

آية الكرسي

*Ayat al-Kursi*

The Verse of the Seat

Lesson 2

هُوَ

Is هُوَ a name of God or a pronoun?

قل هو الله احد

يا هو، يا من لا هو الا هو

In mystical understanding when *hu* is used to refer to God, it alludes to the position of 'the unseen of the unseen's (غيب الغيوب) that no creature can ever know.

## هُوَ

فِي كِتَابِ التَّوْحِيدِ عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: رَأَيْتُ الْخَضِرَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ فِي الْمَنَامِ قَبْلَ بَدْرِ بِلَيْلَةٍ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ: عَلَّمَنِي شَيْئاً أَنْصِرَ بِهِ عَلَى الْأَعْدَاءِ، فَقَالَ: قُلْ: يَا هُوَ يَا مَنْ لَا هُوَ إِلَّا هُوَ، فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحْتُ قَصَصْتُهَا عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَقَالَ لِي: يَا عَلِيُّ! عَلَّمْتَ الْإِسْمَ الْأَعْظَمَ! فَكَانَ عَلَى لِسَانِي يَوْمَ بَدْرِ.

Imam Ali (a) is reported to have said: “One night before f the battle of Badr I saw Khiḍr in my dream and I asked him to teach me something to gain victory over the enemies. He said, “Say, O He, O the One who there is no he but He” (Yā hū! Yā man lā hū illā hū!), when I woke up in the morning I narrated the dream to the Prophet of God and he replied: “O Ali! you have been taught the greatest name of God (*ism al-a’zam*),” so I kept repeating these words in Badr.”

# هُوَ

أمير المؤمنين عليه السلام قرأ قل هو الله أحد فلما فرغ قال : يا هو يا من لا هو إلا هو اغفر لي وانصرني على القوم الكافرين

Imam Ali (a) recited Sura al-Tawhid, and when he finished, he said, *Yā hū! Yā man lā hū illā hū!*  
Forgive me and give me victory over the disbeliever lot.

وكان علي عليه السلام يقول ذلك يوم صفين وهو يطارد ، فقال له عمار بن ياسر :يا أمير المؤمنين ما هذه الكنايات ؟ قال : اسم الله الأعظم ، وعماد التوحيد لله لا إله إلا هو ، ثم قرأ : شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو ، وأواخر الحشر ، ثم نزل فصلي أربع ركعات قبل الزوال . (بحار الأنوار، ج ٣، العلامة المجلسي، ص ٢٢٤)

And the Commander of the Faithful was repeating that on the Day of Siffin while he was chasing [the enemy]. So, Ammar ibn Yasir asked him, O Commander of the Faithful! What are these words? He said, “It is the greatest name of God. It is the pillar of *tawhid* for Allah beside whom there is no deity. Then he recited (3:18) شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو and the closing verse of Sura al-Hashr (59: 22-24). Then he dismounted and recited for units of prayers before noon.

هُوَ

Now lets delve deeper into this.

قال رسول الله (ص) أوتيت ليلة أسري بي ثلاثة علوم، فعلم أخذ عليّ في كتمه، وعلم خيّر في تبليغه، وعلم أمرت بتبليغه

The Prophet (s) said, “On the night I was taken for the Night Journey, I was given three types of knowledge. A knowledge that I was made to pledge to conceal; a knowledge that I was given the choice to publicise at my discretion; and a knowledge that I was commanded to publicise.

هُوَ

ذكر النيسابوري في رجاله، قال كان كميل من خواص علي عليه السلام أردفه على جملة،

Al-Haakim al-Nayshaburi reports in his book of Rijal that Kumayl was one of the intimate companions of Ali (a).

فسأله كميل فقال: يا أمير المؤمنين ما الحقيقة؟ فقال عليه السلام ما لك والحقيقة.

So once Kumayl asked him, “O Commander of the Faithful! What is *Haqiqah*?” The Imam replied, “Where do you stand from *Haqiqah*?”

فقال كميل: أو لست صاحب سرك يا أمير المؤمنين؟ قال: بلى، ولكن يرشح عليك ما يطفح مني،

Kumayl said, “Am I not your privy O Commander of the Faithful?” He said, “You are, but you only receive splashes from what overflows from me.”

هُوَ

فقال: أو مثلك يخيب سائلاً،

Kumayl said, “Would someone like you disappoints one who asks?”

فقال عليه السلام الحقيقة كشف سبحات الجلال من غير إشارة،

He said, “The *Haqiqah* is to unveil the Lights of Glory without pointing [to Him with concepts]”.

قال كميل زدني بياناً، قال عليه السلام محو الموهوم وصحو المعلوم،

Kumayl said, “Explain to me further.” He said, “Obliteration of [fanciful] imagination and to be awakened to knowledge.”

فقال زدني بياناً، قال عليه السلام هتك الستر لغلبة السر،

Kumayl said, “Explain to me further.” He said, “Tearing the veil when by engulfment of the *sirr*.”

الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

*the Living One, the All-sustainer*



# الْحَيُّ

*Al-Hayy*: God is the source of all life. The only originally living being.

Anything that appears to be alive inherits its sense of 'life' or being alive from His attribute of *al-Hayy*.

He is ever-living or *al-ḥayy* not in the way His creation is alive but rather as the Being who never experiences death and who never had a birth.

Every soul experience death except Him (29:57).

The verse is therefore driving the faithful towards the realization, put your trust in the Living One who dies not... (25:58).

# الْحَيُّ

*Al-Ḥayy* along with *al-Qādir* (omnipotent) and *al-ʿĀlim* (omniscient) are the divine attributes of essence (*dhāt*), the primary attributes to which all other attributes of *dhāt* are subcategories.

As *al-Ḥayy* is the mother of all attributes of essence (*dhat*) and together they describe God with all his attributes.

# الْقَيُّومُ

*Al-Qayyum* is the mother of all divine attributes of acts (*fi'l*) such as *al-Khaliq* (the Creator), *al-Raziq* (the Sustainer), *al-Muhiyy* (the Giver of life), *al-Mumit* (the taker of life), *al-Mubdi'* (the Originator) and *al-Mu'id* (the Resurrector).

*Al-qayyum* occurs thrice in the Qur'an, and every time along with *al-ḥayy*.

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ 2:255

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ 3:2

وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ 20:111

# الْقَيُّومُ

*Al-Qayyum* is from *qiyam* which literally means to stand on one's feet and, figuratively, means to stand for a cause or to attend to something, upholding it protecting and managing it, bringing it up, looking after it, and having power over it.

Allah is attending to everything sustaining it and providing for it.

أَفَمَنْ هُوَ قَائِمٌ عَلَى كُلِّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ قُلْ سَمُّوهُمْ

*Is He who sustains every soul along with what it earns [comparable to the idols]? And yet they ascribe partners to Allah! Say, "Name them!" (13:33)*

## الْقِيَوْمُ

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَ أُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.

*Allah bears witness that there is no god except Him and[ so do ]the angels and those who possess knowledge maintainer of justice, there is no god but Him, the Almighty, the All-wise.( 18 )*

# الْقَيُّومُ

However *al-Qayyum* is on the paradigm of *fay'ul*, which is a paradigm used to show the maximum degree of a quality.

So, *Al-Qayyūm* is the One who maintains or upholds all things, the Sustainer, the One who is vigilant over every creature and every soul.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُمَسِّكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ أَنْ تَزُولَا وَلَئِن زَالَتَا إِنْ أَمْسَكَهُمَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّن بَعْدِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

*Indeed Allāh sustains the heavens and the earth lest they should fall apart, and if they were to fall apart there is none who can sustain them except Him (35:41).*

# الْقِيَوْمُ

If God were to stop maintaining and upholding the universe – whose existence is only as real as it is connected to Him – then all besides Him would simply vanish out of existence.

So God does not simply create in detachment. He is constantly sustaining His creation and involved in their affairs and they subsist through Him.

يَسْئَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ

*Everyone in the heavens and the earth asks Him. Every day He is engaged in some work (55:29).*