

ALLAH:

Same as Biblical God or Totally Other?

ICJS
COURSE



الله

INSTRUCTOR:

Zeyneb Sayilgan, Ph.D.,
ICJS Muslim Scholar

NOVEMBER 2, 9, & 16, 2022
IN PERSON AND ONLINE

Free—Register Today!

Course Outline

- ❑ **Class 1: Theological Foundations:
God in the Qur'an**
- ❑ **Class 2: Embodied Practice:
God in the Life of Prophet Muhammad**
- ❑ **Class 3: Culture and Context:
God in American Muslim Life**

Course Objectives

- ❑ Gain basic religious literacy on Muslim conceptions of God
- ❑ Explore how Islamic views of God impact human life
- ❑ Uncover a Qur'anic posture of interreligious dialogue that affirms sameness and difference alike

Today's Agenda

7:00-7:05 p.m.	Introduction
7:05-7:10 p.m.	Course Outline and Objectives
7:10-7:30 p.m.	Small-group #1
7:30-8:00 p.m.	Theological Foundations: The Qur'an
8:00-8:25 p.m.	Small-group #2
8:25-8:30 p.m.	Plenary

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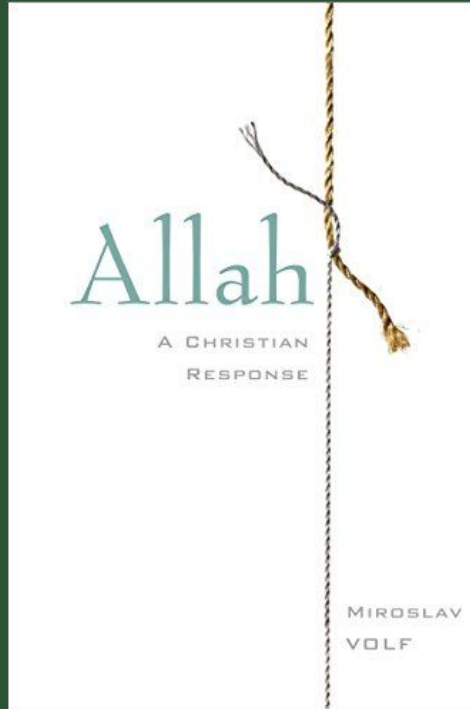
A Texas school board rejects 'In God We Trust' signs in Arabic



Malaysia High Court rules Christians can use Allah



Small Group #1



*The prevalent belief that [religious] traditions worship different gods is directly linked to increased hostility and violence around the globe. **Theological wars fuel real wars.***

(Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*)

- Briefly introduce yourself
- Discuss Allah in national and international news in light of Volf's statement. What do you think is at issue in these two scenarios?
- What do you think are the underlying causes for tension and conflict?





ONE GOD Many Names

A NAWAWI FOUNDATION PAPER
BY DR. UMAR FARUQ ABD-ALLAH

In the turmoil of current events and talk of clashing civilizations, people often want to know what Muslims worship. Many Jews, Christians, and Muslims correctly assert that each of their religions invokes the God of Abraham, but many among America's religious right increasingly make a point of denying this common ground. For the Christian Coalition's Pat Robertson, the world's troubles turn on the question of "whether Hubal, the moon god of Mecca known as Allah, is supreme or whether the Judeo-Christian Jehovah, God of the Bible, is supreme." Franklin Graham—son of Billy Graham and prominent evangelical who led the invocation at George W. Bush's 2001 presidential inauguration—insists that Christians and Muslims worship different Gods. In the same vein, William Boykin, a top Pentagon general, brought himself international notoriety by proclaiming his God to be a "real God" and "bigger" than the Muslim God, whom he deemed a mere "idol," inflammatory remarks for which the Bush-Cheney administration has refused to hold him accountable.¹

The fact that *Allāh* and the Biblical God are identical is evident from Biblical etymology.² From the standpoint of Islamic theology and salvation history,³ it is simply unacceptable to deem the Biblical God and that of the Qur'an to be anything but the same, despite the fact that, in recent years, many English-speaking Muslims have developed an ill-ad-



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Etymologically, Allāh comes from the same root as the Biblical words Elōhîm, hā-Elōhîm, and hā-Elôh (all meaning “God”) invoked by the Hebrew prophets and the Aramaic and Syriac Alāhā (“God”) used by John the Baptist and Jesus.

Elōhîm derives from elôh (Hebrew for “god”), and Alāhā is an emphatic form of alāh (Aramaic/Syriac for “god”), while Allāh is connected to ilāh (Arabic for “god”). All three of these Semitic words for “god” – elôh, alāh, and ilāh – are etymologically equivalent. The slight modifications between them reflect different pronunciations conforming to the historical pattern of morphological shifts in each tongue.





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They are akin to the variations we find, for example, between the Latin, Spanish, and Italian words for God (Deus, Dios, and Dio) or the English and German (God and Gott). Elōhîm, Alāhā, and Allāh are all cognates – sister words – deriving from a common proto-Semitic root, which, according to one standard view, was the root 'LH, conveying the primary sense of “to worship.” The fundamental linguistic meaning of the three Abrahamic cognates for God – Elōhîm, Alāhā, and Allāh – is “the one who is worshiped.”

(Umar Faruq Abdallah,
[One God many Names](#))

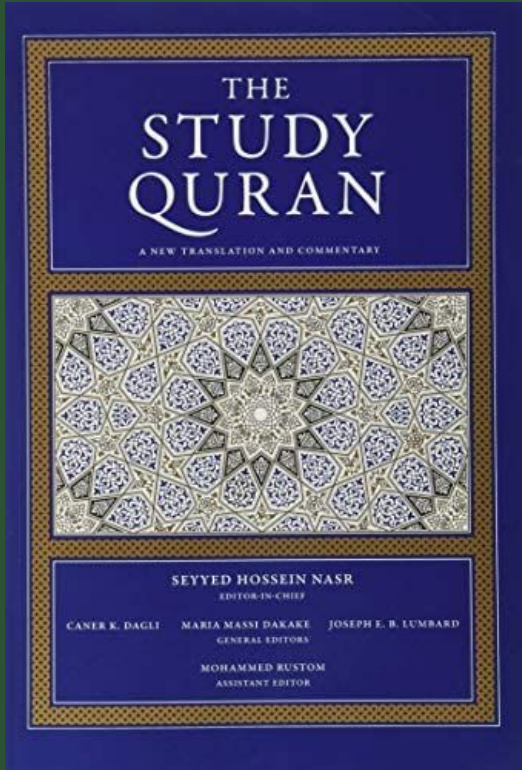


God in the Qur'an



- ALLAH (*al-ilah*) - The One God
- Qur'an: God speaks
- Divine Names in the Qur'an

Distance and Nearness of God



Distance of God - *Tanzih*

Declaring the Incomparability of God

Transcendent nature of God

Nothing is like Him (Q 42:11)

And there is none like unto Him (Q 112: 4)

Nearness of God - *Tashbih*

Affirming Similarity with God

Immanence nature of God

And when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit (ruhī), then fall down before him prostrate (Q 38:72)

And indeed We have created the human being, and We know whatever thoughts his inner self develops, and We are closer to him than his jugular vein." (Q 50:16)



Divine Names in the Qur'an

AL-GHAZĀLĪ
THE NINETY-NINE
BEAUTIFUL NAMES
OF GOD · *al-Maqṣad al-asnā
fī sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*
translated with Notes by
DAVID B. BURRELL
and NAZIH DAHER



Al-asma al-husna (The Most Beautiful Names)

Call upon God, or call upon The Merciful; whichsoever you call upon, to God belong the most beautiful Names (Q 17:110)

- 1) The Attributes of Beauty (*Jamal*)
- 2) The Attributes of Glory (*Jalal*)



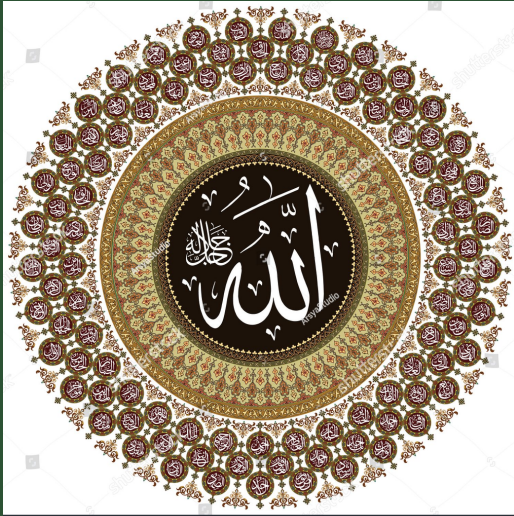
God in the Qur'an

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. To Him belongs sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death, and He is powerful over all things. He is the First, the Last, the Outward, and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things. (Q 57:1–3)

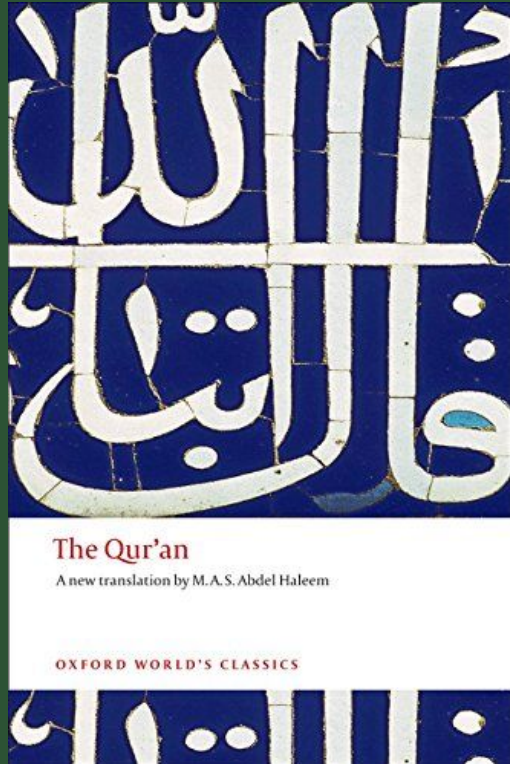
So, do not invent similitudes for God. Surely God knows and you do not know (Q 16:47)

Say, "He, God, is One. God, the Eternally Sufficient to Himself. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And none is like unto Him. (Q 112:1–4)

The Originator of the heavens and the earth, He [God] has appointed for you mates from among yourselves and has appointed mates also among cattle. He multiplies you thereby; nothing is like unto Him, yet He is the Hearer, the Seer (Q 42:11)



God in the Qur'an



O humankind! You are needful of God; and He is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised (Q 35:15)

He is the Only True God in the heavens and the earth. He knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal, and knows whatever you do. (Q 6:3)

Surely, We have created each and every thing by measure (Q 54:49)

With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He. He knows what is on land and sea; no leaf falls but that He knows it, nor any seed in the dark recesses of the earth, nor anything moist or dry, but that it is not written in a clear record (Q 6:59)

And when My servants ask you, concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me that they may be guided. (Q 2:186)



Small group #2

- Based on the reading and presentation, what are some basic features of the Islamic conception of God?
- What has surprised you in that regard?

Maher Zain

[Close to You](#)

