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Tawheed (Monotheism) the core of Islam

There are two fundamental beliefs in the religion of Islam. The first is *tawheed*, which is belief in and worship of One God (Allah), the Creator.

The second is belief that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is a Prophet who received guidance and revelation from Allah.

Although the basic beliefs of Muslims include belief in other prophets, the revealed books of God, the angels and jinn, heaven and hell, the day of judgment, and divine decree, it is *tawheed* which is at the core of Islam.

Definition of *Tawheed* (*Tawheed*) The Arabic word *tawheed* means "unification" or "asserting oneness." In Islam, *tawheed* refers to the divine oneness and uniqueness of Allah (God). Muslims refer to God as *Allah* because it is what the Creator calls Himself in the Holy Qur'an. The name *Allah* is not used exclusively by Muslims, however. Jews and Christians in the Arab speaking world also refer to God as *Allah*.

Types of *Tawheed* Although "monotheism" may be one way to describe *tawheed*, the Islamic concept of "One God" can be understood on different levels. Muslim scholars frequently divide *tawheed* into three categories or degrees:

1. Belief in Allah's Divine Lordship (*Tawheed Ruboobiyyah*) Muslims acknowledge that Allah is the Creator, and He is the only One capable of giving life or taking it. All things are subject to Allah's Will.

In the Qur'an, Allah tells us: "Allah created all things and He is the agent on

which all things depend." (Az-Zumar 39:62); and, "Allah created you and whatever you do." (As-Saffat 37:96)

Understanding that Allah is the only Supreme Being means denying the existence of any other god. Allah has no partners. Qur'an strongly rejects any concept of partners of any form to Allah.

2. Belief in Allah's Divine Nature (*Tawheed Uloohiyyah*) Since Allah is the only God, only He is worthy of worship. In Islam, there is no such thing as an intercessor or intermediary. Each Muslim develops his or her own personal relationship with Allah by praying directly to Him and through other acts of worship such as giving to charity, reading the Holy Qur'an, and making *hajj*. Worship should be accompanied by full submission and obedience to Allah.

3. Belief in the Names and Attributes of Allah (*Tawheed Al-Asma' wa Sifaat*) Allah is only one way that God refers to Himself. In total, 99 names of Allah describing His divine attributes can be found in the Holy Qur'an and *hadeeth*. Some examples of these names are:

Ar-Rahim (the Most Merciful);

Al-Ghafoor (the All-Forgiving);

Al-Khaliq (the Creator);

Al Kareem (the Bountiful or the Generous);

Al Wahid (the One or the Unique);

Al-Hamid (the All Praiseworthy).

Allah is unique in being called by these attributes. Allah states in the Qur'an: "There is nothing like Him." (Ash-Shura 42:11); and, "And never has there been anyone coequal with Him." (Al-Ikhlaf 112:4).

***Shirk* – Associating Partners with Allah** The greatest sin in Islam is to engage in practices which contradict or compromise *tawheed*. This direct or indirect association of partners with Allah is referred to as *shirk*. *Shirk* can take many forms. Praying to idols, praying to saints or prophets, practicing magic, fortune telling, believing in superstitions, and believing that amulets protect one from harm are all examples of actions which contradict the Oneness of Allah.

Signs of *Tawheed*: The entire universe, in the way it is created and the way it is controlled, bears witness to the oneness of Allah: "Surely, His is the creation and commandment. Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the 'Aalameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists)! [al-A'raaf 7:54]"

The creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of night and day, the different kinds of inanimate objects, plants and fruits, the creation of humans and animals... all of that indicates that the Almighty Creator is One with no partner or associate:

"That is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things, Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He). How then are you turning away (from Allah, by worshipping others instead of Him)? [Ghaafir 40:62 – interpretation of the meaning]"

The variety and greatness of these created things, the perfect way in which they are formed, the way in which they are maintained and controlled, all indicate that the Creator is One and that He does as He wills and rules and decides as He wants: "Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the Wakeel (Trustee, Disposer of affairs, Guardian) over all things" [al-Zumar 39:62]

All of the above indicate that this universe has a Creator, that this dominion has a Sovereign, that behind these forms is One Who gives them shape: "He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the Best Names" [al-Hashr 59:24]

The soundness of the heavens and the earth, the order of the universe, the harmony among created things, all indicate that the Creator is One, with no partner or associate: "Had there been therein (in the heavens and the earth) aalihah (gods) besides Allah, then verily, both would have been ruined. Glorified be Allah, the Lord of the Throne, (High is He) above all that (evil) they associate with Him!" [al-Anbiya' 21:22]

These great created things either created themselves – which is impossible – or man created himself then created them – which is also impossible: "Were they created by nothing? Or were they themselves the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Nay, but they have no firm Belief" [al-Toor 52:35-36]

Reason, revelation and the original state of man (fitrah) all indicate that this universe has One Who brought into being, that these created things have a Creator Who is Ever-Living and Eternal, All-Knowing and All-Aware, Powerful and Almighty, Kind and Most Merciful. He has the Most Beautiful Names and Sublime Attributes and He knows all things. Nothing is beyond His control, and there is nothing like unto Him: "And your Ilaah (God) is One Ilaah (God — Allah), Laa ilaaha illa Huwa (there is none who has the right to be worshipped but He), the Most

Gracious, the Most Merciful [al-Baqarah 2:163]

The existence of Allah is something that is there is no excuse for not knowing. It is the matter of common sense: "Their Messengers said: What! Can there be a doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?" [Ibrahim 14:10]

Allah has created people with the natural instinct (fitrah) to affirm His Lordship and Oneness, but the shayaateen (devils) came to the sons of Adam and caused them to deviate from their religion. According to a hadeeth qudsi, "I created all My slaves as haneefs (monotheists), but the shayaateen (devils) came to them and made them deviate from their religion, and they forbade them that which I had permitted to them." (Narrated by Muslim)

Among them are those who deny the existence of Allah, and those who worship the Shaytaan, and those who worship man. And there are those who worship the dinar [money], or fire, or genital organs, or animals. And there are some who associate in worship with Him a stone from the earth or a star in the sky.

These things which are worshipped instead of Allah, cannot create or provide; they cannot hear or see, or bring benefits or cause harm. So how can they worship them instead of Allah? "Are many different lords (gods) better or Allah, the One, the Irresistible?" [Yusuf 12:39]

Allah has condemned those who worship these idols which cannot hear, see or think: "Verily, those whom you call upon besides Allah are slaves like you. So call upon them and let them answer you if you are truthful. Have they feet wherewith they walk? Or have they hands wherewith they hold? Or have they eyes wherewith they see? Or have they ears wherewith they hear?" [al-A'raaf 7:194-195]

"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): 'How do you worship besides Allah something which has no power either to

harm or benefit you? But it is Allah Who is the All-Hearer, All-Knower" [al-Maa'idah 5:76]

How ignorant man is of his Lord Who created him and provides for him. How he rejects Him and forgets Him, and worships others instead of Him: "Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind" [al-Hajj 22:46]

Glorified be Allah far above that which they associate with Him. Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds: "Say (O Muhammad): Praise and thanks be to Allah, and peace be on His slaves whom He has chosen (for His Message)! Is Allah better, or (all) that you ascribe as partners (to Him)?" (Of course, Allah is Better).

Is not He (better than your gods) Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water (rain) from the sky, whereby We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of their trees. Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who has made the earth as a fixed abode, and has placed rivers in its midst, and has placed firm mountains therein, and has set a barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet water)? Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? Nay, but most of them know not!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who responds to the distressed one, when he calls on Him, and Who removes the evil, and makes you inheritors of the earth, generations after generations? Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? Little is that you remember!

Is not He (better than your gods) Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain)? Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? High Exalted be Allah above all that they associate as partners (to Him)!

Is not He (better than your so-called gods) Who originates creation, and shall thereafter repeat it, and Who provides for you from heaven and earth? Is there any ilaah (god) with Allah? Say: ‘Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful’ [al-Naml 27:59-64]

How can we achieve Tawheed or true belief in the Oneness of Allah?. It should be noted that achieving Tawheed or true belief in the Oneness of Allah can only be done by testifying truly that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

Achieving this is of two degrees, one that is obligatory and one that is mustahabb.

The obligatory degree is achieved by means of three things:

- 1) Giving up shirk (association of others with Allah) in all its forms, major, minor and concealed.
- 2) Giving up bid’ah (innovation) in all its forms.
- 3) Giving up sin in all its forms.

The mustahabb degree is that in which people may vary greatly, and it means not having anything in the heart of attachment to anything or anyone other than Allah, so the heart is focused entirely on Allah and pays no attention to anything or anyone else; he speaks only for the sake of Allah and his deeds and actions are all for Allah and all his thoughts are focused Allah, may He be glorified and exalted. Some scholars described this degree as: giving up something that is permissible so as to avoid something that is forbidden; that includes actions of the heart, tongue and physical faculties.

In order to achieve these two degrees, certain things are essential:

1 – Knowledge, otherwise how can one attain Tawheed or true belief in the Oneness of Allah and act upon it if he does not know of it or understand it?

Each accountable adult must learn about the Oneness of Allah that which will make his beliefs, words and deeds correct, then anything more than that is a bonus.

2 – Firm, certain and deeply-rooted belief in that which was narrated from Allah, may He be glorified and exalted and His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) of reports and words.

3 – Obedience to the commands of Allah and His Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by doing that which is enjoined, and avoiding that which is forbidden.

The more a person achieves these things, the stronger will be his Tawheed and the greater will be his reward. Our Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has explained to us that the one who attains the highest level of Tawheed is the one who is promised that he will be with the seventy thousand who will enter Paradise without being brought to account – we ask Allah of His bounty. In Saheeh al-Bukhaari and Saheeh Muslim it is narrated that Ibn ‘Abbaas (may Allah be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “The nations were shown to me and I saw a Prophet with a group of men, a Prophet with one or two men, and a Prophet with no one with him. Then a huge crowd was shown to me, and I thought that they were my ummah, but it was said to me, ‘This is Moosa and his people. But look at the horizon.’ I looked, and there was a huge crowd. Then it was said to me: ‘Look at the other horizon,’ and there was (another) huge crowd. It was said to me: ‘This is your ummah, and among them are seventy thousand who will enter Paradise without being called to account or punished.’”

Then he got up and went into his house, and the people started discussing those who would enter Paradise without being called to account or being punished. Some of them said: Perhaps

they are the ones who accompanied the Messenger of Allah (S). Some said: Perhaps they are those who were born in Islam and did not associate anything with Allah. And they mentioned several ideas. Then the Messenger of Allah (S) came out and said: “What are you discussing?” They told him, and he said: “They are the ones who did not perform ruqyah or ask others to do so, and did not believe in omens, and did not use cautery, and they put their trust in their Lord.”

‘Ukkaashah ibn Mihsan stood up and said: Pray to Allah to make me one of them. He said: “You will be one of them.” Another man stood up and said: Pray to Allah to make me one of them. He said: “ ‘Ukkaashah has beaten you to it.”

The phrase “did not perform ruqyah or ask others to do so” means that they did not ask others to perform ruqyah for them. Although asking someone to perform ruqyah is permissible, it is contrary to that which is better. The phrase “and did not believe in omens” means that they did not believe in omens based on birds or anything else about which people are superstitious and may give up something that they had decided to do because of these superstitions. Superstition is haram and is a form of minor shirk. The phrase “and did not use cautery” means that they did not cauterize with fire to treat sickness, even if it is proven to be of benefit, because the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) disliked it, and because no one can punish with fire but the Lord of the fire. The common thread in these three characteristics is that they “put their trust in their Lord”, i.e., they attained the highest degree of trust (tawakkul) and they did not pay the slightest attention to the means, and they did not depend on them, rather they depended on their Lord alone, may He be glorified.

Achieving true Tawheed or belief in the Oneness of Allah cannot be achieved by mere wishing or pretending, or by empty claims that have no real essence,

rather it is achieved by means of firm belief that is rooted in the heart, by achieving true ihsaan that is confirmed by a good attitude and righteous deeds. The Muslim must hasten to make the best of every moment of his life and hasten to do good deeds and acts of worship; he should ignore the hardship and enjoy the pain, for that which is with Allah is precious, for that which is with Allah is Paradise.

What does it mean to bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah? What it means to bear witness that there is no god except Allah is to deny that anyone other than Allah has the right to be worshipped, and to affirm that this is the right of Allah alone, with no partner or associate. Allah says :

“That is because Allah He is the Truth (the only True God of all that exists, Who has no partners or rivals with Him), and what they (the polytheists) invoke besides Him, it is Baatil (falsehood). And verily, Allah He is the Most High, the Most Great”[al-Hajj 22:62]

So the words laa ilaaha (there is no god) deny all things that are worshipped instead of Allah, and the words illa Allah (except Allah) affirm that all kinds of worship are for Allah alone. So what they mean is that there is none that is rightfully worshipped except Allah. Just as Allah has no partner in His dominion, so too He has no partner in His worship.

What it means to bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah is to believe firmly, from the depths of one's heart, and express it on one's lips, that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger to all of creation, mankind and the jinn alike.

That means believing what he has told us about events in the past, what he has told us about things that are yet to come, what he has permitted of halaal things, what he has forbidden of haram things; and it means obeying and following what he has commanded, and

giving up and avoiding what he has forbidden, following his laws, adhering to his Sunnah in secret and in the open, accepting and submitting to his judgments, and knowing that obedience to him is obedience to Allah, and disobedience to him is disobedience to Allah, because he is the one who conveyed the Message from Allah, and Allah did not cause him to die until He had perfected the religion, and he conveyed it clearly.

May Allah reward him on behalf of us with the best reward that was ever given to any Prophet on behalf of his people and any Messenger on behalf of his nation. A person can only enter Islam by uttering this twin testimony of faith; its two parts are intertwined and cannot be separated. For the conditions of testifying that there is no god but Allah are the same as the conditions of testifying that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

In summary Islamic terminology tawheed means to believe that Allah is the one and only true God, and He alone deserves to be worshipped. Tawheed is sometimes referred to as monotheism. However, in its purest sense in the Islamic definition is that no other entity can in any way have Allah's perfect attributes or be equivalent or even in competition with Him. All acts of worship that a person does should be directed to Allah or for Allah Alone. Tawheed is therefore the central concept upon which all of Islam rests. It is the core belief ('aqeedah) around which everything revolves. Indeed, it is the Islamic position regarding the belief in Allah that makes it unique among the world's religions.

Other religions claim to worship one God (monotheism), yet unlike the Islamic concept of God, they either attribute to men what befits only God or they attribute various weaknesses, faults and failings to Him that do not befit His Majesty and are instead more suited to His creation.

Question 1: I would like to become a Muslim. Is this possible? And if so, how can this happen. Is it essential to have witnesses in order to enter Islam

Answer 1: Any human being can embrace Islam. You do not need anyone's permission. You simply say and believe that there is No God except Allah and that Mohammad is his Messenger. Once you say this sentence, you automatically become Muslim. From there, you start carrying on with the duties of Islam. You must do what Allah and His messenger tell you to, and stay away from what they tell you to. Islam does not tell you to do anything unless it is good for you. It also does not tell you to stay away from anything unless it is bad for you. You will notice the change in the way you look at things, the minute you become a Muslim. You will feel more relieved and secure only to think that you are fulfilling the orders of Allah. Doing this, you will clearly see the benefits of it for yourself and for mankind. You can embrace Islam in front of Muslim brothers but if that is not possible you may do it by yourself. It is not essential for the one who wants to utter the twin testimony of faith (al-shahaadatayn) to have witnesses present. He may simply utter the words with his tongue, and that is sufficient for him to enter Islam. Just do it as soon as you feel that is for you and don't wait an instant as no one knows when death will strike us. Seek help from Allah to help you in practicing the religion. Allah will make it easy for you. Once you say and believe in the Oneness of Allah and in the message of his Prophet Mohammad, then you are a Muslim. To become a Muslim, simply say the following words with your tongue and heart: *Ashhadu alla ilaha illa Allah, wa ash hadu anna Mohammadan abduhu wa rasuluhu.* This means I testify and witness that there is no god worthy of being worshipped other than Allah and that Mohammad is his Messenger. You must say it and believe in it. May Allah help us all. Ameen.

Editorial

Assalamu Alakium
Dear Readers!
Spread the word of Islam to Muslims and Non-Muslims, gently and kindly.
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