

# Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ①

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ② لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ③

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ④

## سُورَةُ الْإِخْلَاصِ (112) SŪRAH AL-İKHLĀŞ

While *Al-Ikhlāş* is among the shortest sūrahs of the Qur'ān, it is one of the most eloquent and profound in meaning. All the verses of this sūrah complement one another and follow a logical order. *Ikhlāş* means purification – the purification of faith. It completely eliminates pagan concepts and doctrines as well as false attributes that the ignorant have attributed to Allah, the Exalted. The sūrah declares that there is no true deity other than Allah, and hence, that He alone has the right to be worshipped without any intercessor or associate. The reason for that is stated in the Qur'ān:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ.

*That is because Allah is the True Reality, and that which they invoke besides Him is falsehood; and because Allah is the Most High, the Most Great.*<sup>1</sup>

This sūrah has been known by several other names, among them:

- *At-Tawḥeed* – the surah which states that Allah is one
- *At-Tafreedh* – the sūrah stating that Allah is unique, with none comparable to Him
- *At-Tajreed* – the sūrah which removes all false concepts about Allah
- *Al-Asās* – the sūrah which is the foundation, essence, or core of Allah's message to mankind

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) often used to recite *Sūrah al-Kāfirūn* in the first rak'ah and *Sūrah al-Ikhlāş* in the second rak'ah of the sunnah prayers of fajr and maghrib, as well as in the sunnah prayer following ṭawāf of the Ka'bah. Each of these two sūrahs deals with *tawḥeed* from a specific perspective.

*Al-Ikhlāş* was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) during the early days of his prophethood. Ubayy bin Ka'b related that the idol worshippers had said to him, "O Muḥammad, tell us the lineage of your Lord." They were inquiring about the origin of Allah, from where He came or from what substance He was made, assuming He was something similar to the stone, wood and clay of their idols. So Allah revealed, "Say: 'He is Allah, [who is] One; Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.'"<sup>2</sup>

Anas reported: "A man from the Anṣār used to lead the people in prayer at Masjid Qubā'. He would always begin his recitation of the Qur'ān by reciting *Sūrah al-Ikhlāş* and then follow it with another sūrah. His companions told him, "You should either recite the sūrah alone or leave it and recite another sūrah instead." The man said, "I will not leave it. I would rather give up leading the prayer if you prefer." The people did not approve that another take his place as imām. When the matter was brought before the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), he asked, "What prevents you from conceding to what your companions want? What makes you recite this sūrah in every rak'ah?" The man replied, "[Because] indeed, I love it." The Prophet said, "Your love for it will let you enter Paradise."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22:62.

<sup>2</sup> Aḥmad.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

Mu'adh bin Anas reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "If someone recites, 'Say, He is Allah, [who is] One' [i.e., Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ] ten times, Allah will build for him a palace in Paradise."<sup>4</sup>

And Buraydah bin al-Ḥusayb reported that a man was supplicating, "O Allah, I ask You by [affirming] that You are Allah, there is no god but You, *al-Aḥad, aṣ-Ṣamad*, who neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent." When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) heard it, he said, "By Him in whose hand is my soul, this man has invoked Allah with His greatest name, with which when one supplicates the supplication will be accepted, and when one asks by it, it will be granted."<sup>5</sup>

Abū Sa'eed al-Khudri reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said about Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ, "By Him in whose hand is my soul, this sūrah is equal to one-third of the Qur'ān." And in another narration he said to his companions, "Is it difficult for any of you to recite one-third of the Qur'ān in one night?" This was difficult for them, so they said, "Who among us has the ability to do so, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Say, He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge" [Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ] is equal to one-third of the Qur'ān."<sup>6</sup>

*Al-Ikhlāṣ* was described as being equal to a third of the Qur'ān as an indication of its importance and inherent excellence. But additionally, as Ibn 'Abbās pointed out, "The Qur'ān addresses three matters:

1. Those commands and prohibitions which comprise the law and practical living – These form the subject matter of the sciences of fiqh and ethics.
2. Stories of the prophets and messengers of Allah and their peoples – The punishments and disasters which befell those who resisted and denied the messengers of Allah with their promises, rewards, warnings and punishments.
3. The science of *tawḥeed* and matters relating to the names and attributes of Allah

Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ contains the third matter and a general explanation of it – thus, it is considered equal to one third of the Qur'ān."



---

<sup>4</sup> Aḥmad.

<sup>5</sup> At-Tirmidhi, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah.

<sup>6</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

**Āyah 1. قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,**

This verse refutes all polytheistic beliefs and negates partnership with Allah in every sense. It basically states that all power and capability belongs exclusively to Him and nothing else, unlike what pagans believe. It states the Lord's uniqueness in His perfection, magnificence and majesty.

The word, *qul* (say) is an integral part of the message which was conveyed to the Prophet (ﷺ). In answer to questions posed to him concerning the essence and nature of Allah, he was commanded to "say" the words which follow in this sūrah. Hence, the entire sūrah is also an instruction to believers about how to define their Lord.

*Aḥad* means alone, without another, having absolute and permanent unity and distinct from all else. Allah is the one and only true deity, unique in His essence, attributes and deeds. And He is unique in that His unity is indivisible.

The word *aḥad* expresses an uncountable oneness with no second following it. It is neither one in a series nor can it be added to or divided into fractions or components. It stands for a singular, unique entity, free from every kind of plurality. In Arabic grammatical usage, it is the form of "one" used to distinguish an individual from all others.

Consequently, the divine name *al-Aḥad* it is more emphatic and exclusive in its meaning than the name *al-Wāḥid*. It refers specifically to Allah's essence, conveying that He is absolutely singular in His essence and unique in His attributes. No one is like Him in any way. As He has stated elsewhere in the Qur'ān:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ.

*There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Seeing, the Hearing.*<sup>7</sup>

**Āyah 2. اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ Allah, the Eternal Refuge.**

Allah's names *al-Aḥad* and *aṣ-Ṣamad* do not appear in any other sūrah. *Aṣ-Ṣamad* has many facets of meaning. The āyah indicates that Allah is the Lord who controls and disposes of all affairs, who is immortal, absolute, perfect, complete, self-sufficient and sufficient to meet the needs of all creation; the one eternally and constantly required and sought, depended upon by all existence and to whom all matters will ultimately return. He is the refuge sought out by those in need while He has no need.

He sustains and is not sustained. Everything turns to Him, consciously or unconsciously, for its survival and fulfillment of needs. Allah is unique in His self-subsistence and self-sufficiency. In contrast, all created beings have needs and are dependent on others to fulfill their needs. The Creator is not in need of any of His creation in any way, because nothing they can do will improve or benefit His already perfect state. None is equal to Him and none is similar to Him. His sovereignty prevails over the entire universe and He is supreme in every sense.

---

<sup>7</sup> Sūrah al-Shūrā, 42:11.

Allah's attribute of self-sufficiency induces believers to reflect on the purpose and goals of their worship. Their Lord did not create man to enrich Him or empower Him, but merely to worship Him. As He said:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ. مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُونِ.

*I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me.*<sup>8</sup>

### Āyah 3. لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ He neither begets nor is born,

Another aspect of tawḥeed is contained in the words: "*He neither begets nor is born.*" This means that nothing emerged from Him nor did He emerge from anything else.<sup>9</sup> So the āyah expresses a fundamental aspect of Allah's perfection and negates any parallel, resemblance or likeness associated with kinship. An additional interpretation is that it is not befitting to attribute offspring to Allah as this view would reduce Him to the status of His creatures or imply similarity. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*There is no one more patient with abuse he hears than Allah. They attribute to Him a son, while He gives them provision and wellbeing.*"<sup>10</sup>

And in the words of the Qur'ān:

بَدِيعُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةً وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.

*[He is] Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He does not have a companion, and He created all things? And He is of all things Knowing.*<sup>11</sup>

Allah's perfection and self-subsistence are unknown to human experience and exceed the limits of human imagination. Commentators have pointed out that often people have children out of a need for support in life or a wish for continued existence through their progeny. By describing Himself as *aṣ-Ṣamad*, Allah has already refuted this possibility. It has been said that this āyah is in fact an explanation of the divine name, *aṣ-Ṣamad*.

On the other hand, for Allah to have been born would mean that He previously did not exist, and this contradicts His unique attribute of eternity. So the āyah affirms that He has always existed and was not brought into existence through a biological or chemical process at some point in time. And He will never die or cease to exist. The pagan Arabs understood this matter well. Nothing is born except that it dies, and nothing dies except that its legacy is inherited by others. Allah does not die, so none can inherit His divinity.

---

<sup>8</sup> Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, 51:56-57.

<sup>9</sup> Allah does not beget or give birth; He has no son, as claimed by some of the Christians, and no daughters, as the pagan Arabs believed, because offspring are produced from the bodies of their parents and are similar to them in form and features while nothing is similar to Allah. The verse also refutes the notion that Prophet Jesus (ﷺ) could have been God, because he was born into this world.

<sup>10</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>11</sup> Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:101.



**Āyah 4. وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ Nor is there to Him any equivalent."**

Moreover, nothing is comparable to Allah in any way. This verse makes it clear that Allah is separate and distinct from His creation. And it refutes the claims that Allah manifests Himself in His creation, or in some of His creation, or that Allah becomes one with His creation or with some of His creation, or that the Creator and creation are the same.

The sūrah ends with a reaffirmation of the opening verse. While every creation has a counterpart or parallel, Allah is unique, so nothing can be equal to Him. This is implied in the statement of his being *al-Aḥad*, but it is restated to emphasize and elaborate upon that fact.

The word *kufuw* means a similar thing, one equal in status and position, something comparable, a likeness or an example. It may also be a rival or opponent who is equal in rank or similar in skill. Allah declares that He has no equivalent in His uniqueness. There is no similarity whatsoever between the Creator and His creation in essence, in attributes or in what He does. Once again, it is as He said:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ

*There is nothing like unto Him.*<sup>12</sup>

Because man cannot compare Allah with anything in his own experience, he is commanded:

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ

*Do not assert similarities to Allah.*<sup>13</sup>

So the Creator cannot be understood according to the terms of material existence. The human mind is itself among Allah's creations and subject to the limitations of its created nature. Any similarity between His attributes and those of mankind is in name only and not in essence. The attributes of Allah must be understood in the absolute sense, free from any human deficiency or imperfection.

أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

*Then, is He who creates like he who does not create? Do you not reflect?*<sup>14</sup>

The scholars have defined correct belief as acceptance of what the Qur'ān and Sunnah have described about Allah, without assuming that His attributes resemble those of creation, and without applying to them allegorical meanings or attempting to explain how a certain attribute or quality might be, because that knowledge belongs to Him alone.

The Creator is not bound by the physical laws which He created for this material universe. His existence was not preceded by nonexistence, nor will it ever come to an end. And because He is superior to all His creations, there can never be anything resembling Him. Therefore, He alone is worthy to be worshipped by His creatures.

---

<sup>12</sup> Sūrah ash-Shūrā, 42:11.

<sup>13</sup> Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:74.

<sup>14</sup> Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:17.