

Belief in Allāh is one of the *arkān al ėmān*. Failure to believe in any of those *arkān*, takes you outside the fold of Islām. The single most important fact to know about Allāh is that He is ONE. Belief in the absolute unity of Allāh is known as *tawhīd*.

Tawhīd?

Yes. The core principle in Islām. It has three main branches. At it's essence, it involves acceptance of the following basic beliefs about Allāh:

1. He is the sole Creator of all that is in the heavens and the earth. He is the sole Cherisher and Sustainer of all creation. This is known as *tawhīd ar rubūbiyah*, Unity in the Lordship of Allāh;
2. There is no god but Him, the One, the Unique, without partners or associates, alone worthy of all true worship. This is known as *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*, Unity in the worship of Allāh;
3. He is understood and described by His Names and Attributes, as mentioned by Himself in the Qur'ān and by the Prophet, صلى الله عليه وسلم. There is nothing like Him. This is known as *tawhīd al asma wa as-sifāt*, Unity in the Names and Attributes of Allāh.



Is *tawhīd* mentioned in the Qur'ān?

The concept of *tawhīd* is referred to repeatedly in the Qur'ān, most famously in *Sūrah al Iklās*,

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say: He is Allāh, the One and Unique; Allāh, Who is in need of none and of Whom all are in need; He neither begot any nor was he begotten, and none is comparable to Him.

Sūrah al Iklās, 112:1-4

Was *tawhīd* preached by Muhammad? صلى الله عليه وسلم

Yes, it was the primary message preached by him, the aspect of Islām he emphasised the most. He devoted the first thirteen years of his prophethood and *da'wah* (inviting others to Islām) in helping people understand and adhere to *tawhīd*.

I see. And what about the prophets before him?

All the prophets of Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, without exception, emphasised that He is One and only One, without partners or associates. Here are just a few examples from Allāh's Book,

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said: "O my people, Worship Allāh; You have no deity other than Him. Indeed I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day"
Sūrah al A'rāf, 7:59

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Then We revealed to you (O Muhammad), "Follow the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth; and he was not of those who associate (gods) with Allāh."
Sūrah an Nahl, 16:123

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا

(Spoken by Moses) "Your god is only Allāh, except for whom there is no deity. He has encompassed all things in knowledge."
Sūrah Tā Hā, 20:98



It seems clear that *tawhīd* is a critical branch of knowledge in Islām.

Yes, it is an area that we should all study. The more you know about *tawhīd*, the better your understanding of Islām and of Allāh. Those words, (*rubūbiyah, ulūhiyah, asma wa as-sifāt*) may sound confusing, but in actual fact, the basic concepts are simple. We will discuss them here and in the next three chapters, so that your understanding of *tawhīd* is clear.



Okay then! Tell me about *tawhīd ar rubūbiyah*.

This is to believe that there is only one Lord of creation. It is the belief that Allāh alone created everything from nothing, and remains the sole Cherisher, Sustainer and Maintainer of all that creation.

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا

Does man not remember that We created him before, while he was nothing?
Sūrah Maryam, 19:67



What does the word '*rubūbiyah*' mean?

It is derived from the root word *Rabb*, a word used to describe Allāh. The word *rabb* is commonly translated as 'Lord'. Whilst this is an acceptable interpretation and one that is easy to understand, the feeling in Arabic surrounding this word is altogether much stronger.

Some translations more accurately describe *Rabb* as 'Sustainer', 'Cherisher', 'Maintainer' or 'Fosterer'. According to the classical scholar Ibn Kathīr, it is a word that describes a '*Power who Creates something and thereafter Maintains it in an extremely careful manner, allowing it to flourish and grow until it reaches its highest level of development*'. That is how Allāh takes care of His creation without weariness or fatigue.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلَّاقُ الْعَلِيمُ

Indeed, your Lord – He is the Knowing Creator.
Sūrah al-Hijr, 15:86



Is Allāh the *Rabb* of all human beings or just of Muslims?

Allāh alone is the Lord of us all. Whatever the divisions and disagreements amongst man about who created them, the fact is that Allāh created them all and continues to sustain them. It is irrelevant who a person 'thinks' is his *rabb*, their actual *Rabb* is Allāh. Whatever a person's religion, ideology or faith, Allāh is his or her Creator and Sustainer.



Is Allāh also the *Rabb* of animals and plants, stars and planets?

Yes. He is the *Rabb* of everything. Different things cannot have different Lords. The wonder of creation, and the sustenance of that creation, are not something that can be shared with 'other gods' or 'contracted-out'! *Tawhīd ar rubūbiyah* emphasises that there is only *One* Lord for all creation.

Allāh is the *Rabb* of every insect that crawls across the sand, every bird that wings its flight, every star that shines in the sky, every tree that blows in the breeze, and indeed, of that very breeze itself. Here are a few verses from the Qur'an,

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِّينَ وَالْجِسَابَ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ
اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

It is He who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light and determined for it phases – that you may know the number of years and account (of time). Allāh has not created this except in truth. He details the signs for people who know.

Sūrah Yunus, 10:5

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِنْ مَاءٍ ۗ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَىٰ بَطْنِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَىٰ رِجْلَيْنِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ يَمْشِي
عَلَىٰ أَرْبَعٍ ۗ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Allāh has created every (living) creature from water. And of them are those that move on their bellies, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. Allāh creates what He wills. Indeed Allāh is over all things competent.

Sūrah an Noor, 24:45

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِنَّ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

And We placed within the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shift with them, and We made therein (mountain) passes (as) roads that they might be guided. And We made the sky as a protected ceiling, but they, from, its signs¹, are turning away.

Sūrah al Anbiyā', 21:31,32

اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ فَتَنفِثُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ

It is Allāh who sends the winds, and they stir the clouds and spread them in the sky however He wills.

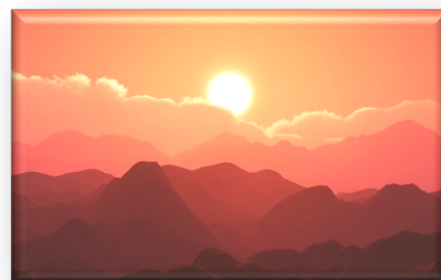
Sūrah ar Rūm, 30:48


يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلًّا يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى ۗ ذَلِكَ
اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْ قِطْمِيرٍ

¹ The signs present in the heavens.

He causes the night to enter the day and He causes the day to enter the night and has subjected the sun and the moon each running (its course) for a specified term. That is Allāh, your Lord; To Him belongs sovereignty. And those whom you invoke other than Him do not possess (as much as) the membrane of a date seed.

Sūrah Fātir, 35:13




 **So, Muslims believe that Allāh does all this alone?**


Yes, and how could it be otherwise? Imagine if there were separate gods, sharing in creation and in the continued maintenance of that creation? What do you think the consequences would be? Imagine if they disagreed over something? What would they do? Imagine, for example, that one god wanted to create something new and the other didn't. How would they settle their dispute?

 **By negotiation?**


Okay, but what if that failed?

 **Well I suppose they'd have to fight it out.**

Hmm. Can you imagine the scene? 'Gods' fighting over what should or should not be created. What should or should not be destroyed. Who should live, who should die. Over every issue there could be a disagreement.

 **Yes. If they fought, where would that leave us?**

Good question. It would be quite an horrific scenario. Just imagine if one god decided one fine morning that the sun shouldn't come up today. What if the other god demanded that 'NO. *It should!*' What would happen to you and I while they fought it out? No sunshine, no heat, no energy, no food and so on. The fight itself may result in total destruction. It truly would be a catastrophe.

 **The sun rising is just one example. I am sure there are so many events that require Allāh's intervention everyday.**

Yes. Allāh سبحانه وتعالى says,

يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

Whoever is within the heavens and the earth asks Him; Everyday He is in a matter.²

Sūrah ar Rahmān, 55:29

Allāh attends to billions and billions of events everyday, without which the universe would not function. These events do not weary Him. If He had to deliberate, negotiate, discuss or even fight over these events with another god. *Allāh hu 'Ālim* (Allāh Knows Best) but the universe may well come to a standstill and even be destroyed altogether. Allāh Himself says in the Qur'ān,

² i.e. Everyday he is in bringing about a matter for each of His creatures

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۚ فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

Had there been within them (i.e., the heavens and the earth) (other) gods besides Allāh, they both would have been ruined. So Exalted is Allāh, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe

Sūrah al Anbiyā', 21:22

Allāh is the only Creator. All other false gods are 'themselves' created. Allāh created everything alone and controls everything alone. That is the basis of the belief of *tawhīd ar rubūbiyah*.

أَيُنشِرُونَ مَا لَا يَخْلُقُ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ

Do they associate with Him those who create nothing and they are (themselves) created?

Sūrah al A'rāf, 7:191



Alhamdulillah (All Praise is due to Allāh), that's very clear. Can I ask now about your numbered point 2 above and *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*?

Insha'Allāh, (if Allāh Wills) we will look at that in our next chapter.

**Allāh,
The Sole Creator and Sustainer**

Questions

1. What does the word '*tawhīd*' mean?
2. Which *sūrah* of the Qur'ān, famously discusses the Oneness of Allāh?
3. Name the three branches of *tawhīd* in Arabic.
4. What do those words mean in English?
5. Try to translate into English, as best you can, the Arabic word, *Rabb*.
6. What are the main principles of *tawhīd ar rubūbiyah*?
7. Is Allāh the *Rabb* only of Muslims? Explain.
8. How many gods created all of creation?
9. How many gods continue to sustain that creation?



Villages of Lembang, West Java, Indonesia