

Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem

Surah Al-Ikhlaas The Chapter of Purity (or Unity)

Chapter 112 of the Qur'an

This Surah was revealed in Mecca. It has four verses.

Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem

*Qul Hu Wallaahu Ahad
Allaahu Samad
Lam Yalid wa lam yoolad
Walam Yakul-lahoo kufu-wan Ahad*

Say: He is Allah, the One
Allah, the Independent
He begets not, nor is He begotten
And there is none like Him

(Mir Ahmad Ali's translation)

Circumstances of revelation:

According to one tradition, the Quresh of Mecca asked the Prophet of Islam (p) to describe Allah. Another tradition says that the Christian delegation from Najrain asked the Prophet to describe Allah. As a result, Allah sent Angel Gabriel with Surah Al-Ikhlaas.

According to another tradition, Jewish scholars of Medina, Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf and Huyayy ibn Akhtab, reported to have asked the Prophet (P), "O' Muhammad, describe your Lord to us, that we may believe in you, for God has revealed the description of Himself in the Torah, so speak to us about Him. Of all things, what is He composed of, and of what nature is He? Is He of gold or copper, iron or silver? Does He eat or drink? From whom did He inherit the earth and to whom shall He bequeath it?"

The Prophet responded by reciting to them Surah Al-Ikhlaas. (Surah was previously revealed in Mecca)

(Ref: The book, "One God, the everlasting refuge" by Ahmad Zaki Hammad)

Merits and Excellence of Surah Al-Ikhlaas:

- Reciting this Surah is equal to reciting one-third of the Qur'an. According to the explanations of our Prophet and Imams, one-third of the Qur'an is dedicated to explaining and expounding the belief in the Oneness of Allah and His attributes. Because Surah Al-Ikhlaas so beautifully and concisely sums up these beliefs in these four simple verses, it therefore contains within it the wisdom and truth equivalent to one-third of the entire Qur'an. For this reason, we are taught that reciting Surah Al-Ikhlaas three times is equivalent to the merits of reciting the entire Qur'an.
- According to a tradition from Imam Jafar as-Sadiq (A.S.), Prophet Muhammad (p) led the funeral prayers of Sa'ad bin Muadh. He informed the people that 70,000 angels, including Angel Gabriel, also prayed Salaat for him. When asked what good acts of the deceased caused him to receive such blessings, he replied that Sa'ad bin Muadh recited Surah Al-Ikhlaas often, while sitting, standing, lying down, and walking.
- It is related by the Prophet (P) that if during one night and day (24 hours), a person does not recite Surah Al-Ikhlaas in any of his obligatory prayers, then Allah says, "My servant, you are not counted among those who are worshippers."

- It is related by Imam Ali bin Husain (S.A.) that Allah revealed this Surah and the first few verses of Surah Al-Hadid for the people of later times who would strive to learn more about Tawheed (Unity of Allah).

(The above hadith and statements are from *Tafseer-e-Namoona* of Nasir Makaram Shirazi, who quoted from the book *Majma-ul-Bayaan*)

Benefits and Protocols of reciting Surah Al-Ikhlaas:

- Reciting Surah Al-Ikhlal three times earns the rewards of reciting the whole Qur'an (see above).
- Whoever recites this Surah in an obligatory salaah, Allah grants him the good of this world and the good of the hereafter, and forgives his parents and children.
- For the benefits of reciting this Surah frequently, while sitting, standing, walking, and lying down, refer to the hadith mentioned above.
- In Salaah, Surahs Al-Ikhlaas and Kafiroon may be substituted for other Surahs, but other Surahs cannot be substituted for these two, i.e., once one starts reciting either of these two Surahs in the Salaah, they should not be interrupted or replaced, but always completed.
- This Surah is not to be recited in a single breath.
- Imam Ali used to recite this Surah in every Salaah. The Prophet (p) said, "O Ali, Surah Al-Ikhlaas is your favorite and beloved Surah, because you are favorite and beloved of Allah."
- Allah loves those people who recite this Surah regularly.
- This Surah is a fortress for protection from every kind of affliction and calamity.

(The above are taken from the Qur'anic commentary by Aqa Mirza Mahdi Puya & S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali, page 1406, published by Peer Mohammad Ibrahim trust, Karachi, Pakistan.)

Meaning and Explanation of key phrases and words in Surah Al-Ikhlaas:

Ahad. This word means one, but not in a numerical sense. It signifies the absolute Oneness of Allah. He is indivisible, unique, having no parts, and there is no "second or third." This concept of Oneness of Allah, or Tawheed, is the foundation of the faith of Islam, and it is unique among all religions. Ahad is different from Wahid, which means "one" as a numerical indicator.

Samad. In Penrice's Qur'anic dictionary, the word Samadun means "a Lord to whom reference is made in the matters of importance." As an adjective, it means, "Everlasting, Sublime."

According to Imam Ali bin Husain (p), Samad means, "the Supreme Being, who is everlasting, who depends on no one and everyone depends on Him. He is eternally besought of all. He cannot be defined or described."

Perhaps the best single word that can be used, if only one word must be used, is "independent," for this word signifies that Allah, and only Allah, is the one who depends upon nothing. All other things in the universe, being creation and not Creator, are dependent upon the Creator for their existence and continuance. Allah alone is independent of all. He is free of any and all needs, whereas everything in creation has definite needs.

Samad as interpreted by various translators of the Qur'an:

- Pickthall: "*The eternally besought by all*"
- Yusufali: "*The eternal, absolute*"
- M.H. Shakir: "*On whom all depend*"
- Aqa Puya: "*The independent*"
- Thomas Cleary: "The ultimate" (also explains as "eternal or everlasting")
- Turkish translators: *The eternally besought of all*"
- N.J. Dawood: "*The eternal*"
- Lebanese scholars: "*The eternal*"

It may be noted here that most of the interpreters have used the word "eternal," alone or in combination.

Imam Husain bin Ali (p) is reported to have said that the word Samad has the following meanings:

1. One who is eternal and everlasting;
2. One who is solid and not hollow. (Here, the commentator explains that all matter consists of atoms, made up of electrons and protons, which have spaces between them, they are not solid, and can be compressed into denser mass); whereas, the Creator is unlike any created matter.
3. One who does not eat or drink;
4. One who never sleeps; and,
5. One who does not change in any manner.

It is related that the people of Basra asked Imam Husain bin Ali (p) to explain to them what Samad means. He is reported to have said that Allah has explained Samad in Surah Al-Ikhlaas by saying, "*He begetteth not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him.*" (Source: Tafseer-e-Namoona, quoted from Majma-ul-Bayaan)

Muhammad bin Hanafia asked Imam Ali (p) to explain As-Samad. He replied in his characteristic eloquence and scholarly knowledge as follows:

- He has neither name nor body, there is nothing to compare Him with, nor is there an example to give.
- He has neither form nor limits.
- He has no place of rest, no structure (house), nor any condition or state.
- He is neither this nor that, neither here nor there, neither full nor empty, neither sitting nor standing, neither moving nor still, neither darkness nor light.
- He is not an individual (needing a soul).
- No place is empty of Him and nothing can contain Him.
- He possesses neither color nor smell.
- His Being is above all things.

Proofs of Tawheed (Oneness of God):

1. Evidence in favor of His pure existence. Allah's existence is free of any limitations or restrictions. He is self-existed. He is uncreated and all-encompassing. There cannot be two beings with the above description. In such case, they would either be competing with each other, or they may have variation in their attributes. This will cause each one to have some limitations in relation to the other. Thus each one will not be fully free of limitations.
2. Evidence based upon knowledge. The vast universe seems to have a variety of apparently unrelated things, like the Sun, the Moon, the stars, animals, plants, etc. On taking a closer look, the creation reveals a definite order, balance, and organization, and each aspect of the creation seems to be in harmony with the rest. This leads one to believe in the existence of Laws that govern them. Thus, the whole universe is governed by a system. This order and balance in a perfect system points to the fact that their Creator is one.
3. Evidence based upon reason and logic. The following Qur'anic statement is worth noting in reaching a logical conclusion as to Oneness of Allah:

"If there had been in them any gods except Allah, they would both certainly have been in a state of disorder; therefore, glory be to Allah, the Lord of the dominion, about what they attribute (to Him)." Surah 21, verse 22.
4. All Prophets invited humankind to worship one God. If there were more than one god, then different Prophets would have invited humankind to different gods.

Different aspects of Tawheed (Oneness of God):

1. Oneness of His Being. As discussed above, God is one with no partner, no associate, and He is absolute in power.
2. Oneness of the working and the movement of created things. This may be sub-divided into the following:
 - a) Oneness of the source of creation. Only one creator is responsible for all creation.
 - b) Oneness of Lordship. He is the only Lord, Cherisher, and Sustainer. He is the sovereign owner of everything in the universe.
 - c) Oneness of the Law-giver. He is the only Law-giver and He alone is responsible for issuing decrees. He gives properties to all things and He is fully capable of accomplishing this.
 - d) Oneness of rulership. He is the absolute ruler over the creation.
 - e) Oneness in commanding submission. Only Allah deserves to receive total and complete submission from His subjects.

In summary, the proofs of Tawheed are all around us, in the perfect movements of the Sun and moon, the orderly change of the seasons, the blossoming of flowers at their appointed times, the radiantly colorful tail-feathers of the peacock, the well-organized colonies of ants, the reproduction of new life in the womb of the mother, etc. This order and organization in the heavens and the earth is proof of Oneness (Tawheed) of the Creator.

Let us pray to God Almighty, that He keep us firmly on the path of Tawheed (belief in His Oneness).
Aameen.

Reference: Tafseer-e-Namoonah (Qur'anic Tafseer) of Sheikh Makaram Shirazi

Moderator: Syed H. Akhtar
Qur'an Discussion group
Austin, Texas
November 20, 2008