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How to Get Closer to Allah: Exploring the Sequence of Allah's Names in Sūrat al-Ḥashr

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Introduction

As Muslims, our purpose is knowing Allah and worshiping Him. However, in an age of autonomy of the self, the very idea of submission and worship can be hard for some people to comprehend or even fully accept. When everything around you is pushing you towards a life lived for yourself and the realizations of your desires above all else, how can you fathom the idea of obedience and servitude? As jurist, theologian and spiritual author Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) explains, “Complete servitude (*‘ubūdiyya*) is a byproduct of complete love, and complete love is a byproduct of the beloved’s perceived perfection.”¹ The key to servitude to Allah is by loving Him, and we love Him by coming to know Him, and we come to know Him by reflecting on His names and attributes.

These names do not just have relevance to us in this life, but if we truly understand and internalize them as who our Lord is, they help us in maintaining focus on the afterlife. The Prophet ﷺ reminds us that Allah has said, “I am as My servant expects of Me.”² Our expectations are more accurate when we know who Allah is as He tells us. When we understand His all encompassing mercy, for example, we not only look for its manifestations in this life, but we look forward to His mercy when it will matter the most: on the Day of Judgment. Hence knowing Him helps us to love Him and gain closeness to Him during our time here on earth, whilst maintaining perspective of the afterlife, and looking forward to experiencing His names in the Hereafter.

Furthermore, reflecting deeply on His names and attributes teaches us how to be in this world. As the scholar Ibn al-Qayyim stated,

God loves His Names and Attributes, and He loves the consequences of His Attributes and their manifestations upon His servants. Just as He is beautiful, He loves beauty; as He is Most Forgiving, He loves forgiveness; as He is Most Generous, He loves generosity; as He is All-Knowing, he loves the people of knowledge ... Since God loves those who emulate His Attributes,

¹ Muḥammad Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa’āda wa manshūr wilāyat al-‘ilm wa al-idāra* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyya, 2002), 2:88–89, cited in Muhammad Elshinawy, “Why Does God Ask Us to Worship Him?,” *Yaqeen*, October 21, 2020, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/why-does-god-ask-people-to-worship-him#ftnt7>.

² *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 7405; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2675.

He is with them according to how much of these qualities they reflect, and this is a special and unique type of companionship.³

Allah reveals His names to us in the Qur'an in a multitude of ways, and attending to the context of such verses, the pairings of His names, and the sequence in which they appear brings about a level of reflection that brings us closer to Him and opens up new dimensions to our relationship with God. One remarkable occasion presents itself in the final verses of Sūrat al-Ḥashr, where Allah mentions several of His names in a distinct way, with entire verses in succession being made up wholly or largely of a number of such descriptions. The uniqueness of these verses tells us that there must be something special about these names that warrant our undivided attention. Not only do the names themselves have distinct meanings that are important for our relationship with our Creator, but the order in which they appear is intentional, revealing nuances that we might otherwise not have considered and that help to enrich our relationship with Him.

This paper endeavors to reflect upon the names contained within the last verses of Sūrat al-Ḥashr, particularly in terms of their sequence and relationship to one another, in an attempt to increase our knowledge and love of Allah and thus better our relationship with Him.

Be not like those who forgot Allah

Before delving into the names mentioned in the final verses of Sūrat al-Ḥashr (the Chapter on Amassing), we are reminded by Allah earlier in the chapter:

And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.⁴

This verse exhorts the believers to be mindful of Allah and is followed by a warning against being like those who forget Him. Those who forget Allah are those who leave Him, are purposefully ignorant of who He is, and abandon signs of His

³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Uddat al-Sābirīn*, (Makkah: Dār 'Ālim al-Fawā'id, 7th ed.), p.85

⁴ Qur'an 59:19.

oneness, His attributes, and the truth of His Prophet ﷺ.⁵ Essentially, they forget Allah's rights over them.⁶ They do not care enough to know Him, and hence turn away from His worship. The consequence of this is that they forget themselves in the sense that they are oblivious to what is truly beneficial for their souls, ruining for themselves this life and the next and forfeiting the opportunity for Allah to mend their brokenness.⁷

The antidote to forgetting is *actively* knowing Allah. And hence, in the same chapter and what comprises the essence of this paper, Allah tells us who He is in this unique order:

He is Allah—there is no god except Him: Knower of the seen and unseen. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful. He is Allah—there is no god except Him: the King, the Most Holy, the All-Perfect, the Source of Serenity, the Watcher [of all], the Almighty, the Supreme in Might, the Majestic. Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him [in worship]! He is Allah, the Creator, the Producer, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.⁸

These names show us how intimately aware of us Allah is. Even before we experience what we go through in life, He has provided the refuge, the solution, and the handhold in Himself. Each name provides ease for our concerns in a uniquely holistic manner. As we contemplate one name, our mind might move to another problem that we may feel is unaddressed by this attribute of Allah, yet we will often find that the next name in the sequence puts us at immediate ease.

⁵ Al-Ṭāhir b. 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa al-tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/19>.

⁶ Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/59/19>.

⁷ 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sa'dī, *Tafsīr al-Sa'dī*, <https://tafsir.app/saadi/59/19>; Ismā'īl b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/59/19>.

⁸ Qur'an 59:22–24.

Sūrat al-Ḥashr

1. “He is Allah—there is no god except Him”

The first verse begins with the statement, “He is Allah—there is no god except Him”, which essentially tells us two things. First, that Allah is His name and that He alone is *al-ilāh*, the One who is worshiped.⁹ The name Allah also encompasses the meanings of all of His names and attributes, so when we call on Allah, we are essentially calling on Him by all of His names—the Most Merciful, the Most Powerful, the All-Knowing, and so on.¹⁰ Knowing that only He is Allah—the One who nurtures, who has all power, the One to whom we turn—necessitates worshiping Him alone.¹¹ The Arabs at the time of the Prophet ﷺ knew that there was a higher being, a creator,¹² whom they referred to as Allah.¹³ However, they also worshiped other supposed deities besides Him or sought intercession through them.¹⁴ In today’s age, many people acknowledge the existence of a God or an abstract higher power, but they do not worship Him. Further still, others may worship God but they associate partners with Him. Hence, here we are told unequivocally that there is no god—no *ilāh*—nothing worthy of worship, except Allah.

As a guidance for all ages and all circumstances, this Qur’anic verse is not simply aimed at the Arabs of old who worshiped physical idols besides Allah, or even at the People of the Book who drifted away from true, pure monotheism. This verse speaks to all of us and invites us to ponder on its meaning. What is it that we turn to with our hearts and obey? What is it that we are actually submitting to and worshiping without even realizing? Allah says, “Have you seen the one who has taken his own whim as his god?”¹⁵ One of the fallacies of our age is that the self, and hence its whims and desires, is elevated in such a way that it becomes the arbiter of what is good and what is right. Confident in its own infallibility and

⁹ Abd al-Razzāq b. Abd al-Muḥsin al-Badr, *Fiqh al-asmā’ al-ḥusnā* (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1441 AH), 94.

¹⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Madārij al-sālikīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1996), 1:56; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badāi’ al-fawā’id* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, n.d.), 1:249.

¹¹ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Badāi’ al-Fawā’id*, 2:247.

¹² Qur’an 43:87.

¹³ Qur’an 31:25.

¹⁴ Qur’an 39:3.

¹⁵ Qur’an 45:23.

transcendence, it fails to consider its absorption of external influences that may go against God's divine guidance.

In this sense, this verse urges us to pause. What have we made equal to God in our hearts? Do we feel justified in submitting to our desires when they go against what Allah has commanded? What have we equated to Him in greatness and power, and what do we consistently choose over Him?

Accepting that Allah is the Only One, fully comprehending this fact, and acting upon it inevitably requires us to understand who Allah actually is. And so, in His ultimate wisdom, Allah continues the verse by facilitating just this.

2. “Knower of the hidden and the witnessed”

The first attribute Allah proceeds to remind us of is that He is the Knower of what is hidden and what is apparent (*‘Ālim al-ghayb wa al-shahāda*), with *al-ghayb*, what is hidden, referring to what is inaccessible to us through our senses.¹⁶ This attribute follows His name Allah because His unique divinity necessitates that He has exclusive, all-encompassing knowledge.¹⁷ This also immediately makes clear that there exists a hidden realm that we do not have access to (except what is revealed by divine revelation). What we think we know through our senses is simply a fraction of what exists, and this should humble us. While we seek to comprehend how this worldly life works and to understand the way of being that Allah has prescribed for us, when we are inevitably faced with matters or situations that we do not understand, we recognize that there is a hidden, metaphysical realm that we are completely oblivious to. Thus, His rulings contain wisdom because He possesses all-encompassing knowledge, while our knowledge is necessarily limited by our human capacity.

In the Qur'an, we are shown how the Prophet Joseph (Yūsuf) (AS) faces trial after trial. Initially, it is not apparent why he is tested—from being plotted against by his own brothers, to being sold into slavery, to having his character doubted and finally, being sent to prison. One might be frustrated that bad things keep

¹⁶ Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/22>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

happening to this good person. But at the end, Yūsuf is honored and reunited with his family. Allah, the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, was aware of all the plotting and the scheming, the quiet prayers and desperate hopes, the future outcome and past events. Indeed, his father, Prophet Jacob (Ya‘qūb) (AS), reassured Yūsuf at the beginning of his journey, “Indeed, your Lord is Knowing and Wise.”¹⁸ All the events that took place, especially the ones that seemed most unfair, were actually guiding Yūsuf to the path that eventually got him to the esteemed position of overseer of food rations. Prophet Yūsuf recognized this when he was reunited with his family:

... And he said, “O my father, this is the explanation of my vision of before. My Lord has made it reality. And He was certainly good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you [here] from bedouin life after Satan had induced [estrangement] between me and my brothers. Indeed, my Lord is Subtle in what He wills. Indeed, it is He who is the Knowing, the Wise.”¹⁹

Yūsuf reiterated Allah’s names *al-‘Alīm al-Ḥakīm* at the end of the verse. In using these names, he could see clearly that every hardship and trial had a purpose, even if it was not evident in that moment. This teaches us that what is ‘witnessed’ seldom gives us the full picture. It is Allah who knows the full spectrum of both the unseen and the witnessed. We may be going through a hardship that is witnessed and our patience is actually reaping rewards and blessings, yet this beneficial outcome is unseen. It remains in the *ghayb* until Allah reveals it, whether in this life or the next. Hence, these attributes teach us not to be materialists, but to trust in the promise of God.

In addition to this, Allah’s ability to know the hidden and the witnessed also extends to Allah knowing what is apparent of our actions and what we keep hidden from other people, as well as what is in our hearts. This can inspire both fear and reassurance. It can inspire a healthy, reverential fear that results in vigilance over both our private actions and our internal states when, for example, we find that our hearts harbor malice, ill-will, and insincerity. At the same time, it also affords us reassurance that Allah witnesses when we do good and when our hearts are in the

¹⁸ Qur’an 12:6.

¹⁹ Qur’an 12:100.

right place, especially in those times when we find it particularly difficult or when people fail to notice. It teaches us to work on our internal states and our private acts just as hard as we work on our external states and public actions.

3. “The Most Compassionate, Most Merciful”

Allah continues His description with two of His familiar names, the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*). Other varying translations of these names include: the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, the All Merciful, and the Bestower of Mercy.

So, what does mercy, *raḥmah*, mean?

Raḥmah is tenderness, kindness, care, and compassion.²⁰ When you show mercy to someone, you treat them with gentleness, care for their state, and desire what is best for them. But Allah is not just merciful in this sense, He is more, He is *al-Raḥmān*. This morphological form, with an *ān* suffix,²¹ speaks to the intensity of His *raḥmah*,²² which is unique to Him alone. His mercy is overflowing, unlimited, incomparable, touching everyone and everything, as He says in the Qur’an, “My mercy encompasses all things.”²³ In a hadith, the Prophet ﷺ told us, “When Allah completed the creation, He wrote in His book with Him upon the Throne: ‘Verily, My mercy prevails over My wrath.’”²⁴ This broad, universally applicable sense of mercy encompasses men and women, adults and children, humans and non-humans, the pious and the sinner, the believer and the non-believer.

Complementing *al-Raḥmān* is *al-Raḥīm*, which reminds us that Allah’s mercy cannot be extinguished; His mercy is both an abundant *and* a permanent attribute, not simply a temporary state.²⁵ Allah also says, “... And ever is He, to the believers,

²⁰ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1976), 384.

²¹ Based on the conventional Arabic forms, the form of *Raḥmān* here is of *fa’lān*.

²² ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ‘ilm al-tafsīr*; <https://tafsir.app/zad-almaseer/1/1>.

²³ Qur’an 7:156.

²⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 3194; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2751.

²⁵ Sheikh Mohammed Akram al-Nadwi explains that *raḥīm*, which follows the form of *fa’līl*, is used to describe the character of someone, similar to, for example, *karīm*, which means a generous, noble person. For one to be described this way, it cannot be that they are generous on a few occasions, but that this is part of who they are and thus expressed in all their interactions.

Merciful,”²⁶ highlighting that there is a special mercy reserved for those who are devoted to Him. Part of this mercy is the spiritual sustenance that is granted to the believers.²⁷

The Prophet ﷺ also reminded the Companions that, “Allah is more merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child,”²⁸ describing a mother picking up and then nursing her child who she thought she had lost—how intense the affection and care of Allah must be to exceed this! Indeed, we were told by the Prophet ﷺ that, “Allah made mercy into one hundred parts. He kept ninety-nine parts with Himself and sent down one part to the earth. From that one part, the creation is merciful to each other, such that a horse raises its hoof over its child for fear of trampling it.”²⁹

Whatever mercy there is in this world, no matter how powerful or unexpected, it is nothing compared to the mercy of Allah. In those times that we feel abandoned and unloved, Allah reminds us that He is *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*. He cares about us more than any human being ever could. Indeed, in Sūrat Maryam, Allah tells us, “[This is] a reminder of your Lord’s mercy to His servant Zachariah, when he cried out to his Lord privately...”³⁰ Allah’s mercy is close to those who express their needs to Him and who turn to Him because they know that He listens and cares.³¹ No one would be vulnerable in front of someone who is harsh and indifferent, but the Prophet Zachariah (Zakariyyā) knew he could express his pain, wants, and concerns to *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*. And knowledge of the fact that the mercy that manifests on this earth is only one part of one hundred parts should make us look forward to the 99 that He has kept for the Hereafter.

Awareness of His all-encompassing knowledge can reassure us, but it does not necessarily tell us whether Allah cares about us or not. In light of the attributes that preceded these names (His knowledge), we come to understand that Allah knows

²⁶ Qur’an 33:43.

²⁷ Aḥmad Ibn ‘Ajbā, *Allah: An Explanation of the Divine Names and Attributes*, trans. Abdul Aziz Suraqah (USA: Al-Madina Institute, 2014), 15.

²⁸ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 5999; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2754.

²⁹ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 6000; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2752.

³⁰ Qur’an 19:2–3.

³¹ Salman Al-Oadah, *In the Company of God: Closeness to Allah through the Beauty of His Names and Attributes*, 2nd ed. (N.p.: Islam Today, 2011), 26.

the trials that we go through, even those that others might not be aware of, and bestows His mercy upon those in need.³² He is Merciful towards us even though He knows all of our secret sins and hidden indiscretions. Of the wisdoms of this sequence of names is that Allah teaches us that there may be difficulties we cannot comprehend and yet His mercy is nevertheless overflowing and permanent. Things may happen to us that we cannot make sense of or have no knowledge of, but we should never despair of the mercy of Allah. Rather, we should turn to Him in the midst of our difficulties because we know that there must be wisdom that is unknown to us in the moment, and because we know that no one cares for us like Him. A test is not indicative of a lack of care, but can be a true expression of mercy since it can bring us close to Him and be a cause of elevation in the next life.

Indeed, a person may think they are doing good by being outwardly kind and caring when they are actually causing harm, simply because they do not have the full picture or because they lack wisdom and foresight. For example, an older sibling might allow their younger one to have unlimited screen time or eat candy because that makes the younger sibling happy. While it is outwardly kind, it lacks wisdom and knowledge about the harms of these actions. Mercifully preventing the toddler, though it will come with pain, abundant tears, and frustration, is beneficial for him and will save him from serious harms unknown to him in the future. In a story narrated by Ibn al-Jawzi, the Caliph Abdel-Malik bin Marwan would spoil his son al-Walid because he loved him so much and would not discipline him. Then, when Al-Walid fell behind in his studies, he said, “Our love for al-Walid has harmed him!”³³

In Sūrat al-Kahf, when Prophet Mūsa (AS) commences on the journey with al-Khadir, what occurs after seems far removed from mercy or wisdom—the damaging of a boat, the killing of a child, and the mending of a wall in a village inhabited by cruel, stingy people. But Allah told us that al-Khadir was given *rahmah* (in the verse, meaning prophethood, tenderness and/or blessings)³⁴ and knowledge from Allah.³⁵ At the end of the story, we are shown that what happened,

³² Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/22>.

³³ ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Tanbīh al-nā’im al-ghamar ‘alā mawāsīm al-‘umūr* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1418 AH/1997 AD), 49.

³⁴ ‘Abd al-Rahmān Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr fī ‘ilm al-tafsīr*, <https://tafsir.app/zad-almaseer/18/65>.

³⁵ Qur’an 18:65.

despite seeming harsh and even inexplicable on the outside, was the pinnacle of mercy and care.³⁶ This story demonstrates that Allah’s commands are based on reality and not on a facade, and thus, when it comes to events that we dislike, we should remember that there are inner secrets and profound wisdoms covered in *rahmah* that we are unaware of.³⁷ Some matters might seem objectively bad in this world, but result in elevation in the next. Allah reminds us that He is *al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*, and all of His commands are out of mercy for us and with full awareness of what is of everlasting benefit for us.

Allah addresses our worries and our fears, our desire to be cared for, loved, and treated kindly, and our need to be guided to what is truly best for us. When we are in difficult situations, or around uncaring people, we take comfort in *al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*, who possesses all-encompassing knowledge.

4. “He is Allah—there is no god but Him, The King”

Once our hearts are put to rest with the knowledge that our Creator knows all, and has the most intense concern and care for us, Allah begins the next verse by again reminding us: “He is Allah—there is no god but Him.” Indeed, why would we turn our hearts in submission to anything or anyone else when we have a Lord who is All-Knowing, Most Merciful? He is the One whom we should worship.

Next, Allah turns us to His majesty. As we face seemingly powerful humans and structures that we must contend with as we navigate this earthly life, Allah tells us that He is the King, the Sovereign, the Ultimate Possessor of all (*al-Malik*). Linguistically, if someone is a *malik*, it means they have the complete and total ability, authority, and power to act with what is under their control, including in terms of commanding and prohibiting, raising and humbling, appointing and deposing. With the true King, *al-Malik*, none has that ability over Him.³⁸

³⁶ Qur’an 18:79–82.

³⁷ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/1/3>.

³⁸ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Badāi’ al-fawā’id*, 2:121; Ibn al-Qayyim, *Shifā’ al-‘alīl*, 2:652, cited in ‘Umar Sulaymān al-Ashqar, *Sharḥ Ibn al-Qayyim li-asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* (Amman: Dar al-Nafā’is, 2008), 46; Sayyid Maḥmūd al-Alūsī, *Tafsīr al-Alūsī*, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/59/23>.

If we find ourselves confused about our role on this earth, how to behave with the resources given to us, who to follow and to obey, and where real power lies, *al-Malik* makes everything clear. Indeed, most of us go through life and are bombarded with different ideologies. We form attachments to the temporary and the material. We might feel entitled to act as we wish with what we perceive we own. We may flock to what we see as centers of power and try to conform to their rules so that we can benefit from them. If we have power or authority, we might elevate ourselves and see ourselves as better than others.

Yet, we are told in this verse that Allah is the King and the Sovereign, and we are essentially living in and benefiting from His Kingdom. He is the ultimate source of power and authority. This world and everything in it belongs to Him, and He has ultimate sovereignty over it.

In practical terms, knowledge of this helps us in a variety of ways. First, it takes a hold of the heart. Knowing He is *al-Malik* helps us to find strength in Him because we see reality as it is. All other sources of power and authority are fleeting and secondary. *Al-Malik* is the one who has power over everything. Whatever needs we have, we go to *al-Malik* because He owns all and nothing owns Him.

Second, it helps to cement our values and principles. He is *al-Malik*, and thus we follow the rules that He prescribes. We do not follow the fluctuating norms of society, particularly not when they contradict what God has commanded. Of course, our shariah contains differences and versatility and that is precisely because it comes from *al-Malik*, who we already understand to be the All-Knowing (and thus knows that some matters require flexibility depending on circumstance, as well as what is good for us in this world and the next) and the Most-Merciful (and therefore, all His rules for us are ultimately out of His care for us, and the flexibility in certain matters is to make things easier for us in a way that is beneficial and not harmful).³⁹ *Al-Malik* has the authority to appoint and depose; He appoints people to certain roles, and He has chosen from amongst His servants prophets and messengers to guide people. Recognizing He is *al-Malik* should

³⁹ Yaqeen Institute, Difference of Opinion: Clearing Up the Confusion, 27 October 2021, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/infographics/difference-of-opinion-clearing-up-the-confusion-infographic>

ensure our acceptance of those whom He has appointed to guide us and our obedience to them.

Third, this name also teaches us how to behave with our temporary power and authority. In essence, we are walking on God’s earth, and nothing that we own is truly ours—not even our bodies. This means that we will be held accountable for what has been placed in our trust and for those over whom we have had worldly authority or power. Knowing that Allah is *al-Malik* teaches us to act with God-consciousness, humility, and morality, knowing that we will ultimately face the King of all kings.

Worldly kingship is often flawed, filled with transgression, undeserved entitlement, self-centeredness, arrogance, terror, and other shortcomings. But, *al-Malik* is free from all imperfection, and by way of assuring us of this, Allah positions this name perfectly between His all-encompassing mercy, *al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, and His complete freedom from defect, *al-Quddūs*.⁴⁰

5. “The Most Holy”

Immediately following Allah’s name *al-Malik* is *al-Quddūs*, a pairing we also find in Sūrat al-Jumu‘a.⁴¹ The word *quddūs* means ‘holy’ or ‘sacred.’⁴² It tells us that God transcends all attributes of perfection,⁴³ meaning whatever we imagine as perfect, Allah transcends beyond that in His perfection, and is hence free from any defect and purified from anything blameworthy.⁴⁴ This means that *all* of His attributes are also pure and holy. His knowledge is most perfect and complete, as is His mercy. *Al-Malik al-Quddūs* reminds us that whatever defects plague human kings, Allah is far above and completely free of them.⁴⁵ He is *al-Quddūs*.

Because we are used to dealing with human beings who have flaws, we often filter our understanding of the Creator through our experiences with His creation. Yet,

⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Taḥrīr w al-tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁴¹ Qur’an 62:1.

⁴² Hans Wehr, 875.

⁴³ Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God: al-Maqṣad al-asnā f sharḥ asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, trans. David Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992), 59.

⁴⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-masīr*, <https://tafsir.app/zad-almaseer/59/23>.

⁴⁵ Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

through this name, we learn not to project human qualities onto Allah. If we attribute to God the shortcomings of a human being or we project our own insecurities onto Him, even if subconsciously, this prevents us from trusting Him fully. If we fail to internalize that He is *al-Quddūs*, seeing evil in the world may cause us to question or resent Him, or to conclude that He must not be merciful, does not have full knowledge or power, or to deny His existence completely. But Allah tells us in these verses that He is indeed All-Knowing, All-Merciful, Truly Sovereign *and* completely free of defects. *Al-Quddūs* reminds us that Allah is truly above His creation, utterly perfect, and completely free of fault in His very essence.

Understanding that Allah is *al-Quddūs* reassures our hearts when we are weary of the evil we see around us and removes the mental and emotional barriers that we may have erected as a result of our flawed projections. It reminds us that despite the power and authority of *al-Malik*, we never have to fear injustice from Him. We are not dealing with a mortal, but rather *al-Malik al-Quddūs*—the Holy King.

6. “The All-Perfect Source of Serenity”

Closely related to *al-Quddūs*, the next name mentioned in succession is *al-Salām*. *Al-Salām*, the root (*s-l-m*) meaning peace, soundness, safety, and security, also means perfection and freedom from fault with an added nuance. *Al-Salām* is not only perfect in His essence, but is perfect in His actions and will always remain so.⁴⁶

Most human beings desire peace, and few people would want to remain in a state of chronic or even momentary anxiety. When we do feel anxious, some might reach for a pill, others might call up a friend, and others might meditate or take a walk. What we all have in common is the desire to soothe this anxiety and lack of peace in whatever way we can. Here, Allah reminds us that He is *al-Salām*, intimately aware of our needs, offering refuge and comfort to those suffering from worry and anxiety. He is, and always will be, the Pure Source of Peace. Unlike worldly solutions, Allah is the only source of perfect, lasting, unadulterated peace.

⁴⁶ Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

Through this name, we come to understand two key lessons: that a lack of peace is inevitable in this life and that when we experience it, we should turn to Allah because He is the Source of Peace. *Al-Salām* does not give us false promises of a perfect, stress-free life. We are informed in the Qur'an that there will be tests and trials in this world,⁴⁷ which helps to temper our expectations and build fortitude through God to weather the storms we face. Indeed, we are also told to “give good tidings to the patient.”⁴⁸ We will face difficulties, but we are not alone if we are with Allah, and nothing that we suffer is ever in vain if we turn to Him. Allah tells us,

And We scattered them into communities on earth—some of them righteous and some of them short of that—and We tested them with good and evil, that they may return.⁴⁹

Whatever tests we go through, the purpose is always for us to return to Allah. So when our hearts feel perturbed by worldly tribulations, it is *al-Salām* who will offer us comfort and ease.

While other activities and practices may help to alleviate our stresses, in the heart “is a strong desire that will not cease until He is the only one who is sought. In it, is a void that cannot be filled except by His love, turning to Him, always remembering Him, and being sincere to Him. Were a person to be given the entire world and everything in it, that would never fill the void.”⁵⁰

Some might claim to find peace elsewhere, in listening to pop music or repeating positive affirmations, and may even say that this gives them more peace than prayer or reciting the Qur'an. Whilst not dismissing the plausibly calming nature of these activities, there are two important things to note. First, temporary relief does not address the root issue. A person can turn to alcohol to forget their problems, and indeed, being inebriated will make them forget. It does not, however, heal the rupture inside and will, inevitably, make their issues worse. Even a less destructive outlet, such as a vacation, provides temporary relief, but it does not provide lasting

⁴⁷ For example, see Qur'an 2:155, 6:165, 18:7.

⁴⁸ Qur'an 2:155.

⁴⁹ Qur'an 7:168.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Madārij al-sālikīn*, 3:156.

solace for deeper issues and problems. Second, and perhaps more importantly, we find momentary peace during other activities, in part, because we can comprehend what is happening. People often enjoy listening to songs because they can relate the theme and lyrics to what is going on in their own lives. Yet, the peace found in prayer is far more profound if carried out with the same attentiveness and understanding. The Prophet ﷺ used to say, “O Bilāl, give the call to establish the prayer and comfort us with it.”⁵¹ Prayer is comfort and this is part of the reason why, when we conclude the prayer, we say, “O Allah, You are Peace (*al-Salām*) and from You is peace. Blessed are You, the Majestic and the Noble.”⁵² Prescribed to us by *al-Salām*, understanding, submission, and devotion in prayer can bring us true, lasting peace.

In saying this, it is important to note that the use of alternative permissible meditative practices, exercise, or other tools to help us achieve calm are viable complements to seeking *al-Salām* through prayer and Qur’an. They should be utilized wherever possible, but always and in addition to actively turning to and calling upon *al-Salām*. We should use the tools at our disposal as their very existence is due to the permission and mercy of Allah in the first instance. Using these tools properly shows the harmonious link between our mind, body, heart, and soul, as they are all connected and interdependent, designed by *al-Salām*.⁵³ Indeed, understanding that He knows all, is the Most Merciful, and the Perfect Source of Peace steers us to those tools that are permissible and keeps us away from those that are not.

Knowing *al-Salām* and turning to Him can give one peace in the most unlikely of situations. When the Prophet ﷺ had escaped Mecca with his companion Abū Bakr, and while the people of the tribe of Quraysh were hot on their heels with the intention to kill the Prophet ﷺ, they found refuge in the Cave of Thawr. However, the assailants followed them, and were standing a few inches from them. We are told in the Qur’an:

⁵¹ *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, no. 4986.

⁵² *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 592.

⁵³ For more on Islam and mental health, see: Dr Rania Awaad, Danah Elsayed, Hosam Helal, Holistic Healing: Islam’s Legacy of Mental Health, Yaqeen Institute, 27 May 2021, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/holistic-healing-islams-legacy-of-mental-health>

If you do not support him, surely Allah already supported him when those who denied evicted him, as he was the second of two in the cave, when he said to his companion, “Do not be sad; Allah is surely with us.” So Allah sent down His tranquility upon him and aided him with troops you did not see...⁵⁴

Tranquility from Allah came first, before material aid.

When Allah tells us that He is *al-Salām*, we are invited to find peace in Him, and turning to Him will give us everlasting peace in the Abode of Peace (*dār al-salām*), that is Paradise.⁵⁵

7. “The Grantor of Security”

The aforementioned names have taught us that Allah, the King, is free from fault in His essence (*quddūs*) and His actions (*salām*), thus removing any human deficiencies we may subconsciously attribute to Him.⁵⁶ He is the One that we turn to for true lasting peace, and He promises us that those who strive in His way will enter paradise in peace. Allah then continues His uniquely holistic description of Himself by addressing our insecurities and fears. When we feel unsafe, He reminds us that He is *al-Mu'min*, the Grantor of Security, the One who gives security from fear.⁵⁷ The root word *a-m-n* has two basic meanings: the opposite of fear⁵⁸ and belief/trust⁵⁹.

Al-Mu'min gives security to everyone from oppression, meaning we can be sure that He will never oppress us. The Prophet ﷺ told us that Allah said, “O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and I have forbidden it among you.”⁶⁰ We may feel unsafe and fearful when we are faced with people who are powerful and unpredictable. Yet, according to our scholars, these verses affirm that

⁵⁴ Qur'an 9:40.

⁵⁵ Qur'an 10:25.

⁵⁶ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Allah says about Quraysh that He “made them secure (*āmanahum*) against fear” (106:4).

⁵⁹ In the Qur'an, the brothers of Prophet Yūsuf say to their father, “But you would not believe us (*wa mā anta bimu'min lanā*), even if we were truthful” (12:17).

⁶⁰ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2577.

Allah never commits injustice,⁶¹ and He would never betray His promises, to a believer or disbeliever.⁶²

Furthermore, *al-Mu'min* gives inner security to the believers through their faith in Him, and during hardship, He sends means by which they are secured from fear.⁶³ For example, when the Muslims were in battle, Allah said, “Recall: [Allah] covering you tightly with drowsiness, as security (*amn*) from Him...”⁶⁴ Similarly, “Those to whom people [i.e., hypocrites] said, ‘Indeed, the people have gathered against you, so fear them’ But it [merely] increased them in faith, and they said, ‘Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best Disposer of affairs.’”⁶⁵

When the prophets Moses (Mūsa) and Aaron (Hārūn) (AS) were told to speak to Pharaoh, they expressed their fear to Allah: “They said, ‘Our Lord, indeed we are afraid that he will hasten [punishment] against us or that he will transgress.’”⁶⁶ And Allah responded to them, “...Be not afraid; I am indeed with you, hearing and seeing.”⁶⁷ These verses reveal to us that even the prophets and the righteous felt fear; it is natural to feel this way when faced with danger and uncertainty. But they knew who to turn to assuage their apprehensions. When you feel afraid, turn to *al-Mu'min* and ask Him to secure your heart. Recite and reflect upon the Qur'an to learn how Allah comes through for the believers, and what is promised to the steadfast: “Surely those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then remain steadfast—there will be no fear for them, nor will they grieve.”⁶⁸ Indeed, when Pharaoh threatened the magicians who believed in Allah with crucifixion and torture, they were the ones who were unafraid, while Pharaoh was insecure. They said,

Never will we prefer you over what has come to us of clear proofs and [over] He who created us. So decree whatever you are to decree. You can only decree for this worldly life. Indeed, we have believed (*āmannā*) in our

⁶¹ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁶² Maher Muqaddim, *Asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā: Jalāluhā wa laṭā'if iqtirānīhā wa thamarātuhā fī ḍaw' al-kitāb wa al-sunnah*, 3rd ed. (Kuwait: al-Imām al-Dhahabī, 2014), 131.

⁶³ Muqaddim, *Asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 132

⁶⁴ Qur'an 8:11.

⁶⁵ Qur'an 3:173.

⁶⁶ Qur'an 20:45.

⁶⁷ Qur'an 20:46.

⁶⁸ Qur'an 46:13.

Lord that He may forgive us our sins and what you compelled us [to do] of magic. And Allah is better and more enduring.⁶⁹

They trusted in the promise of God, and their hearts were secured by Him. Pharaoh, on the other hand, spent the rest of his life afraid of being challenged and doing everything in his power to stop Mūsa (as). Eventually, Pharaoh drowned. There was no safety for him in this life or the next.

One will also notice that a believer is called a “*mu’min*.” We are both secured by our faith in God, and we secure others from any injustice. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The believer (*mu’min*) is the one who is trusted with the lives and wealth of people. The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand people are safe.”⁷⁰ We cannot profess to be true servants of *al-Mu’min*, if we do not give that same security to others that we desire from Allah.

Another meaning of the name *al-Mu’min* is that Allah follows through on His promises.⁷¹ Knowing this, helps to remove the fear associated with uncertainty and lack of trust. We believe in Allah (*āmannā bi-Allāh*) and we believe Him (*āmannāh*); i.e., what He tells us. When He tells us what pertains to this world and the Hereafter, we have absolute faith and security in its truth because He always follows through.

Al-Mu’min also assures us by fulfilling the optimistic expectations the believers have of Him; He does not let them down.⁷² The Prophet ﷺ told us that Allah said, “I am as My servant expects of Me.”⁷³ In another narration, with the addition, “If he thinks good of Me, he will have it. If he thinks evil of Me, he will have it.”⁷⁴ Having a good opinion of Allah (*ḥusn al-ẓann bi-Allāh*) is part of the worship of the heart. It is to think well of God even when things outwardly seem to be negative, and one can only do this when they know Allah. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “Wondrous is the affair of a believer, as there is good for him in every matter; this is not the case for anyone but a believer. If he experiences pleasure, he thanks

⁶⁹ Qur’an 20:72–73.

⁷⁰ *Musnad Aḥmad*, no. 23958.

⁷¹ Muqaddim, *Asmā’ Allāh*, 132.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, no. 7405; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2675.

⁷⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, no. 639.

Allah and it is good for him. If he experiences harm, he shows patience and it is good for him.”⁷⁵ And when we do that, *al-Mu'min* attests to that good opinion by following through. When we believe that there is purpose in hardship, that we will be rewarded, and that Allah responds to us with what is best, then Allah gives us even better than what we had hoped for. Indeed, Ibn Mas'ūd is reported to have said that, “By the One besides whom there is no god, a believing servant is not given anything better than a good opinion of God Almighty, and by whom there is no god but Him, no servant of God Almighty thinks well of Allah except that God Almighty gives him [according to His good opinion]; that is because goodness is in His hand.”⁷⁶ One of the righteous said that he saw the scholar, Malik bin Dinar (d. 130/748), in a dream after he had passed away. Mālīk b. Dīnār said in the dream: “I have committed many sins, and my good opinion of Allah erased them;”⁷⁷ i.e., he had hope that God would forgive him, he put in the work and effort to achieve His forgiveness, and so he was forgiven.

8. “The Controller, the Watcher [of all]”

Whether suffering from personal crises in our lives or bigger issues that we feel we cannot affect, our lack of control brings feelings of helplessness and even despair. Allah continues His description by assuring us that He is *al-Muhaymin*.⁷⁸ *Haymana* means complete control and guardianship;⁷⁹ He is the one who has complete command, and having complete command necessitates having perfect knowledge (He is ‘*Ālim al-ghayb wa al-shahāda*) and power (*al-Malik*).⁸⁰

Throughout the Qur'an, we are shown the illusion of man's worldly control. For example, it seemed like Pharaoh was in control when he was oppressing the Children of Israel. It also seemed like the King who massacred the believers in Sūrat al-Burūj had the upper hand. But Allah reminds us, “...We will progressively lead them [to destruction] from where they do not know.”⁸¹ They may have

⁷⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2999.

⁷⁶ Ibn Abī al-Dunya, *Ḥusn al-dhann billāh* (Riyadh: Dār Ṭaybah, 1408 AH/1988 CE), 96.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁸ There is a difference of opinion about the root: *amn* or *haymana*. See: Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁷⁹ *Hans Wehr*, 1224.

⁸⁰ Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names*, 64.

⁸¹ Qur'an 7:182.

believed that they were in control, but Pharaoh was eventually drowned and the King and his accomplices “will certainly suffer the punishment of Hell and the torment of burning.”⁸² Knowing that Allah is in complete control can help us to feel at ease in those times where we feel incapable of affecting change. We rest assured knowing that nothing escapes *al-Muhaymin*’s power or knowledge.

According to Ibn ‘Ashūr, part of the wisdom of this name following *al-Mu’min* is to ward off the thought that Allah gives security due to His fear or weakness.⁸³ For example, a soldier may be made to guard a specific area, yet he may not do so of his own volition or out of protectiveness of the area and people he is guarding. He may do so out of fear of being punished and because he is weaker than the one commanding him. With Allah, He is the One in control, and no one controls Him. He gives inner security to those who believe and those whom He has mercy upon. Āsiya (may Allah be pleased with her), who was also murdered by Pharaoh, saw her place in Paradise and was able to smile in the face of her tormentor. The believers described in Sūrat al-Burūj were given inner security and remained firm in their beliefs. So, who was really in control and who had true, everlasting security?

Knowing that Allah is *al-Muhaymin* encourages us to turn to Him through supplication when we desire change as we recognize that He is the One who provides the means and determines all outcomes. Allah says, “Call upon Me; I will respond to you.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, having certainty that Allah is *al-Muhaymin* provides an antidote to defeatism. We are not asked about the result of our actions, only that we take the right actions with a sincere heart. The Qur’an constantly praises “those who believe and do good.” Even when the whole world is doing the opposite of what is right, even when our efforts seem to be futile, we know that Allah is in control of everything. When Mūsa (AS) and Bani Israel were about to be overtaken by Pharaoh, it indeed seemed like Pharaoh was in control. Mūsa could have stopped moving and just surrendered to Pharaoh. Instead, he trusted that Allah was *al-Muhaymin* and said, “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.”⁸⁵ Despite our trust in *al-Muhaymin*, it may often feel like bad things

⁸² Qur’an 85:10.

⁸³ Ibn ‘Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁸⁴ Qur’an 40:60.

⁸⁵ Qur’an 26:62.

still happen. The man described in Sūrat Yāsīn persisted in calling his people to the truth even though they consistently rejected it, and he did not stop until he was reportedly killed. This outcome seems bad from a worldly perspective; there was no miracle to save him as a reward for his endeavor on earth. However, he was given the ultimate reward in the hereafter: “It was said, ‘Enter Paradise.’ He said, ‘I wish my people could know of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honored.’”⁸⁶

Knowing that Allah is *al-Muhaymin* is knowing that Allah is in control of all events and outcomes. On the Day of Judgment, all illusions of control will crumble. Those who did good for the sake of God will be rewarded, and those who did evil will face the consequences of their choices. As Allah reminds us, “And all faces will be humbled before the Ever-Living, All-Sustaining. And those burdened with wrongdoing will be in loss.”⁸⁷

9. “The Almighty”

The previous names provide reassurance for our hearts, while *al-Muhaymin* specifically both reassures us and alerts us to the power of God. *Al-‘Azīz* follows to further emphasize and explain His all-encompassing power. Indeed, power is sought out in this world, and people sometimes behave in undignified ways to gain favor with the mighty of this earth. They may lie, cheat, and even humiliate themselves. They may act in opposition to their values and morals; all of this is in an attempt to gain *‘izza*—strength, glory, and honor.⁸⁸

However, as Allah tells us in the next name mentioned in this sequence, it is Allah who is the Almighty (*al-‘Azīz*). The One who cannot be subdued, who conquers everything, and subjects everything to Himself.⁸⁹ Only He can grant the *‘izza* that is so coveted by human beings. God tells us: “And let not their speech grieve you. Indeed, honor (*‘izza*) belongs to Allah entirely. He is the Hearing, the Knowing.”⁹⁰ Indeed, people who flout God’s laws and feel that they have impunity, Allah says,

⁸⁶ Qur’an 36:27.

⁸⁷ Qur’an 20:111.

⁸⁸ *Hans Wehr*, 713.

⁸⁹ *Tafsīr al-Sa‘dī*, <https://tafsir.app/saadi/59/23>; Ibn ‘‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

⁹⁰ Qur’an 10:65.

“They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might (‘*azīz*).”⁹¹ No matter how much strength or power (*quwwa*) one can project, it is not true ‘*izza* if it is not dignified. This teaches us to turn to Allah and conform to His commandments for strength and dignity, and to avoid all that He dislikes.

Indeed, true servants of *al-‘Azīz* are those who derive their dignity from Him, respect themselves, and have an inner strength. People generally derive their strength and feelings of importance from worldly sources, such as authority, wealth, popularity, social status, ethnicity or nationality. Yet, Allah is the One who truly strengthens and gives honor, and true dignity comes in servitude and obedience to Him. When our pursuits are in His name and for Him, we break free of the power that worldly matters have over us. ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭab (rA) stated famously, “Verily, we were a disgraceful people and Allah honored us (*a‘azzanā*) with Islam. If we seek honor from anything besides that with which Allah honored us, Allah will disgrace us.”⁹²

So, how can we obtain this ‘*izza* from God? Allah says in the Qur’an: “Whoever desires honor—then to Allah belongs all honor.”⁹³ The way to this honor and strength from Allah is through being mindful of Him and being righteous, especially when it contradicts our base desires. Allah says, “... Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous (*atqākum*) of you.”⁹⁴ Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware.”⁹⁵ In fact, it was a supplication of the righteous to say, “O Allah, honor me (*a‘izzanī*) with your obedience, and do not humiliate me with disobedience.”⁹⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim reminds us that we are honored by our faith and the manifestation of that faith as obedience to Allah.⁹⁷

⁹¹ Qur’an 22:74.

⁹² Al-Hākim al-Naysapūrī, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, 207.

⁹³ Qur’an 35:10.

⁹⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim stated that “Piety (*taqwā*) has three levels: The first is protecting the heart and limbs against sin and forbidden actions. The second is protecting them against undesirable matters. The third is protection against nosiness and whatever is not of one’s concern. The first will grant life to the servant, the second will grant him health and power, and the third will grant him happiness and joy.” Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badāi‘ al-Fawā’id*, 45

⁹⁵ Qur’an 49:13.

⁹⁶ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *al-Jawāb al-kāfi* (Casablanca: Dār al-Ma‘rifā, 1418 AH/1997 CE), 59.

⁹⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ighāthat al-lahafān min maṣāyid al-shayṭān* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma‘ārif, n.d.), 181.

10. “The Compeller” (*al-Jabbār*)

After reflecting on *al-‘Azīz*, Allah turns our attention to His name the Compeller (*al-Jabbār*). While *‘izza* reminds us about Allah’s power and justice and teaches us to have strength based in dignity and obedience to Him, the following name in the sequence both emphasizes His power over His creation and comforts us if we have been victims of injustice. And perhaps this is part of the wisdom that the following name is *al-Jabbār*, which has two main meanings: 1) the One who is able to compel and subdue all His servants, with all of creation submitting to Him; and 2) the One who mends the broken and enriches the poor.⁹⁸

Al-Jabbār is the only One able to truly compel, and examples of this are ample. *Al-Jabbār* turned Moses’ staff into a real snake when the magicians were only able to create illusions.⁹⁹ He confines us all within the limits of our species, compelling us to be human beings unable to have wings like a bird.¹⁰⁰ *Al-Jabbār* also compels tyrants according to His will, making them answer for their oppression, sometimes in this life and surely in the next.¹⁰¹ It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, “The arrogant and the tyrants will be gathered on the Day of Resurrection as tiny particles. The people will trample upon them due to their disgrace before Allah Almighty.”¹⁰²

Al-Jabbār is also the One who mends what is broken and the One who consoles the hearts.¹⁰³ The Arabic word for the splint that is used to set a broken bone is a *jabīrah*, from the same root word as *jabbār*. As such, for those of us who are broken and have been victims of injustice, this name carries a valuable meaning. When the mother of Mūsa (AS) let go of her son in the river, we are told in the Qur’an,

⁹⁸ *Tafsīr al-Sa‘dī*, <https://tafsir.app/saadi/59/23>.

⁹⁹ The Qur’an says that, “And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him from their magic that they were moving.” Qur’an 20:66.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

¹⁰¹ Muqaddim, *Asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā*, 141.

¹⁰² Ibn Abī al-Dunya, *al-Tawāḍu‘ wal-khumūl*, 224.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 140.

And the heart of Moses' mother ached so much that she almost gave away his identity, had We not reassured her heart in order for her to have faith [in Allah's promise].¹⁰⁴

In the midst of her anguish at being separated from her baby and the danger he was in, *al-Jabbār* was the One who comforted her, “Thus, We returned him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted and that she may not grieve, and so that she would know that Allah's promise is true; yet most of them do not know.”¹⁰⁵ In this situation, *al-Jabbār* returned the baby to his mother and she was comforted and relieved. However, it's important to remember that our hearts are not always mended by being given what we want, and in many cases we are given something else entirely. The Prophet ﷺ was wronged by his people, who persecuted him until he had to leave his beloved home. He said regarding Mecca, “By Allah, you are the best and most beloved land to Allah. Had I not been driven away from you, I would not have left you.”¹⁰⁶ The Prophet ﷺ was heartbroken. He did not want to leave Mecca, and life in Madina was not easy. The Companions also became very ill and wished they could return to Mecca. The Prophet ﷺ prayed to Allah, “O Allah! Make us love Medina as we love Mecca or even more than that.”¹⁰⁷ And indeed, Medina eventually became beloved to them and their home.

Allah grants solace and mends our brokenness in different ways. Sometimes it can be through an uplifting word by a dear friend or being inspired to pray and weep to Allah. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, you will never leave anything for the sake of Allah Almighty but that Allah will replace it with something better.”¹⁰⁸ Undoubtedly, the best thing Allah can give us when something has been taken away is Himself.

This name inspires awe at the majesty of Allah, makes one afraid of committing injustice, and still allows us to find comfort in the One who can mend all.

¹⁰⁴ Qur'an 28:10.

¹⁰⁵ Qur'an 28:13.

¹⁰⁶ *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 3925.

¹⁰⁷ *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 3, bk. 30, no. 113.

¹⁰⁸ *Musnad Aḥmad*, no. 23074.

11- The Majestic, the Proud

So far, the names *al-Quddūs*, *al-Salām*, and *al-Mu'min* have addressed and reassured our hearts, *al-Muḥaymin* has placed a bridge between reassurance and a sense of awe, and *al-'Azīz* and *al-Jabbār* have reminded us of His dignity and strength.¹⁰⁹ Finally, the sequence ends with *al-Mutakabbir*: the One who has pride and greatness, yet is free from all faults, injustice, and oppression.¹¹⁰ Stemming from the same root word, Allah is greater (*akbar*) than anything on this earth. He says, “And to Him belongs [all] grandeur (*kibriyā*) within the heavens and the earth, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”¹¹¹

Al-Mutakabbir teaches us to humble ourselves and not attribute false grandeur to ourselves or implicitly compete with the grandeur of God. The Prophet ﷺ reminds us, “No one who has the weight of a seed of arrogance in his heart will enter Paradise.” Someone replied, “But a man loves to have beautiful clothes and shoes.” The Prophet ﷺ clarified, “Verily, Allah is beautiful and he loves beauty. Arrogance means rejecting the truth and looking down on people.”¹¹² The Prophet ﷺ also told us, “Allah Almighty says that might is His garment and grandeur is His cloak: Whoever competes with Me, I will punish him.”¹¹³ Satan attributed greatness to himself and arrogated to himself rank above Adam when he said in defiance to Allah, “I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay.”¹¹⁴

Anyone who is arrogant and boastful should indeed be fearful. The Prophet ﷺ warned that “Whoever exalts himself or carries himself with arrogance, he will meet Allah while He is angry with him.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, Korah (Qārūn) became enamored with himself because of the riches that God gave him. He was “from the people of Moses, but he tyrannized them.”¹¹⁶ He thought that because of his treasures he was greater, and he attributed his success to himself, causing him to

¹⁰⁹ Ibn ‘Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/23>.

¹¹⁰ *Tafsīr al-Sa’dī*, <https://tafsir.app/saadi/59/23>.

¹¹¹ Qur’an 45:37.

¹¹² *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 91.

¹¹³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 2620.

¹¹⁴ Qur’an 7:12.

¹¹⁵ *Musnad Aḥmad*, no. 5959.

¹¹⁶ Qur’an 28:76.

end in ruins.¹¹⁷ Allah “caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves.”¹¹⁸

Al-Mutakabbir also carries another implication related to the solace that Allah’s grandeur provides. Anyone who is overwhelmed by the apparent greatness of their problems, who is made to feel small by others for worldly reasons, or who looks in awe at those stationed above him in life should know that Allah is greater.

After *al-Mutakabbir*, the verse beautifully ends with “Glorified is Allah far above what they associate with Him [in worship]” (*subḥān Allāhi ‘ammā yushrikūn*). This statement concludes the verse by completely detaching the heart from every supposed rival or equivalent the polytheists would associate with Allah. A sentiment that, again, continues to be applicable. After learning about some of Allah’s magnificent names and attributes, who is it that we honestly take as saviors? Do we attribute a grandeur to ourselves above others? Do we turn to what He does not love for peace, safety, and control?

12. The Creator, the Producer, the Fashioner

After detaching every supposed deity from Allah, and after understanding the aforementioned diverse names of Allah, He reminds us in the next verse that He is *al-Khāliq* (the Creator), *al-Bāri’* (the Producer), *al-Muṣawwir* (the Fashioner). Indeed, in their pure forms, these functions are entirely unique to Allah. The first part of the verse, “He is Allah, *al-Khāliq*”, tells us that Allah alone creates, negating the supposed divinity of false idols who are unable to create.¹¹⁹ *Al-Khāliq* determines what is brought from non-existence to existence, *al-Bāri’* distinguishes creation from each other by specifying their different forms, and *al-Muṣawwir* makes the visual manifestation of what He has created and produced.¹²⁰

These names are mentioned sequentially because in totality they show the divine conception of the creation of human beings from the beginning to their end. So

¹¹⁷ Qur’an 28:78.

¹¹⁸ Qur’an 28:81.

¹¹⁹ Ibn ‘Āshur, *al-Taḥrīr wal-tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/24>.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Allah starts with creation (*al-Khāliq*), which is bringing into existence that which did not exist, then with producing (*al-Bāri*'), which is the formation of the human body, then with fashioning (*al-Muṣawwir*), which gives each human his or her beautiful form.¹²¹

Notably, these names come after our hearts have been settled with the knowledge of all the names previously discussed. The One who possesses all of these names is the One who is *al-Khāliq*, *al-Bāri*', *al-Muṣawwir*. Indeed, these names instill both a sense of awe and comfort. He created the universe, which is so much bigger than us, and He created us. We have purpose. The Most Merciful is the One who fashioned us Himself. The Source of Peace is the One who made our souls and physical bodies. The true King is the One who gave us inherent dignity. How humbling that we have such a connection to Him!

These names are followed with “to Him belong the best names” (*lahu al-asmā' u al-ḥusnā*). That is, He has *all* the Most Beautiful Names, only some of which have been mentioned here.¹²²

13. “The Almighty, the Most Wise”

To conclude this set of verses and the chapter as a whole, Allah says, “Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Him (*yusabbiḥu lahu*). He is the Almighty, the Wise.”¹²³ This finale reflects the start of the chapter, “Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth exalts Allah (*sabbāḥa lil-Allāhi*), and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”¹²⁴

And hence this chapter is concluded in the same way that it started—with a reminder that everything exalts Him, and He is the Almighty (*al-ʿAzīz*) and the All-Wise (*al-Ḥakīm*). Indeed, the entire chapter, and particularly the verses we have been discussing on His beautiful names, obliges anyone who contemplates to glorify Him,¹²⁵ indeed it is the only rational outcome to what has been discussed.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*; <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/24>.

¹²³ Qurʾan 59:24.

¹²⁴ Qurʾan 59:1.

¹²⁵ Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr*; <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/59/24>.

How can our hearts not be filled with awe, reverence, and love for Allah, who possesses these beautiful names and attributes?

As previously mentioned, Allah's name *al-ʿAzīz* first appears in verse 23, between His names *al-Muḥaymin* and *al-Jabbār*. When Allah pairs certain names together, it gives a new meaning or a novel understanding that may not be captured by our limited imagination when the name is mentioned alone. Here, Allah is *al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥakīm*, and this is most fitting to mention after we are told of His unique power to create, distinguish, and fashion.¹²⁶ This pairing shows us that creation did not just come about from the might of Allah, but also from His deep wisdom. All of creation, and specifically humanity, how we look, and how we function, have been determined by the Most Wise. Our different appearances, expressions, shapes, and forms are not just due to random genetics, but are part of the wisdom of Allah. We might be made to feel a certain way because we do not fit into modern standards of beauty, or because of our ethnicity and color, but Allah—the One who has the most concern for us, who is Himself the Most Beautiful¹²⁷—chose for us to appear like this.

Concluding the entire chapter with these two names reminds us that nothing is arbitrary. In the context of the verses in this paper, the names chosen, the order in which they appear, and the chapter in which they appear have been deliberately chosen by the Almighty, the Most Wise. There is purpose, there is guidance, and there is healing for us when we truly contemplate their significance.

Conclusion

The names mentioned in verses 22-24 of Sūrat al-Ḥashr take us through a journey of the heart, teaching us trust in and reliance on Allah. We are reminded first and foremost not to submit our hearts to anything or anyone but Allah (*huwa Allāh aladhī lā ilāha ilā hu*), that His knowledge is all-encompassing, including what is inaccessible to us (*ʿĀlim al-ghayb wal-shahāda*), and that He is the Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*). From here on, the names address, among other things, the different emotional states that we endure: when we are confused about who to turn

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ The Prophet ﷺ said, “Verily, Allah is beautiful and He loves beauty.” *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, no. 91.

to for authority, He is *al-Malik*; when we are worried about injustice or oppression from God, He is *al-Quddūs*; when we feel anxious and disturbed, He is *al-Salām*; when we are afraid and uncertain, He is *al-Mu'min*; when we feel apathetic or out of control, He is *al-Muḥaymin*; when we feel overcome, He is *al-'Azīz*; when we see oppression or have been victims (or perpetrators) of oppression, He is *al-Jabbār*; and when we see others elevate themselves or our problems become overwhelming, He is *al-Mutakabbir*. We zoom out, and Allah reminds us that He is the Creator, the Producer, the Fashioner. Logically, He knows what is best for us. Profoundly, we conclude with the fact that He is *al-'Azīz al-Ḥakīm*: The Almighty, the Most Wise. Nothing is arbitrary.

The verses we have visited are uniquely placed, with each name providing ease for our individual concerns, addressing our hearts and the natural fluctuations they undergo. Whatever doubt, fear, or worry enters our hearts, understanding who Allah is helps to calm our fears and soothe our pain.