lead to believing that the less favoured parts are inferior to those that are more favoured. They interpreted the reports concerning that as indicating that what is meant by “the greatest” is “great”, and that all the names of Allah are great. When Abu Ja’far at-Tabari said: The reports differ as to which is the greatest name, and in my view all opinions are sound, because none of these reports state that it is the greatest name, and nothing is greater than Him, it was as if he was saying: each of the names of Allah, may He be exalted, may be described as the greatest, in the sense that they are all great, as noted above.

End quote.

1. That what is intended in the hadiths quoted above is to highlight the extra reward for the one who calls upon Allah by that name.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajaar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Ibn Hibbaan said: What is meant by the greatness mentioned in the reports is the extra reward granted to the one who calls upon Allah by that name, just as there are hadiths which speak of great reward for the one who recites the Qur’an; what is meant thereby is the extra reward of the reciter.

End quote.

1. That what is meant by the greatest name is the frame of mind and focus of the one who is calling upon Allah by that name, which includes everyone who calls upon Allah, may He be exalted, by any of His names, if he has the right frame of mind.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was said that what is meant by the greatest name is any of the names of Allah, may He be exalted, by which a person calls upon Him with complete submission and focus of mind, in the

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sense that at that moment he has nothing in his mind except Allah, may He be exalted. Whoever is like that will receive a response. Something similar to this was narrated from Ja'far as-Saadiq, from al-Junayd, and from others.

End quote.

The second view:

is the view of those who say that Allah, may He be exalted, has kept to Himself knowledge of His greatest name, and that He has not granted knowledge thereof to any of His creation.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Others said: Allah, may He be exalted, has kept to Himself knowledge of His greatest name, and that He has not granted knowledge thereof to any of His creation.

End quote.

See: Fath al-Baari, by al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (11/224).

The third view:

is the view of those who affirmed that the greatest name of Allah exists and that it is a specific name, but they differed as to which is the greatest name, and there are fourteen views! Al-Haafiz Ibn Hajar (may Allah have mercy on him) has listed them in his book Fath al-Baari (11/224-225).

They are as follows:

1. Hu! (He!)
2. Allah
3. Allah ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem (Allah the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful)
4. ar-Rahmaan ar-Raheem al-Hayy al-Qayyoom (the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, the Ever-

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Living, the Sustainer)

5. al-Hayy al-Qayyoom (the Ever-Living, the Sustainer)
6. al-Hannaan al-Mannaan Badee' as-Samawaati wa'l-Ard Dhu'l-Jalaali wa'l-Ikraam al-Hayy al-Qayyoom (the Compassionate, the Bestower, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Possessor of majesty and honour, Ever-Living, Sustainer)
7. Badee' as-Samawaati wa'l-Ard Dhu'l-Jalaali wa'l-Ikraam (the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the Possessor of majesty and honour)
8. Dhu'l-Jalaali wa'l-Ikraam (the Possessor of majesty and honour)
9. Allahu laa ilaaha illa Huwa al-Ahad as-Samad alladhi lam yalid wa lam yoolad wa lam yakun lahu kufuwan ahad (Allah there is no god but He, the One, the Eternal Refuge, who neither begets nor is born, Nor is there to Him any equivalent)
10. Rabb Rabb (Lord, Lord)
11. The prayer of Dhu'n-Noon in the belly of the fish: laa ilaaha illa anta subhaanaka inni kuntu min az-zaalimeen (There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers) [al-Anbiya' 21:87]
12. Huwa Allah Allah Allah alladhi laa ilaaha illa Huwa Rabb al-'arsh al-'azeem (He is Allah, Allah, Allah, besides Whom there is no other god, Lord of the mighty Throne)
13. It is concealed within the divine names
14. The word of Tawheed: Laa ilaaha ill-Allah (there is no god but Allah).

Shaykh al-Albaani (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It should be understood that the scholars differed as to which is the greatest name of Allah, and there are fourteen views, which were listed by al-Haafiz in al-Fath, followed by the evidence for each view. Most of the evidence is from the hadiths, but in some cases it is simply the view of an individual and no attention need be paid to it, such as the twelfth view, the evidence for which is that So and so asked Allah to teach him the greatest name, then he saw in a dream that it was "Allah Allah Allah alladhi laa ilaaha illa Huwa Rabb al-'arsh al-'azeem (He is Allah, Allah, Allah,

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besides Whom there is no other god, Lord of the Mighty Throne)!”!

Some of these hadiths are saheeh (sound), but are ambiguous in meaning, and others are mawqoof, like this one. Some of them are clear in meaning; they fall into two categories:

The first category is that which is sound and clear in meaning, namely the hadith of Buraydah, “Allah, there is no god but He, the One, the Eternal Refuge, Who neither begets nor is born...” al-Haafiz said: This is more sound in terms of its isnaad than everything else that has been narrated concerning that. And it is as he said (may Allah have mercy on him). Ash-Shawkaani confirmed that in *Tuhfat adh-Dhaakireen* (p. 52). It is listed in *Saheeh Abi Dawood* (1341).

The second category is those which are clear in meaning but are not sound, some of which al-Haafiz clearly stated were weak, such as the hadith which is quoted to support the third view, which was narrated from ‘Aa’ishah in *Ibn Maajah* (3859). It also appears in *Da’eef Ibn Maajah* (841). Concerning some other reports he did not say anything, such as the hadith which is quoted to support the eighth view, namely the hadith of Mu’adh ibn Jabal in *at-Tirmidhi*, which is listed in *ad-Da’eefah* (no. 4520).

There are other hadiths that are clear in meaning, but al-Haafiz did not quote them; however, they are waahin (flimsy); they are also listed in the same book (nos. 2772, 2773 and 2775).

Silsilat al-Ahaadeeth ad-Da’eefah wa’l-Mawdoo’ah (13/279).

Thirdly:

Perhaps the view that is most likely of all of them to be correct is the view that the greatest name is “Allah,” because this is the one name which encompasses all the other names and attributes of Allah, may He be exalted, and it is a name that was never given to anyone other than Allah, may He be exalted. This is the view of most scholars.

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1.

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The name “Allah” is indicative of all the beautiful divine names and sublime attributes ...

Madaarij as-Saalikeen (1/32).

2.

Ibn Ameer Haaj al-Hanafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It was narrated that Muhammad ibn al-Hasan said: I heard Abu Haneefah (may Allah have mercy on him) say: The greatest name of Allah is “Allah”. This is also the view of at-Tahhaawi and many of the scholars, and most of the devoted worshippers.

At-Taqreer wa't-Tahbeer (1/5).

3.

Abu'l-Baqaa' al-Fatoohi al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

We learn two things:

The first is that the name “Allah” is a name that refers to His essence and is unique to Him, so it encompasses all of His beautiful names.

The second is that it is the greatest name of Allah according to most of the scholars, and is the name that is connected to all praiseworthy attributes.

Sharh al-Kawkab al-Muneer (p. 4)

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Ash-Sharbeeni ash-Shaafa'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

According to some scholars, it is the greatest name of Allah. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in two thousand three hundred and sixty (2360) places.

Mughni al-Muhtaj ila Ma'rifat Alfaz al-Minhaaj (1/88, 89)

5.

Shaykh 'Umar al-Ashqar (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

What appears to be the case from comparing the texts in which the greatest name of Allah is mentioned is that this name is "Allah". This name is the only name which appears in all the texts concerning which the Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) stated that the greatest name of Allah is mentioned in them.

One of the things which support the idea that "Allah" is the greatest name is the fact that it is repeated in the Holy Qur'an 2697 times - according to the list in al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras [a famous concordance or index of the Qur'an] - and it is mentioned in the form "Allahumma" [a vocative form] five times, whereas another divine name which is applicable only to Allah, may He be exalted - namely ar-Rahmaan [the Most Gracious] - is mentioned only fifty-seven times. This idea is also supported by the fact that this name ("Allah") encompasses many great and significant meanings.

Al-'Aqeedah fi Allah (Belief in Allah), p. 213

The second of these views in terms of strength is the view that the greatest name of Allah is al-Hayy al-Qayyoom (the Ever-Living, the Sustainer). This is the view of a number of scholars, including an-Nawawi, and it was regarded as more likely to be correct by Shaykh al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him).

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And Allah knows best.