

WHAT IS THE GREATEST OF ALL OBLIGATIONS IN ISLĀM?

—WORSHIPPING ALLĀH ALONE (TAWHĪD)

We are often asked, *“What is wrong with you people that you’re always talking about Tawhīd and making lengthy discussions regarding it? Why don’t you focus upon the state of the Muslims instead? Can’t you see how the Muslims are being oppressed around the world? Aren’t there more important things to talk about?”* In response, we say: Firstly, *Tawhīd* (monotheism) is to single out Allāh alone with worship, and it is the very foundation of Islām. So to give *Tawhīd* importance is to give the foundation of Islām its true importance. When people disregard *Tawhīd* and its true meaning, and oppose what it stands for, calamities befall them. If we were to ponder upon the Qur’ān and what it contains of guidance, we find that it clarifies *Tawhīd* completely—so much so that there is not a chapter in the Qur’ān except that it mentions something from the aspects of *Tawhīd*, and a clarification of that which opposes *Tawhīd*. So throughout the Qur’ān we find information related to the Names and Attributes of Allāh, or we find information related to the actions of Allāh and His Lordship, that He is the sole Creator, Sustainer, Provider and Controller of all of existence. In it we find the command of Allāh to worship Him alone, without associating partners with Him in worship. We also find verses warning of the great danger in associating partners with Allāh in worship (*shirk*) and the absolute forbiddence of directing worship to other than Him—and that is the greatest of all sins. Additionally, we find that Allāh commands with obedience to Him and His Messenger, Muhammad (ﷺ), and this is from the rights of *Tawhīd*. Allāh describes the rewards He has prepared for those who establish *Tawhīd*—that they are in eternal gardens of Paradise—and the punishment and torment He has prepared for those who reject *Tawhīd* and associate partners with Him in worship, that they are in the eternal Hellfire. So therefore the whole of the Qur’ān revolves around this fundamental issue of *Tawhīd*. Indeed if we look at the life of the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ), we will find that he spent thirteen years of his prophethood in Makkah and ten or so years in Madīnah. The period that he was in Makkah, he spent calling the people to the worship of Allāh and warning them from associating others in worship with Him. During this time there was no revelation obligating the *Zakāt* (obligatory charity), nor the fasting, nor the Hajj, nor the veiling, nor the prescribed punishments, nor the rest of the obligations and forbiddences and the affairs related to social interactions—rather these regulations were all revealed after the migration to Madīnah.

The notable exception being the Prayer (*Salāh*) which was made obligatory shortly before the Messenger’s migration from Makkah to Madīnah. So one can clearly see the great focus that Allāh and his Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) gave to the call to *Tawhīd* and the call to the abandonment of worship of all other gods. And the reason for this great emphasis upon *Tawhīd* is due to its great status in Islām. So once this *Tawhīd* was deeply rooted in the hearts of the believers, Allāh sent down the rest of the obligations such as *Zakāt*, fasting, Hajj and the Islamic dress code. And this was because none of these outer acts of worship are accepted by Allāh unless they are established upon *Tawhīd*. It was for this noble purpose of calling mankind to *Tawhīd* that Allāh sent the Messengers (ﷺ), and each of them began their call with *Tawhīd* just as Allāh has stated, **“Verily, we have sent among every nation a Messenger proclaiming: ‘Worship Allāh alone and keep away from the false deities.’”** (Qur’ān, An-Nahl: 36) and, **“We did not send a Messenger before you, O Muhammad, except that We inspired them to say that none has the right to be worshipped except Me, so worship Me.”** (Qur’ān, Al-Anbiyaa: 25). And every Prophet would say to his people, **“O my people, worship Allāh. You have nothing worthy of worship other than He.”** (Al-A’rāf: 59). And the same can be said about those who follow the way of the Prophets—they also give *Tawhīd* the importance that it deserves and they begin their call with it. Indeed the purpose of our creation is rooted in the worship of Allāh, as He stated in the Qur’ān, **“I did not create the Jinn and mankind except that they worship me.”** (Qur’ān, Adh-Dhariyāt: 56). So if one does not worship his Lord, or he worships others alongside Him, then he has violated *Tawhīd*, and committed the gravest sin in the sight of Allāh. There is huge misunderstanding amongst many Muslims and non-Muslims—they think that *Tawhīd* is merely to affirm and recognise the Lordship of Allāh, i.e. that He is the Creator, the Sustainer, Giver of life and death and the Controller of the Universe, and they claim that anyone who affirms this and recognises this, has submitted himself to Allāh and is a believing Muslim. This false notion of limiting *Tawhīd* (monotheism) only to the actions of Allāh is actively propagated by some Muslim sects. They do not recognise that the *Tawhīd* which Allāh requested from every one of His Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (ﷺ) was the *Tawhīd* of singling out Allāh alone with all worship. Even the idol-worshippers in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) affirmed that Allāh was the Creator, Sustainer, Giver of life and death, yet they directed worship to other than Him. So the mere affirmation and recognition of one Lord and Creator did not benefit them. Allāh, the Most High, stated in that regard, **“Say (O Prophet, to the idol-worshippers): Who**

provides for you from the sky and the earth? Who possesses the hearing and the sights and who gives life to the dead and who is it that gives death to the living and who controls the affairs? They will say it is Allāh. Then say to them, ‘Will you not fear!’” (Qur’ān, Yūnus: 31). So the point of dispute between the Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) and the worshippers of idols and graves was not due to their denial that Allāh was the Lord and Creator, but because they refused to direct their worship to Allāh or they would share their worship between Allāh and their idols and the inhabitants of the graves. So this point has been overlooked by many contemporary Islamic sects. Some Muslims in these times falsely claim that those who call upon the dead in their graves and seek rescue from them are not committing acts of polytheism because they do not believe that the dead created them or that they control the universe—and so long as they believe this, they do not regard their acts as being idolatrous. They claim that these things that they call upon alongside Allāh, whether it be Prophets, Saints, Pīrs, Angels and so on, are merely intermediaries and intercessors between them and Allāh. They claim in their writings and lectures, **“We only call upon the saints and the Prophets because they are mediators and intercessors between us and Allāh,”**—this was the very same claim of the idol-worshippers in the time of Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ). Allāh stated in the Qur’ān that the polytheists said about their idols, **“We do not worship them, except that they bring us closer to Allāh in rank..”** (Qur’ān, Az-Zumar: 3). And Allāh, the Most High, said regarding the polytheists, **“They worship others besides Allāh, those who cannot harm them nor benefit them, and they say, ‘They are our intercessors to Allāh.’”** (Qur’ān, Yūnus: 18). In these times we find Muslims falling into this most major of all sins, and they state, *“Our calling upon the inhabitants of the graves and our connection with the dead and seeking their aid and assistance is not polytheism, rather it is a means of nearness to Allāh and we only seek from them intercession, because they are Allāh’s beloved ones. So they are nothing more than mediators. And this is not Shirk (i.e. polytheism), since polytheism is to believe that there is another creator or sustainer besides Allāh.”* We must understand that this statement of theirs is the very statement of the polytheists of old as we stated in the Qur’anic verses above. Another doubt that we sometimes hear is, **“Just because we invoke the dead and seek assistance from them, does not mean we are worshipping them.”** Then this statement of theirs is in opposition to the texts. Allāh stated, **“And the places of prayer are for Allāh alone, so do not invoke anyone along with Allāh.”** (Qur’ān, Al-Jinn: 18), and He said, **“And whoever invokes along with Allāh any other deity has no proof for that. And his reckoning will be with His Lord. Indeed the unbelievers will**

never prosper.” (Qur’ān, Al-Mu’minūn: 117). So we are commanded to devote all acts of worship only to Allāh (تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى) and this is because He is the Creator, Sustainer, Giver of life and death, and He is the one who provides sustenance. Allāh stated, **“O mankind, single out your Lord with all worship, He who created you and all those that came before you, so that you may attain piety. He who has made the earth a resting place for you and has made the sky a canopy, and has sent down rain from the sky, and brought out with it crops and fruits from the earth as provisions for you. So do not set up rivals with Allāh in worship whilst you know all this.”** (Qur’ān, Al-Baqarah: 21-22). This verse appears very early on in the Qur’ān and contains the first direct command to mankind. And this command addresses the whole of mankind to worship their Lord and Creator alone without associating any partners with Him. This verse mentions some of the actions of Allāh —and these actions constitute His sole Lordship, and it is these actions of our Lord that establish the reason as to why we must worship Him alone, without any partners or associates. So we worship Him and seek His aid, rescue and refuge —we call upon Him alone, since those other deities that are called upon did not create us, nor do they sustain us, nor send down the rain or bring out the crops. So why should we call upon the Prophet for aid or intercession, when we can call upon the one who created him? Why call upon the pious inhabitants of the graves, or the Angels or the Jinn when we can call upon the one who created them? Indeed Allāh has commanded in the Qur’ān that we invoke none except Him, **“Your Lord says: Invoke Me and supplicate to Me and I will answer you. Indeed those who disdain to worship Me will enter the Hellfire in disgrace.”** (Qur’ān, Ghāfir: 60). Allāh states in yet another place, **“And from His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. So do not prostrate to the sun, nor to the moon, but prostrate to Allāh who created them, if you truly worship Him.”** (Qur’ān, Al-Fussilat: 37). This verse clarifies that the external actions of worship such as prostrating and bowing are the sole right of Allāh, and are not to be directed to the sun, moon, Angels, Prophets, graves or to one’s ancestors. The Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) specifically stated, **“Do not take my grave as a place of worship.”** (Reported by Bukhārī and Muslim). Worship in Islām encompasses all those affairs which Allāh is pleased with and loves, from speech and action, whether internal in the heart or external upon the tongue and limbs. So we are commanded to turn all our worship to Allāh. The Muslim, who is obligated to pray five times each day, states in every unit of his prayer, **“Only you (O Allāh) do we worship, and only your aid do we seek.”** (Qur’ān, Al-Fātihah: 5), and the Prophet himself stated, **“Du’ā (invocation) is worship.”** (Reported by Abu Dawūd in his *Sunan*). From worship also is to have complete trust and

reliance in Allāh, so Islām forbids reliance upon amulets and good-luck charms, superstitions and omens as all of these matters violate complete reliance and trust in Allāh. As Muslims we believe that Allāh is the controller of everything, and, **“No calamity befalls except with the permission of Allāh, and whosoever believes in Allāh, He guides his heart. And Allāh is the All-Knower of everything.”** (Qur’ān, At-Taghābun: 11). The wearing of amulets was forbidden by the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in his saying, **“Whoever wears a charm has committed Shirk.”** (Authentically reported by Ahmad in *Al-Musnad*). And it is reported that the Companion of Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), Hudhayfah (رضي الله عنه) saw a man wearing a string around his arm as a protection from fever, so he removed it and cut it up. (Reported by Ibn Abī Hātim in his *Tafsīr*). So from that which we have mentioned above, we see it is not permissible for us to violate any of the rights that solely belong to Allāh —for example, it is not permissible for anyone to claim knowledge of the unseen and the future, and the Knower of the unseen is only Allāh, so it is not permissible to go to the diviners and fortune-tellers or astrologers. The Prophet Muhammad stated, **“Whosoever visits a fortune teller and believes in what he says, then he has disbelieved in that which was revealed to Muhammad.”** (Authentically reported by Abu Dawūd). And this is this due to the statement of Allāh, **“With Him (i.e. Allāh) are the keys to the unseen and none knows the unseen except Him alone.”** (Qur’ān, Al-An’ām: 59) and, **“Verily, the knowledge of the Hour is with Allāh alone, He sends down the rain and knows that which is in the wombs. No person knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no person knows in which land he will die. Verily, Allāh is the All-Knower, All-Aware.”** (Qur’ān, Luqmān: 34).

—CONCLUSION

From this brief discussion, the reader can see why the Salafīs (i.e. *Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah*) place so much importance upon *Tawhīd* and give it the priority it deserves. *Tawhīd* (Islamic monotheism) is to direct all worship to Allāh alone and to abandon the worship of all things that are worshipped besides Him.

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“Verily, we have sent among every nation a Messenger proclaiming: ‘Worship Allāh alone and keep away from the false deities.’”

Qur’ān 16:36

التوحيد

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF TAWHID ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM

“The right of Allāh upon His servants is they worship Him alone and never associate anything in worship with Him.”

The Prophet Muhammad,
Bukhārī & Muslim.