246163 - Could you give me the most accurate translation for these names of Allaah: [al alaa] [al akram] [al ilaah] [al awwal]

the question

Could you give me the most accurate translation for these names of Allaah: [al alaa] [al akram] [al ilaah] [al awwal]

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

al-A‘laa, al-Akram, al-Ilaah and al-Awwal are among the beautiful names of Allah.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High [al-A‘laa]”

[al-A‘laa 87:1]

“Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous [al-Akram]”

[al-‘Alaq 96:3]

“For Allah is (the only) One Ilaah (God)”

[an-Nisa’ 4:171]

“He is the First [al-Awwal](nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him). And He is the All-Knower of every thing”

[al-Hadeed 57:3].

Al-A‘laa (the Most High) is the One Who is the most exalted in all aspects: exalted in His Essence,

exalted in His attributes, exalted in the sense of prevailing and controlling.

Being exalted in His Essence means that He, may He be glorified, is far above all of creation in His Essence; He is above His Throne, above all that He has created.

Being exalted in His attributes means that to Him belong all perfect attributes, and He is far above all shortcomings.

Being exalted in the sense of prevailing and controlling means that He has prevailed over and subdued all things, and everything has submitted to His control.

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

The Muslims are unanimously agreed that Allah, may He be glorified, is Exalted, Most High, and the Quran speaks of that. Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is the only One Who is Most High in all aspects, because His Highness is an attribute of praise. So we affirm that Allah, may He be exalted, is Most High in His Essence, Most High in His attributes, and Most High in the sense of prevailing and controlling. End quote.

Ijtimaa‘ al-Juyoosh al-Islamiyyah (2/182)

As-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-‘Aliy, al-A‘laa (the Exalted, the Most High) is the One Who is most sublime and exalted in all aspects, in Essence, in esteem and attributes, and in terms of prevailing over all others.

He is the One Who rose over the Throne and is the ultimate Sovereign; He is the One who possesses all attributes of greatness, pride, majesty, beauty and all other perfect attributes, and His attributes are the most perfect. End quote.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di (p. 946)

Al-Akram (the Most Generous) is the One Who is very generous and very kind to His creation.

Al-Khattaabi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

He is the most generous of the most generous and no generous one could ever match or equal His generosity. End quote.

Al-Asma’ wa’s-Sifaat by al-Bayhaqi (1/148)

Abu Hayyaan (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Akram (the Most Generous) is a description that is indicative of emphatic generosity, for His generosity surpasses all generosity; He bestows innumerable blessings, shows forbearance to the sinner, accepts repentance and pardons bad deeds. End quote.

Al-Bahr al-Muheet (10/507)

Generosity is not just the matter of giving. Rather the word al-karam, translated here as generosity, means good; Allah is al-Akram (translated above as the Most Generous), which means that He is the best and most perfect in His attributes.

As-Sa‘di (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The name al-Akram may refer to one who has numerous attributes in the most perfect manner, whose generosity and kindness are abundant, and whose munificence encompasses all things. End quote.

Tafseer as-Sa‘di (p. 930)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

With regard to the words (interpretation of the meaning),

“Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists),

Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood),

Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous [al-Akram]”

[al-‘Alaq 96:1-3],

Allah describes Himself as being generous after stating that He created man, so as to show that He is generous to His creation, and that He helps them to attain praiseworthy goals and aims.

The word al-karam is a comprehensive term that includes all good and praiseworthy characteristics. It does not mean only giving; rather giving is its ultimate meaning, because kindness to others is the ultimate good characteristic. Therefore al-karam is an abundance of goodness and availability thereof…

Anything good and praiseworthy may be described as karam. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do they not observe the earth, how much of every good kind [min kulli zawjin kareem] We cause to grow therein?”

[ash-Shu‘ara’ 26:7].

Ibn Qutaybah said: This means: of every good type (of plants). Az-Zajjaaj said: Zawj (translated here as kind) means type, and kareem means praiseworthy (or good). Others said that “min kulli zawj” means of every type or kind, and “kareem” means good, of plants that are eaten by humans and livestock. It may be said in Arabic “nakhlah kareemah” to refer to a palm tree that bears good fruit, and “naaqah kareemah” to refer to a she-camel that produces a lot of milk.

Allah, may He be glorified, tells us that He is al-Akram (the Most Generous), in the superlative form of the word, using the definite article, which indicates that He alone is the Most Generous. This is unlike if He had said “wa Rabbuka akram (and your Lord is most generous – without the definite article al-), which would not be indicative of exclusivity.

The word al-Akram (with the definite article) is indicative of exclusivity. And He did not say “more generous than…”; rather He left it open, to highlight that He is the Most Generous of all, without

any restriction. This indicates that His is the ultimate generosity, unsurpassed by anything else, and subject to no shortcomings.

Ibn ‘Atiyyah said: Then Allah, may He be exalted, says to him (interpretation of the meaning): “Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous [al-Akram]” [al-‘Alaq 96:1-3], by way of consoling and comforting the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). It is as if He is saying: Carry on with what you are commanded to do, for your Lord is not like other lords; rather He is the Most Generous, Whose generosity will never fall short, so He will support you and cause you to prevail.

I say: Some of the early generations said: No one should give a gift for the sake of Allah that he would feel embarrassed to give to someone who is dear to him, for Allah is the Most Generous of all those who are generous. That is, He is the One who deserves honour (ikraam) more than anyone else, for He is more generous and more honourable than anything. He, may He be glorified, is majestic and munificent (dhu’l-jalaali wa’l-ikraam), so He deserves to be venerated and honoured. Veneration implies glorifying and honouring implies praise and love. End quote.

Majmoo‘ al-Fataawa (16/293-296)

Al-Ilaah (God) means the One Who is loved and worshipped, Who alone deserves to be acknowledged as divine and worshipped. The idols are only called aalihah (gods) because the mushrikeen worship them besides Allah and claim that they are deserving of that. The name of Allah is derived from the word al-ilaah (lit. “the God”). Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Al-Ilaah is the One Who possesses all attributes of perfection and majesty. This name includes all the divine names. Hence the correct view is that the root of the name Allah is al-Ilaah, as is the view of Seebawayh and the majority of his companions, except very few of them, and that the name of Allah, may He be exalted, encompasses all the meanings of the beautiful names and sublime attributes of Allah. End quote.

Badaa’i‘ al-Fawaa’id (2/249).

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

The word “Allah” is a proper noun referring to the Lord, may He be glorified and exalted. Its root is the word al-Ilaah (“the God”), but the word is contracted to make it easier to pronounce, because it is repeated so frequently. The word ilaah refers to the one who is loved, and the one who is loved is the one who is worshipped out of love and veneration. End quote.

Ash-Sharh al-Mumti‘ (3/56)

Al-Awwal (the First) is the One before Whom there is nothing.

This is a name which indicates that Allah alone possesses absolute perfection, that He encompasses all time (and is above time), and that everything other than Him is something that came into being after not being.

Muslim narrated in his Saheeh (2713) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to say:

“Allaahumma Rabb al-samawaati wa’l-ard wa Rabb al-‘arsh il-‘azeem, Rabbaanaa wa Rabba kulli shay’in, Faaliq al-habb wa’l-nawa wa munzil al-Tawraati wa’l-Injeeli wa’l-Furqaan, a’oodhu bika min sharri kulli shay’in anta aakhidhun bi naasiyatihi. Allaahumma anta al-awwal fa laysa qablaka shay’un, wa anta al-aakhir fa laysa ba’daka shay’un, wa anta al-zaahir fa laysa fawqaka shay’un wa anta al-baatin fa laysa doonaka shay’un. Iqdi ‘annaa al-dayna wa aghninaa min al-faqri (O Allaah, Lord of the seven heavens and the exalted Throne, our Lord and Lord of all things, splitter of the seed and the date-stone, Revealer of the Tawraat and the Injeel and the Furqaan [Qur’aan], I seek refuge in You from the evil of all things You shall seize by the forelock [have total mastery over]. O Allaah, You are the First so there is nothing before You, and You are the Last so there is nothing after You. You are al-Zaahir [the greatest and highest] so there is nothing above You, and You are al-Baatin [aware of the subtlest secrets] so there is nothing closer than You. Settle our debt for us and spare us from poverty).”

Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“He is the First [al-Awwal](nothing is before Him) and the Last (nothing is after Him), the Most High (nothing is above Him) and the Most Near (nothing is nearer than Him)”

[al-Hadeed 57:3].

Al-Awwal (the First) means that there is nothing before Him, because if there were anything before Him, Allah would be something created, but He, may He be glorified and exalted, is the Creator. Hence the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) explained the name al-Awwal as meaning the One before Whom there was nothing; all that exists came after Allah, may He be glorified and exalted; there is nothing with Allah and nothing before Allah. End quote.

Liqa’ al-Baab al-Maftooh (208/4)

And Allah knows best.