2594 - Some of the Names of Allah and their meanings

the question

can you give all the meanings of attributes of allah, including its literal and technical meaning and where it is mentioned in the quran or sunnah

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This is a question which needs a very long answer, but we will summarize it as follows:

Firstly, the names of Allah are not limited to any specific number. We know some of them and do not know others, as is indicated by the hadeeth of ‘Abd-Allah ibn Mas’ood (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: ‘There is no one among you who, when he is stricken with distress and grief, says, “Allahumma inni ‘abduka wabnu ‘abdika wabnu amatika naasiyati bi yadika maadin fiyya hukmuka, ‘adlun fiyya qadaa’uka. As’aluka bi kull ismin huwa laka sammayta bihi nafsaka aw allamtahu ahadan min khalqika aw anzaltahu fi kitaabika aw asta’tharta bihi fi ‘ilm il-ghayb ‘indaka an taj’al al-Qur’aana rabee’a qalbi wa noora sadri wa jilaa’a huzni wa dhahaaba hammi [O Allah, I am Your slave, sone of Your slave and 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 named Yourself with, or You taught to any of Your creation, or revealed in Your Book, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the Unseen with You, that You nmake 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 Allah will remove his distress and his grief, and will give him joy instead…”

(Reported by Imaam Ahmad, 3582; it is a saheeh hadeeth).

Secondly, The names of Allah are all husnaa [Most Beautiful], as He says (interpretation of the

meaning):

“And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names. They will be requited for what they used to do.” [al-A’raaf 7:180]

The meaning of al-husnaa implies the utmost beauty, and that each name includes the quality of perfection.

Al-‘Allaamah ‘Abd al-Rahmaan ibn Naasir ibn Sa’di (may Allah have mercy on him) said: Many of the names of Allah have been mentioned in the Qur’aan, according to the context, but we also need to point out their broader meanings, so we say:

The name Rabb (Lord, Cherisher) is repeated in many aayaat. The Rabb is the One Who guides and cares for all of His slaves by managing their affairs and bestowing different kinds of blessings. In a more specific sense, He cares for and guides His friends (devoted slaves) by reforming and setting straight their hearts and souls and attitudes. For this reason, many of their du’aa’s or prayers to Him address Him by this glorious Name, because they are asking Him for this specific kind of care.

The name Allah refers to the One Who is adored and worshipped, the One Who possesses the attributes of divinity and to whom all His creation is enslaved. The attributes of divinity with which He describes Himself are the attributes of perfection.

Al-Malik (the Sovereign), al-Maalik (the Possessor), Alladhi lahu’l-Mulk (the One to Whom Dominion belongs). Allah is the One Who is described with the attributes of sovereignty and dominion, which are the qualities of might and pride, subjugation and control. He is the One Who is in absolute control of creation, Who issues commands and Who rewards or punishes. The entire Universe, high and low, belongs to Him. All of them are His servants and slaves, and are utterly dependent on Him.

Al-Waahid (the One), al-Ahad (the Unique). He is the One Who is uniquely and utterly and perfectly

One, with no partners in His Uniqueness. His slaves are obliged to believe in His Oneness, in belief and word and deed, by recognizing that He is absolutely perfect and is unique in His oneness, and by directing all kinds of worship to Him Alone.

Al-Samad (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks). He is the One to Whom all of creation turns for all of their needs, for He is in and of Himself absolutely perfect, in His Names and Attributes and Deeds.

Al-'Aleem (the All-Knowing), al-Khabeer (the Aware). He is the One Whose Knowledge encompasses all things, seen and unseen, secret and open, everything that is inevitable or impossible or possible, in heaven and on earth, the past, the present and the future. Nothing whatsoever is hidden from Him.

Al-Hakeem (the Wise). He is the One Who has ultimate wisdom, in His creation and in His commands. He is the One Who created everything well.

"… And who is better in judgement than Allah for a people who have firm Faith." [al-Maa'idah 5:50 – interpretation of the meaning].

He does not create anything in vain, or legislate anything in jest. He is the One Who has Dominion in this world and the next. His ruling applies in three major spheres, in which none else has any share with Him: He judges between His slaves by means of His Law, His decree and His reward/punishment.

Wisdom: He puts things in their rightful places and gives them their rightful status.

Al-Rahman (the Most Gracious), al-Raheem (the Most Merciful), al-Barr (the Source of Goodness), al-Kareem (the Most Generous), al-Jawaad (the Generous), al-Ra'oof (the Compassionate), al-Wahhaab (the Bestower). These names are all close in meaning, and they all indicate that the Rabb is characterized by mercy, goodness, and generosity. They testify to the vastness of His mercy and other attributes, with which He encompasses all of His creation to the extent that His wisdom decrees, although the greater share is bestowed upon the believers in particular. Allah

says (interpretation of the meaning):

“… My Mercy encompasses all things. That (Mercy) I shall ordain for those who are the Muttaqoon (pious)…”

[al-A’raaf 7:156]

Blessings and goodness are all traces of His Mercy and Generosity. The good things of this world and the next are all traces of His Mercy.

Al-Samee’ (the All-Hearing). He hears all voices, in all the different languages, no matter how many and how varied, when they call on Him for their needs.

Al-Baseer (the All-Seeing) Who has insight into all things, not matter how small. He can see a black ant walking across the face of a rock on the darkest night. He can see what is below the seven levels of the earth and what is above the seven heavens. He is the All-Hearing and All-Seeing, Who knows who is deserving of reward or punishment according to His Wisdom.

Al-Hameed (the Praiseworthy), Who is inherently deserving of praise, by His Names, Attributes and deeds. He has the Most Beautiful Names, the most perfect attributes and the most perfect and beautiful deeds. His actions always revolve around munificence and justice.

Al-Majeed (the Most Glorious), al-Kabeer (the Most Great), al-‘Azeem (the Most Great), al-Jaleel (the Sublime One). These Names describe Allah with attributes of glory, pride, greatness and majesty. He is greater than everything, more mighty, more majestic and more exalted. To Him belong glorification and exaltation in the hearts of His close friends and devoted slaves, whose hearts are filled with veneration of His might and humble submission to His glory.

Al-‘Afuw (the Pardoner), al-‘Ghafoor (the Forgiver), al-Ghaffaar (the All-Forgiving), Who has always been and will always be known for His pardon and forgiveness towards His slaves. Everyone is in need of His pardon and forgiveness, as they are in need of His mercy and generosity. He has promised to forgive and pardon whoever follows the appropriate means. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And verily, I am indeed Forgiving to him who repents, believes (in My Oneness, and associates none in worship with Me) and does righteous good deeds, and then remains constant in doing them (till his death).”

[Ta-Ha 20:82]

Al-Tawwaab (the Acceptor of Repentance). He always accepts the repentance of those who repent and forgives the sins of those who commit sin. Allah accepts the repentance of everyone who repents to Him sincerely. He is the One Who forgives those who repent, firstly by helping them to repent and causing their hearts to turn towards Him. After they repent, He turns to them and accepts their repentance, pardoning their sins.

Al-Quddoos (the Holy) and al-Salaam (the One Free from all defects). Allah is far above any attribute of imperfection, and He is above being likened to any of His creation.

“… There is nothing like unto Him…”

[al-Shoora 42:11]

“And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him.”

[al-Ikhlaas 112:4]

“… Do you know of any who is similar to Him?…”

[Maryam 19:65]

“… Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship)…”

[al-Baqarah 2:22]

The names al-Quddoos and al-Salaam reject the idea that He could be lacking in any way, and they imply that He is absolutely perfect in all aspects, because once the idea of imperfection is rejected, this is proof of total perfection.

Al-‘Aliyy (the Exalted), al-A’laa (the Most High). He is the One Who is completely exalted in all aspects, in His essence, in His status, in His attributes and in His dominion. He is the One Who rose over the Throne and Who dominates all things. In all the attributes of might, pride, glory and beauty that are ascribed to Him, He reaches the ultimate level.

Al-‘Azeez (the Almighty), to whom belong all might and power, the power of strength, the power of dominion, the power of invincibility. None of His creatures can harm Him. He has subjugated all that exists, and the whole of creation is under His control and is subject to His might.

Al-Qawiy (the Most Strong), al-Mateen (the Firm One). The meanings of these Names are similar to the meaning of al-‘Azeez.

Al-Jabbaar (the Compeller). This Names includes the meanings of al-‘Aliyy, al-A’laa and al-Qahhaar.

Al-Ra’oof (the Compassionate) means the One Who consoles broken hearts and supports the weak and those who seek His help and turn to Him.

Al-Mutakabbir (the Majestic) is the One Who is above all bad qualities, shortcomings and faults, because of His might and pride.

Al-Khaaliq (the Creator), al-Baari’ (the Inventor of all things), al-Musawwir (the Bestower of forms). He is the One Who has created from nothing all that exists, and formed it by His wisdom, praise be to Him. He has always been and will always be known by this mighty attribute.

Al-Mu’min (the Guardian of Faith), Who is praised for His own sake by His perfect attributes, and by the perfection of His majesty and beauty. He sent His Messengers and revealed His Books with signs and proofs, and confirmed His Messengers with signs and proofs, to confirm the truth of the message they brought.

Al-Muhaymin (the Watcher over His creatures) Who is aware of everything that is hidden and concealed, and Whose knowledge encompasses all things.

Al-Qadeer (the Powerful), Whose power is perfect. By His power He created all things that exist, by

His power He is controlling all things and by His power He formed them and perfected them. By His power He gives life and death, and will resurrect His slaves to receive their reward or punishment, so that those who have done well will be rewarded with good, and those who have done evil will be punished. When Allah wills a thing, He merely says “Be!” and it is. By His power He controls people’s hearts, and He directs them as He wills.

Al-Lateef (the Most Subtle and Courteous), Whose knowledge encompasses everything that is hidden and concealed. He knows everything that is secret and understands the most subtle things. He is Kind to His believing slaves and takes care of their interests by His benevolence and grace, in many ways that they are not even aware of. This Name also shares the meanings of al-Khabeer and al-Ra’oof.

Al-Haseeb (the One Who takes account). He is the One Who is All-Knowing about His slaves. He is Sufficient for those who put their trust in Him, and He rewards or punishes His slaves for good and evil, according to His wisdom. He knows about all their deeds, major and minor.

Al-Raqeeb (the Watchful). He is the One Who watches what is hidden in people’s hearts. “… He Who takes charge of every person and knows all that he has earned” [al-Ra’d 13:33 – interpretation of the meaning]. He protected His creation and set it in motion, running according to the most perfect system and controls.

Al-Hafeez (the Preserver). He is the One Who protects what He has created and encompasses it with His knowledge. He protects His close friends from falling into sin and destruction, and gently protects them when they are active and when they are at rest. He counts the deeds of His slaves and rewards or punishes them accordingly.

Al-Muheet (the Encompasser). He is the One Who encompasses all things with His knowledge, power, mercy and dominion.

Al-Qahhaar (the Subduer). He is the Subduer of all things, to Whom all of creation submits because of His power and strength and the perfection of His Might.

Al-Muqeet (the Provider of sustenance). He gives provision to everything that exists and directs the affairs of all as He wills.

Al-Wakeel (the Trustee). He is the One Who is in a position to run the affairs of His creation, by His knowledge and the perfection of His power and His encompassing wisdom. He is the One Who is taking care of His close friends, making the right way easy for them and causing them to steer clear of the wrong way. He is taking care of all their affairs, and whoever puts his trust in Him will find that He is Sufficient for him.

“Allah is the Walee (Protector or Guardian) of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light…” [al-Baqarah 2:257 – interpretation of the meaning].

Dhoo’l-Jalaali wa’l-Ikraam (Possessor of Majesty and Honour), i.e., the Possessor of Might and Pride, the Possessor of Mercy and Generosity, Who is kind to everyone and to specific individuals. He honours His close friends and devoted worshippers who glorify Him, extol His greatness and love Him.

Al-Wudood (the Loving). He loves His Prophets and Messengers and their followers, and they love Him. He is dearer to them than everything else. He has filled their hearts with love for Him and their tongues utter words of praise to Him. Their hearts are drawn to Him in love and sincerity and they turn in repentance to Him at all times.

Al-Fattaah (the Opener). He judges between His slaves according to His laws, His decrees and His decisions concerning reward and punishment. By His Grace He opens the eyes of those who are sincere, and opens their hearts to know Him, love Him and turn to Him in repentance. He opens the door to all kinds of mercy and provision for His slaves, and generates the causes by means of which they can earn good things in this world and the next.

“Whatever of mercy (i.e., good) Allah may grant to mankind, none can withhold it, and whatever He may withhold, none can grant it thereafter…” Faatir 35:2 – interpretation of the meaning]

Al-Razzaaq (the Provider), Who provides for all His slaves. There is no living creature on earth, but

Allah provides for it.

His provision for His slaves is of two types:

General provision, which include the righteous and immoral, the first and the last. This is the provision of physical needs.

Specific provision, which is provision for the heart which is nourished with knowledge and faith, and the halaal provision which helps a person to adhere to religion. This provision is specifically for the believers, and is given to varying degrees according to His wisdom and mercy.

Al-Hakam (the Judge), al-'Adl (the Just). He judges between His slaves in this world and the next, with His justice and fairness. He does not oppress anyone in the slightest, and no one is made to bear the burden of another person's sin. He does not punish a person more than he deserves for his sin, he restores to people their rights and does not leave anyone without restoring what is his right. He is just in His running of the universe and in His decision making.

"… Verily, My Lord is on a Straight Path (the truth)…"

[Hood 11:56 – interpretation of the meaning].

Jaami' al-Naas (Gatherer of the People). He will gather all of mankind on the Day concerning which there is no doubt. He has comprehensive knowledge of their deeds and their provision, and there is nothing, major or minor, that He is not aware of. He will gather every particle of their bodies that has disappeared or been changed into something else, of all the people who have died from the earliest times until the latest times, by the perfection of His power and the vastness of His knowledge.

Al-Hayy (the Ever-Living), al-Qayyoom (the Self-Sustaining). He is completely alive and sustains Himself, and He sustains and cares for the people of heaven and earth. He controls their affairs and provides for them. The name al-Hayy encompasses all the qualities of His essence and the name al-Qayyoom encompasses all the qualities of His deeds.

Al-Noor (the Light). He is the Light of the heavens and of the earth, Who enlightens the hearts of the ‘aarifeen (those who have proper knowledge of Him) with knowledge of Him and fills their hearts with the light of His guidance. He is the One Who illuminates the heavens and the earth with the lights that He has placed therein. His veil is Light and if it were to be removed, everything of His creation as far as He can see would be burnt, may He be glorified.

Badee’ al-Samawaati wa’l-Ard (Originator of the heavens and the earth). He is the One Who created them and formed them with the utmost beauty and with the most magnificent system of organization.

Al-Qaabid (the Constrictor), al-Baasit (the Expander). He is the One Who takes people’s souls, and Who provides them with ample provision and expands their hearts. All of this is in accordance with His Wisdom and Mercy.

Al-Mu’ti (the Giver), al-Maani’ (the Withholder). No-one can withhold what He gives, and no one can give what He withholds. All interests and benefits are sought from Him, and the needs of all are addressed to Him. He is the One Who gives them to whomever He wills and withholds them from whomever He wills, by His Wisdom and Mercy.

Al-Shaheed (the Witness). He is the One Who watches over all things and hears all voices, loud and soft. He sees all that exists, great and small alike. His knowledge encompasses all things, and He is the Witness Who sees all the deeds of His slaves, good and bad alike.

Al-Mubdi’ (the Originator), al-Mu’eed (the Restorer). Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And it is He Who originates the creation, then will repeat (after it has perished)…”

[al-Room 30:27]

He initiated their creation, in order to test them as to which of them would be best in deeds, then He will re-create them in order to reward with good those who did well, and punish those who did evil.

He is the One Who initiated His creation in stages, and Who is constantly renewing it.

Al-Fa’’aal lima yureed (the One Who does whatever He wants). This has to do with the perfection of His power and the strength of His will and ability. Everything He wants, He does, with nothing to stop Him and no one to oppose Him, and with no support or help, no matter what it is. If He wants something, all he has to do is say “Be!” and it is. Although He can do whatever He wants, His will operates in conjunction with His Wisdom, may He be praised, so He is described as being completely Able and being Strong of will, but also as being completely Wise in all that He has done and will do.

Al-Ghaniy (the Self-Sufficient), al-Mughni (the Enricher). He is independent in and of Himself, and is completely Independent in all aspects, because of His perfection and the perfection of His attributes. Nothing can undermine His perfection and make Him imperfect in any way whatsoever. He cannot be anything but Self-Sufficient, because this self-sufficiency is one of His essential qualities, just as He cannot be anything but the Creator, the Able, the Provider, the Kind, Who does not need anyone else at all.

He is the Self-Sufficient in Whose hands are the treasures of the heavens and the earth, the treasures of this world and of the Hereafter. He gives His creation enough in general terms so that they do not have to seek help of anyone else, and He gives to specific people of the divine knowledge and realities of faith with which He has filled their hearts.

Al-Haleem (the Forbearing One). He is the One Who showers His creation with blessings both apparent and hidden, in spite of their sins and many mistakes. He is Forbearing and does not punish sinners straight away for their sins. He rebukes them so that they will repent, and gives them time to turn to Him in repentance.

Al-Shaakir (the Grateful), al-Shakoor (the Appreciative). He is the One Who appreciates the smallest deed, and forgives the greatest mistakes. He multiplies beyond measure the deeds of those who are sincere; He appreciates those who give thanks to Him, and He remembers those who remember Him. Whoever draws near to Him with something of righteous deeds, He draws

near to him by more than that.

Al-Qareeb (the Ever-Near), al-Mujeeb (the Responsive). Allah, may He be glorified, is near to everyone, and His nearness is of two types:

His nearness to everyone in a general sense, through His knowledge, watching, awareness and witnessing, which encompass all things.

His nearness in a specific sense, to His slaves, those who ask help of Him and those who love Him. The true nature of this closeness cannot be understood, but its effects may be seen in His kindness towards His slave, and His care, support and help of him. Another of its effects is His response to those who call on Him and His acceptance of the repentance of those who worship Him. He is also the One Who responds in a specific way to those who respond to Him and follow His religion. He also responds to those who are in need and to those who no longer have any hope in any of His creation, and who put their trust in Him, hoping for His pleasure and fearing His wrath.

Al-Kaafi (the Sufficient). He is the One Who gives His slaves all that they need. More specifically, He is Sufficient for the one who believes in Him and puts his trust in Him and asks Him for all that he needs in worldly and spiritual terms.

Al-Awwal (the First), al-Aakhir (the Last); al-Zaahir (the Manifest), al-Baatin (the Hidden). The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) explained this in a clear and comprehensive fashion when he said, addressing his Lord: “You are the First, and there is nothing before You; You are the Last, and there is nothing after You. You are the Manifest and there is nothing above You; You are the Hidden and there is nothing beneath You.”

Al-Waasi’ (the All-Encompassing). His attributes and qualities, and everything that has to do with Him, are all-encompassing in such a way that no one can praise Him as He deserves, but He is as He praised Himself, vast in power, might and dominion, and vast in grace and kindness, and vast in generosity and munificence.

Al-Haadi (the Guide). He is the One Who guides His slaves and shows them the way to all that will benefit them, and protects them from all that will harm them. He teaches them what they do not know, and guides them to the true guidance which will help them and set them straight. He fills them with taqwa (piety) and causes their hearts to turn to Him, in response to His command.

Al-Haqq (the Truth). He is true in and of Himself and in His attributes. His existence is undeniable, and His attributes are perfect. His existence is one of His essential qualities (He cannot but exist), and nothing else can exist except through Him. He is the One Who has always been and will always be described with attributes of majesty, beauty and perfection. He has always been and will always be known for His Kindness. His words are truth; the meeting with Him is truth; His Messengers are truth; His Books are truth; His religion is the Truth; the worship of Him Alone, with no partners or associates, is the Truth; everything that has to do with Him is truth. Allah is the Truth and whatever else they claim to be divine besides Him is false. Allah is the Most High, the Most Great, as He says (interpretation of the meanings):

“And say: ‘The Truth is from your Lord.’ Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve…”

[al-Isra’ 18:29].

“… So, after the truth, what else can there be, save error?…”

[Yoonus 10:32]

“And say: ‘Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely, falsehood is ever bound to vanish.’”[al-Isra’ 17:81]