

 **Remind me about *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*?**

Tawhīd al ulūhiyah also affirms the Oneness of Allāh but this time it relates to our *ibādah* (worship) of Him.

 **By '*ibādah*' you mean performing *salāh*, fasting, giving charity and so on?**

Yes, and other good deeds of course. *Tawhīd al ulūhiyah* states that such acts of *ibādah* must be directed at Allāh alone. Nothing other than Allāh has the right to be worshipped.

 **So, we can't pray to or bow down in *ibādah* to anything else?**

That's right. Nothing except Allāh can be the object of our devotion and worship.

- When we pray, we pray only to Allāh;
- When we fast, we do so only for Allāh;
- If we perform the Hajj, we do so only for Allāh;
- If we do good for our parents, we do so only seeking Allāh's Pleasure;
- If we keep away from bad deeds, we do so only because we fear Allāh;

That exclusive worship to Allāh alone, also applies to *jinn*, another Creation made from smokeless fire. All acts of *ibādah* of mankind and *jinn* must be done for the Sake of Allāh alone,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say, Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allāh, Lord of the Worlds. No partner has He: And this I have been commanded and I am the first (among you) of the Muslims.

Sūrah al An'ām, 6:162,163


Again, *tawhīd al ulūhiyah* is to believe that none has the right to be worshipped but Allāh. In fact, that very worship was the sole reason behind our creation as humans. Allāh says,


وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ


And I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me.

Sūrah adh Dhāriyāt, 51:56



 **How do people break *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*? They worship other things instead of or along with Allah.**


 **What kinds of things? Statues, idols, rocks, stones, the sun, the moon, mountains, trees and so on.**

 **I have never heard of people worshipping trees? But idols, yes, I've heard of that. Are idol worshippers in breach of *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*?**


I'm afraid so. The reality is, they worship mere pieces of stone, inanimate objects that can neither harm them nor help them, or even help themselves.

 **Please explain.**

Well, think about it. Can an idol that accidentally falls from the hands of its own worshipper, prevent itself from smashing to the ground? If this 'god' can't help himself, how will he help his devotee?

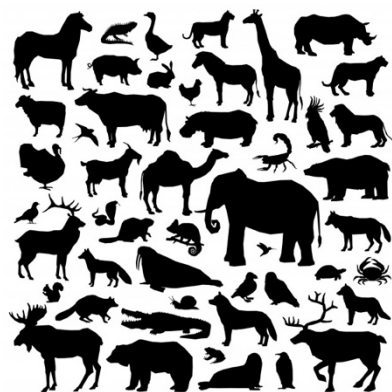
 **The items mentioned above are all lifeless. What about *living* things? Are they also worshipped alongside Allāh?**

Yes. People have worshipped living things also including animals, birds, fish, human beings and so on. This too is a breach of *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*.

 **Human beings? How have people come to worship humans?**

By associating them as partners with Allāh. For example, by saying that Allah سبحانه وتعالى has a son, mother, wife or daughter.

This is an extremely serious crime in the Eyes of Allāh. He is One and Unique. He has no partners or associates, no sons, daughters or relatives of any kind. Allāh confirms this,



(١) قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (٢) اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (٣) لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٤) 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

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

It does not befit Allāh to take for Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decrees a thing He only says: "Be" and it is.
Sūrah Maryam, 19:35

 **Is it a sin to place partners with Allāh?**

Ascribing partners with Allāh is the gravest sin of all in Islām, one that Allāh tells us Himself, that He will not forgive,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed, Allāh does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allāh has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.
Sūrah an Nisā', 4:48

 **What is the name of this sin in Arabic?**

Shirk. The word means to associate partners with Allāh, and is itself derived from the Arabic word for ‘partner.’ For example, in day to day Arabic, trading companies are often known as *sharaka*, because they are made up of business partners. A person who commits *shirk* is called a *mushrik*. A community of people who commit *shirk* are *mushrikīn*.



So those who worship idols, or natural or inanimate objects are committing *shirk*?

Natural, unnatural, animate, inanimate, dead, living, animal, vegetable or mineral! Basically, those who worship anything alongside Allah are from amongst the *mushrikīn*.



Christians believe in one God but pray to Jesus as His son. Are they *mushrikīn*?

If a Christian declares belief in one God, but then bows down in prayer to Jesus as the ‘son’ of God, then, the Islāmic understanding is that he has reneged on that declaration and has indeed committed *shirk*. He would fall outside of *tawhīd* because of his action in associating someone else with Allāh سبحانه وتعالى. He divided his worship between Allāh and that other person.

It is one thing to respect people like Ēsa ibn Maryam (Jesus, the son of Mary عليهم السلام) and Maryam, herself, as great and pious servants of Allāh. However, it is quite another thing to pray to them alongside any prayers to Allāh. Allāh warns us,

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ ۚ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلَّمْتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ وَرُوْحٌ مِنْهُ ۖ فَآمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۗ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً ۚ انتَهوا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ ۖ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلٌ

O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion, or say about Allāh except the Truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allāh and a Word which He directed to Mary and a soul (created at a command) from Him: so, believe in Allāh and His messengers. And do not say “Three”; - desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allāh is but One God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allāh as Disposer of affairs.

Sūrah an Nisā’, 4:171



What about Muslims? Do they ever break *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*?

Yes. It happens. Muslims who turn to others for help in lieu of Allāh, or who plea with them to act as go-betweens, between them and Allāh, are contravening *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*. Approaching Allāh through so-called saints, sages, wise men, *peers*, *murshads* and so on, is an example of this.



That’s strange. How can these so-called *saints* ask Allāh’s Help on behalf of others? What makes *them* so special?

That’s right. How do the people who visit these ‘saints’ know what is in their hearts? Who knows. They may well be deviant and corrupt individuals, who can’t even help themselves, let alone others. You should understand clearly that nobody has the right to stand as an intercessor between a person and Allāh except with Allāh’s permission. Allāh says in the Qur’ān,

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ

Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? Sūrah al Baqarah, 2:255

 **So, our communication with Allāh should be direct?**

If someone is seeking the Help of Allāh, they should approach Allāh themselves. For example, we can raise our hands, make *du'a* (supplication) and seek that help directly. There is no barrier or obstacle between Allāh and His Creation. No one has the power to harm or help you except Allāh. He says,

وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ ۚ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا مِنْ الظَّالِمِينَ

And do not invoke besides Allāh that which neither benefits you nor harms you, for if you did, then indeed you would be of the wrongdoers.

Sūrah al Yūnus, 10:106



 **Does this also apply to Muslims who visit the graves of others seeking help?**

Yes. It is bizarre that people should ask the 'living' for assistance in communicating with Allāh. It is even more bizarre when people ask the dead. Allāh says,


وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَالْأَمْوَاتُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُسْمِعُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَا أَنتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَن فِي الْقُبُورِ

And not equal are the living and the dead. Indeed, Allāh causes to hear whom He wills, but you cannot make hear those in their graves.

Sūrah Fātir, 35:22


According to a *hadīth* related by Aisha and Abdullāh bin Abās رضي الله عنهما :

When the last moment of the life of Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم came he started putting his 'Khamīsa' on his face and when he felt hot and short of breath he took it off his face and said, "May Allāh curse the Jews and Christians for they built the places of worship at the graves of their Prophets." The Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was warning (Muslims) of what those had done. Bukhāri


 **I remember there is a line in *Sūrah al Fātihah*, which reads 'It is YOU we worship.' That sounds like a strong confirmation of *tawhīd al ulūhiyyah*?**

Yes. The line is: **إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ** - When you express such an intention to worship Allāh **alone**, how can you then associate partners with Him in that worship?

However, notice something else. What is the line that follows that?

 **'...and You we ask for help.'**

Yes, **وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ** - What does that tell us?

 **As I understand it, it tells us that not only do we worship Allāh *alone*, but also 'His' should be the first direction we turn to if we need 'help'. Correct?**

Allāh Knows Best but that is what it could indicate to us. It's not just *ibādah* to others we should be careful of, but also of relying upon others for help instead of Allāh. These particular lines are not tucked away, hidden in some corner of Allāh's book. They appear right at the beginning of the Qur'ān and, indeed, the same theme continues right throughout,

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتَلًا رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

*And remember the Name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with (complete) devotion. He is the Lord of the East and the West; there is no deity except Him, so take Him as Disposer of (your) affairs¹.
Sūrah al Muzzammil, 73:8,9*



Before we continue, could we just review our discussion so far of Allāh and *tawhīd*?

Certainly.

- Belief in Allāh is the first of the *arkān al emān*, the pillars of faith.
- Failure to believe in Allāh takes us outside the fold of Islām.
- We learn from *tawhīd ar rubūbiyah* that Allāh is the sole Creator and Sustainer of everything.
- We learn from *tawhīd al ulūhiyah* that He alone is worthy of all worship.

But of course, our discussion of Allāh and *tawhīd* is not over. The way to really understand the nature of Allāh is through His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes. Insha'Allāh, that's what we will examine next.

¹ i.e., trust in Allāh and rely upon Him.

Allāh, the One alone worthy of all worship

Questions

1. Explain as best you can the meaning of *tawhīd al ulūhiyah*.
2. What does the word *ibādah* mean?
3. According to Allāh's Words, what was the sole reason behind our creation?
4. What is the name in Arabic of the sin of associating partners with Allāh?
5. Again, in Arabic, what do we call a person who commits this sin?
6. What do we call a group of people who commit this sin?
7. What kinds of things do *mushrikīn* worship?
8. Is it possible for people to approach Allāh through other human beings? Explain.
9. What is the best way to communicate with Allāh?
10. How many sons does Allāh have?
11. Whom alone should we worship?

