

Does Islam teach that Allaah has only 99 Names?

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Does Islam teach that Allaah has only 99 Names?

Based on the works of Shaykh Saalih al Fawzaan (حفظه الله)

Compiled by Abu Abdirrahmaan Nasser ibn Najam

Checked by Aboo Talhah Daawood Burbank (رَحْمَةُ اللهِ)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

QUESTION: Does Islam teach that Allaah has only 99 Names?

ANSWER:

This is a misconception which is held by very many Muslims, principally because of one particular hadeeth (statement of Muhammad (peace be upon him)) in which he said:

Allaah has 99 Names, whoever correctly preserves them and acts in accordance with them will enter Paradise.

(Hadeeth found in the collections of two scholars of hadeeth in the past called Bukhaaree and Muslim).

However this does not mean that Allaah only has 99 Names.

Carefully looking at the hadeeth shows that of Allaah's Names, there are 99 which, if correctly preserved and acted upon by a person, will take a person to Paradise.

This is similar to the situation where a man says: I have a hundred dollars, I will give them to charity.

This does not necessarily mean that the man only has 100 dollars in the whole world to his name. Rather he might have 20,000 dollars in his account - but he has specified 100 of them that he will give away.

The Islamic belief that Allaah has more than 99 Names is confirmed by another hadeeth. Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to make a supplication to Allaah which included the following words:

"I ask You by every Name that You have, that You named Yourself with, or that You revealed in Your Book, or that You taught one of Your Creation, or that You kept with Yourself as knowledge of the Unseen..."

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(Hadeeth found in the collections of three famous scholars of hadeeth called Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, and al Hakim)

If you look at the last phrase of the supplication quoted here, it makes clear that there are some Names which Allaah has chosen not to reveal to His Creation, and which instead He has, from His Tremendous Wisdom, kept with Himself.

There is however a hadeeth in which Muhammad (peace be upon him) specified and named all the 99 Names.

However this hadeeth is not authentic.

This means that the scholars of hadeeth have examined the text of the hadeeth and its chain of narration going all the way back to Muhammad (peace be upon him) and found that there is something in either of these two aspects of the hadeeth which mean that it cannot be reliably attributed back to Muhammad (peace be upon him) – i.e. there is no proof that he actually said it.

Therefore Muslims do not use or act upon this hadeeth.

QUESTION: What are some examples of the Attributes of Allaah which have been mentioned in the Book or in the Sunnah?

ANSWER:

There are indeed many, many Attributes which are mentioned in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah but we will mention a few here.

Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Seeing, Mercy, Honour, Wisdom, Loftiness, Greatness, etc.

All of these can be found in the Qur'aan or the Sunnah or both.