

# Ibraheem & Imaan

Perfecting the Pillars: Al-Asmaa' Ul-Husnaa

## Part I

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## Lesson 1

# Allah, the Proper Name of God

“Allah, there is no deity except Him! To Him belong the best names.” (20:8)

الله

Imaan was a small, elderly woman with bright eyes and a warm smile. She lived in a cozy little house, near the California coast, with her grandson Ibraheem. She kept herself busy each afternoon telling him stories of the times when she was a young girl in Egypt.

This afternoon Ibraheem sat at her knees, listening intently as she took him through the streets of the old town in Egypt, to her family home, more than sixty years ago.

The story was about the first time she visited the studio of her famous grandfather, Abdul-'Azeez bin Saalih Al-Hatamee. Imaan weaved a beautiful tale filled with vivid sights and sounds. Ibraheem felt as if he could really smell the fresh bread in the air from the bakery down the street, or hear the birds chirping in the ancient lemon tree, which had grown to cover the balconies in the courtyard.

“He was the most talented calligrapher in the city,” said Imaan with a smile. “He wrote books, decorated the walls of the Grand Mosque, and made beautiful paintings for the wealthiest families of Egypt.”

“What is cal-lig-ra-fee?” asked Ibraheem in a soft voice. He was a tall boy, even though he was just seven years old, with light brown hair and green eyes. He was Imaan’s only grandchild. His mother and father had died in a tragic car accident soon after his birth, so she had raised him as if he was her own son ever since then.

“Calligraphy is to write in a very nice way that looks beautiful,” explained Imaan, “more beautiful than the

writing you see in books or the newspaper. Come with me, I will show you what I mean."

Imaan took Ibraheem upstairs to the attic where she had a large chest filled with things that were very special to her. She opened the chest and pulled out a large box. She placed it on the table and brought two chairs for them to sit on as they looked at what was inside.

Ibraheem could not wait to see, but he sat quietly waiting for Imaan to tell him what she was going to show him.

"This is my grandfather's most important work," said Imaan. "He gave it to me as a gift, so that I would always remember something very important that he taught me."

Imaan lifted the lid, and Ibraheem leaned forward to look inside. Imaan took out a small canvas covered in delicate white paper. She carefully unwrapped it and placed it on the table in front of Ibraheem. It was beautiful! All different shades of blue and green swirled across the page. Ibraheem loved it immediately.

He said, "It is very nice. What did your grandfather teach you about this picture?"

"As I was telling you before," continued Imaan, "My grandfather was a very talented man. He lived with my family in the city. Our house was quite large, so my parents had given him a room near the garden, where he had made a studio in which to work on his paintings.

At first, I would never go to his studio, as I did not want to disturb him while he worked. But one day, as I passed by his door, he called me in to look at his newest painting. That would be the first of many visits that I would make to his studio.

"That first afternoon I came into my grandfather's studio and sat next to him as he put the finishing touches on

this very painting. I was just about the same age as you are now, and I had never seen calligraphy like this before.

"I asked my grandfather what the painting said, he told me that it was one of the names of God. These names are called **Al-Asmaa' Ul-Husnaa**, The Most Beautiful Names of Allah.

"Then he explained to me more about the name that he was working on. This is what he told me...

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"**Ya** Imaan, everyone has a name. You have a name, your mother has a name, your friends have names. Whatever name a person has, you know that name is a good one. Their parents chose it because it was very nice just for them.

"Well God has a name also. God chose His name for Himself because He created everything, He knows everything, and He teaches us everything that we need to know.

"This name is one that you have probably heard a lot. The name of God is **Allah** (Al-laah). We use this name all the time to remember God and to ask Him for help.

"Sometimes you will see someone sneeze, and they will say 'Al-Hamdoo-lil-lah'. This means, 'All praise is for Allah'. Other times you will hear people say 'Sub-haa-nal-lah', when they see or hear something surprising, this means, 'Glorified be Allah'. When people say 'Al-laa-hoo Ak-bar', when they are happy or excited, this means 'Allah is the greatest'.

"So many times a day, in our prayers, when we make du'a, or when we are eating, we say the name of Allah. When we do this, we get closer to Allah, and He gets closer

to us. Allah loves those who remember Him, and who say His name all through the day. The name that we use the most in our lives to call on God is Allah. There is no one and nothing that has such a wonderful name as this one.

"So, next time you start to do something, when you eat, go to sleep, wake up, get dressed, or leave the house to go somewhere, remember Allah by saying His name in the daily ad'iyaa (supplications) that you make. Whenever you do this, Allah will remember you remember you, too."

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

(Fath-koo-roo-nee adh-koor-koom wash-koo-roo-lee  
wa-laa tak-foo-roon)

"So, remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me." (Qur'aan 2:152)

Imaan had finished her story, and looked at Ibraheem with a smile, "See what an important thing Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez taught me? That is not all. I visited him many more times after that, and he taught me about many of Allah's beautiful names. Insha-Allah we can come here each afternoon and look at one of grandfather's paintings and I will teach you everything that he taught me, does that sound like a good idea my little Ibraheem?"

"Yes, Grandma Imaan," said Ibraheem excitedly. "I would like to do that!"

As they went downstairs, Imaan told Ibraheem, "So today you learned that..."

**Allah** is God's proper name<sup>1</sup>, the name we use the most each day, which He has chosen and told us to call Him by.

Imaan carried the canvas with her downstairs and decided to hang it up on the living room wall. She told Ibraheem that each time they learned a new name of Allah, she would hang the new painting there to remind them of what they had learned.

Ibraheem could not forget the words of Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez and the beautiful painting. He loved the soft lines and the many shades of blue and green that Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez had used. *Allah's name is beautiful*, he thought.

<sup>1</sup> These are ayaat in the Qur'aan where this name of Allah is used: (1:1), (3:18), (5:109) (6:124), (7:180), (8:40), (16:91), (20:8), (57:5), (65:3), (74:56), (85:20).

### Lesson Questions:

1. Who is Allah? (God who created everything and teaches us everything we know.)
2. Why do we call God Allah? (Because He has chosen this name and told us to use it.)
3. What happens when we remember Allah? (We get closer to Allah, and He will love us more.)
4. What is the best name of God? (Allah)
5. When we remember Allah, what will Allah do for us? (Allah will remember us and love us more.)



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## Lesson 2

### Ar-Rahmaan, The Most Compassionate

“In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.” (1:1)

الرَّحْمَنُ

It was just after **Fajr**, and Ibraheem was reading **Qur'aan** with Imaan in the living room. He read slowly and carefully, making sure that he followed all the **Tajweed** rules that Grandma Imaan had taught him.

As soon as they finished reciting, Ibraheem asked, “When can we look at another painting and learn Allah’s names?”

Imaan laughed, Ibraheem loved to hear stories. Now he would not rest until he had seen every picture in the box and learned all of the names of Allah that Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez had taught her. But that was fine, she loved telling stories herself, and she missed seeing the paintings as well.

“We can go right now, but for this story, we will have to take a little trip,” said Imaan with a smile.

Ibraheem asked no questions. He did not want to waste any time. He ran to the attic and brought the second painting carefully into the living room. Imaan took the painting, tucked it under her arm, took Ibraheem by the hand and walked outside.

They walked for quite a while until they came to the beach near their house. Imaan sat down in the sand placed the painting on her lap. She carefully unwrapped it to reveal the light blue and yellow painting within.

“This painting always reminds me of the sea because of the color and the way it looks like it has waves in it. Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez taught me about this name one

hot afternoon in August when I came again to visit him in his studio. Here is what he taught me....

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"Allah has another name that is important for everyone to know. It is Ar-Rahmaan (Ar-Rah-maan)," said Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez in a whisper, as if he was telling Imaan a very important secret. When he showed Imaan the painting, she squealed with delight. Blue was her favorite color!

Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez continued, "This name means something very special. It means that Allah is the Most Compassionate. That is a big word, and it means something very big, too. Compassionate means that Allah takes care of everything that He has created, and remember, Allah has created everything.

"Allah created us. He made our bodies, our eyes, our ears, and our mouths. He gives us food and water, plants and animals, mountains and rivers, and every other thing that you can think of. There are many things Allah has created that we do not even know about, but Allah still takes care of everything.

"Allah also takes care of our hearts. He sends Prophets, like **Rasulullah** ﷺ, and books, like the Qur'aan, to show us how to pray and how to live a good life.

"Allah teaches us how to be nice to each other and how to take care of our problems. Everything we need to know, Allah teaches us through the prophets and the books that He has sent.

"Allah uses the name Ar-Rahmaan many times in the Qur'aan<sup>2</sup>. He uses it a lot when He teaches us the stories of the prophets and books that He has sent before.

"There is even a **surah** in the Qur'aan named Ar-Rahmaan (Surah 55) because it tells all about how Allah is compassionate. It talks about all the things in the earth that Allah has blessed us with and about the guidance Allah has given us.

"So now you know what Ar-Rahmaan means. It means that Allah takes care of everything He created. He takes care of our bodies and our souls. He gives us food and water. He gives us prophets and books so that we can be happy in this life and the next.

"Allah gives these things to everyone, even if they do not believe in Allah. Allah does this to show us how good He is, and to teach us about all the wonderful things He has created. So remember, Ar-Rahmaan means....

Allah takes care of us by sending us the things our bodies need (like food and water) and the things our souls need like (prophets and guidance).

Imaan finished her story, then looked out at the blue ocean and bright sun in the sky. Ibraheem looked as well. He thought the picture looked like the ocean, too. He would remember this name of Allah because Allah had created such a nice world for us to live in, with sparkling water, a shining sun, the birds in the sky, and the refreshing breeze.

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<sup>2</sup> Some of the verses where Allah has called Himself by this name are listed below. For your own information and for a deeper understanding of what Ar-Rahmaan means see the stories related to these ayaat (the Surah, or chapter, number is listed first followed by the verse number): (1:3), (17:110), (19:58), (21:112), (27:30), (36:52), (50:33), (55:1), (59:22), and (78:38)

Allah had made him a Muslim, and had given him Grandma Imaan to teach him and take care of him. Allah had been very compassionate to Ibraheem and all of the creation. Ibraheem knew this was very true indeed.

### Lesson Questions:

1. What does Ar-Rahmaan mean? (The Most Compassionate-Allah gives us all the things we need to survive and be good.)
2. What is another name for God that you have already learned? (Allah)
3. Is Allah compassionate to everyone? (Yes, Allah is compassionate to everyone and everything.)





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### Lesson 3

## Ar-Rahem, The Merciful

“...and He (Allah) is the Most Merciful of the merciful.” (12:64)

الرَّحِيمُ

The painting of Allah's name, Ar-Rahmaan, had been hanging in the living room for more than a month now. Ibraheem had asked Grandma Imaan to leave it there. They had spent many evenings talking about the blessings Allah had given their family and all of mankind.

But now Imaan thought it was a good time to take that painting down and put up a new one. She went to the attic and got the next painting one evening after Ibraheem had gone to sleep. She would surprise him with the new painting in the morning. She smiled to herself thinking how happy Ibraheem would be to hear this new story.

Fajr came quickly and Grandma Imaan, as usual, woke Ibraheem for **salaah** early so that they could read a page of Qur'aan together. Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez had always told Imaan that a home in which the Qur'aan is recited, is a light in this life and the next. This is one lesson Imaan wanted Ibraheem to learn from a very young age.

Ibraheem got up and rubbed his eyes, it was still quite dark out, but he got ready for salaah quickly and came to the living room. He immediately noticed the new painting, but he did not ask Imaan about it until they had finished Fajr and read Qur'aan.

The soft yellow light of early morning was now spilling in through the windows. Ibraheem walked over to the painting and said, “This is a new painting Grandma Imaan, but it looks the same as the last one, just the colors are different.”

"Very observant of you little Ibraheem!" said Imaan, "I thought it was time for a new lesson, so I put this painting up last night. I wanted to surprise you this morning."

Ibraheem ran to Imaan, gave her a warm hug and smiled, "Grandma Imaan, I am so happy to learn more about Allah. Can you please teach me about this name of Allah?"

"Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez read a surah in the Qur'aan (Surah Yusuf) that taught him what this name means, so he decided to paint a picture that would remind him of it. Can you read the Arabic? Can you guess what this name is?"

Ibraheem stood in front of the painting and read each letter silently in his head, then he said, "I think I know what it says. Is it Ar-Raheem (Ar-Ra-heem)?"

"That's correct Ibraheem," said Imaan, "now I will teach you about the story that Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez read, and what it taught him about this name of Allah..."

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"Imaan," Grandfather said, "Ar-Raheem is a very special name of Allah that means 'The Merciful'. This is another big word, and it means that Allah helps people who try hard to do what is right, even if it means they will be hurt or will lose something.<sup>3</sup>

"Once there was a prophet named Yusufؑ, and he had eleven brothers who did not like him very much. One

---

<sup>3</sup> The concept of mercy in Islam includes kindness and making things easy, but not always in the way that seems most obvious to us, or the way that avoids difficulty. In fact, mercy as Allah describes it, has to do with the special help He gives to those who are righteous and who work hard to do good deeds, even if they suffer because of it. For examples of "mercy" as Allah has described it in the Qur'aan see the following verses: (2:163), (3:31), (4:100), (11:41), (12:53), (12:64), (26:9), (30:5), and (36:58).

day the brothers decided to kill Yusufؑ. They decided they would put him into a well (a deep hole where there is water, once you are inside it, you cannot get out very easily). Then they lied to their father and said that Yusufؑ had been killed by a wolf.

Imaan gasped and opened her eyes in wonder, how could the brothers have done such a terrible thing?

Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez continued, "Yusuf's father, Ya'qoobؑ (who was also a prophet), knew that his sons were not telling the truth. He was very sad that Yusufؑ was gone, so he prayed to Allah to see Yusufؑ again one day.

"Allah is Ar-Raheem, The Merciful, so He sent people to the well that got Yusufؑ out. They took him to Egypt and sold him as a slave. Yusufؑ grew up in Egypt and became very good young man. But all through those years, he still missed his father and wished that they could be back together again.

"Allah knew how much Yusufؑ tried to be good and do good things, so He had mercy on Yusufؑ a second time, and brought Yusuf's fatherؑ to Egypt. Then they could be together again.

"This is how Allah showed that He is Ar-Raheem, The Merciful, because He gave His special mercy to Yusufؑ and Ya'qoobؑ. They both had been patient and trusted in Allah, even though Yusuf's brothers had done a terrible thing. They did not get angry or hate the brothers, even though most people would have been very angry. Therefore, Allah showed special mercy to them, and that special mercy shows how Allah is Ar-Raheem. So, remember, Ar-Raheem means....

Allah shows special kindness to people who  
try hard to do good things.

Ibraheem had heard the story before, but he had never thought about how merciful Allah had been to save Yusufؑ and bring his father back to him. Ibraheem knew how hard it was not to have a mommy and daddy, as his parents had died soon after he was born.

Grandma Imaan looked at Ibraheem and somehow knew what was going through his mind. She pulled him close and brushed his hair back with her fingers. She did not need to say anything; there was nothing to say. Ibraheem smiled and looked at the painting as he thought to himself how happy Yusufؑ must have been that Allah had brought his father back to him again.

Insha-Allah, he thought, Allah will bring me back to my father and mother, if I am good and go to **Jannah**, because Allah is Ar-Raheem.

### Lesson Questions:

1. What does Ar-Raheem mean? (The Merciful-Allah takes care of people who try hard to be good.)
2. What happened to Yusufؑ? (His brothers put him in a well to get rid of him.)
3. What happened when Yusufؑ went to Egypt? (Allah brought his father back to him.)
4. Why did Allah have mercy on Yusufؑ? (Because Yusufؑ was good, and Allah is merciful to those who try hard to be good.)



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## Lesson 4

### Al-Malik, The King

“The King of Mankind.” (114:2)

الْمَلِكُ

Ibraheem ran through the garden chasing Bundook, his pet tabby cat, who loved to pounce on anything that moved. Today Ibraheem had brought a small red ball to play with. They had spent the last few hours racing around the trees and bushes, as Bundook batted the ball in all directions.

Ibraheem was tired now, and the sun was high in the sky. He went into the cool shade of the house and looked for a place to rest until the heat of the day had passed.

He found Imaan in the kitchen, kneading dough for loaves of fresh bread that she would bake for dinner tonight. There were fresh vegetables on the table that would be cut for the salad, and some fish marinating in a dish on the table to be grilled later on.

As Imaan worked, Ibraheem asked, “Grandma Imaan can I get the next painting from the box upstairs? I would love to learn another name of Allah if you have time.”

Imaan nodded her head yes. A broad smile flashed across Ibraheem’s face, as he ran to get the next painting. This time he brought it to the living room and hung it up by himself. He was careful to take the painting of Allah’s name Ar-Raheem down, wrap it in tissue and put it back upstairs in the box for safekeeping. When he was finished, he came to the kitchen to see if Imaan was ready yet.

She was, so they walked back to the living room together. Imaan sat on the couch, and Ibraheem sat on the floor in front of her.

"Now let me see if I can remember," said Imaan with a glint in her eye.

Ibraheem never thought about that, what if Grandma Imaan could not remember the story, what then?

But Imaan was just playing with Ibraheem, she remembered the story very well. She just wanted to make sure he was paying attention before she started.

"This painting is of Allah's name, Al-Malik (Al-Ma-lik). Al-Malik means The King, and I have always thought this painting looked like the letters were made out of gold. Here is what Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez taught me about this name...

---

The sun was shining brightly through the windows of the studio. Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez sat by the window painting. He mixed the yellows on his palette to get just the right shade. He would work for hours and only take breaks to eat or make salaah.

Imaan peeked around the corner of the door. Then she tiptoed up behind Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez. She thought he could not hear her, but he did. However, he did not want to spoil her fun, so he kept painting as if he did not notice anything.

Imaan came up close behind him and placed her hand on his arm. She smiled warmly at him and asked politely if she could see his new painting.

"I will tell you all about it," said Grandfather Abdul-'Azeez. He picked her up and placed her on his lap so she could see better.

"This is the name of Allah, Al-Malik, The King.<sup>4</sup> This means that although there are kings that we may have heard of, like the King of Jordan or the King of Morocco, they are human kings. They only have power because people have given it to them. But Allah is not this type of king.

"Allah is The King of everything and everyone. That means He owns everything, He created everything, and everything will come back to Him in the end.

"Once there was a King named **Fir'own**. He was so proud that he even told his people that he was GOD! He wanted people to only listen to him, to worship him, and to forget about listening to Allah. So, Allah sent Prophet Musaؑ to Fir'own to teach him about Islaam.<sup>5</sup>

"Prophet Musaؑ went to Fir'own telling him to worship Allah and to stop treating his people so badly. But Fir'own said he was god and he could do whatever he wanted to.

"Fir'own felt very angry that Prophet Musaؑ was challenging him in front of all the people. He called all his helpers, and his army, to try and make Prophet Musaؑ look foolish, so people would not listen to him.

"He called his magicians (people who play tricks that Shaytaan shows them how to do). He told Prophet Musaؑ to come in front of all the people, and he told Musaؑ that his magicians were more powerful than him.

"Then, the magicians played a trick. They moved some ropes to make them look like snakes. The people and even Prophet Musaؑ thought that the ropes looked like real snakes!

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<sup>4</sup> This name of Allah appears in the Qur'aan in the following ayaat: (20:114), (23:116), (59:23), (62:1), (114:2).

<sup>5</sup> This story is related in the Qur'aan in the following ayaat (7:102-126).

"But Prophet Musaؑ knew that Allah is Al-Malik, The King and that He is more powerful than Fir'own and his magicians. So, Musaؑ threw his staff (a stick that people use to walk with, especially if they walk up mountains or take care of sheep).

"His staff became a huge serpent and it ate all the little fake snakes that the magicians had made.

"Do you know what happened then Ibraheem?"

Ibraheem shook his head, he was scared to even ask.

Imaan continued, "The magicians all became Muslims! They knew that their trick was not real, but what Prophet Musaؑ had done was.

"Fir'own was now so mad he could not stand it! Even his trusted magicians believed in Prophet Musaؑ and Allah. He screamed at the magicians and told them they could not believe in Allah unless he gave them permission. After all, he was their king.

"But the magicians knew that although Fir'own was a king, he was not THE KING. They had to listen to Allah because He was the King of all kings.

"He told them that he would kill them if they believed in Allah, but that did not change their minds. They said that even if they die, they will go back to Allah anyway.

"You see, it was better for them to listen to Allah and die, knowing that Allah will be happy with them, than listen to Fir'own and live, knowing that Allah will be angry with them when they die and return to Him later on.

"Now even though Fir'own was a king and a very powerful one, he was not at all as powerful as Allah, the magicians understood this. That is why we should ask help only from Allah, and always remember that Allah is, Al-Malik, THE King. There is no king greater than Him. So remember, Al-Malik means....

Everything belongs to Allah,  
and Allah is in charge of everything.

Ibraheem thought for a moment then said, "Grandma Imaan, those magicians were really very brave and strong. It would have been a lot easier for them to just listen to Fir'own and not get hurt."

"That's true," replied Imaan. "But, they had finally realized who the real king was, Allah had granted them faith. Do you think you could have stood up to Fir'own like Musaؑ and the magicians did?" asked Imaan.

"I hope so!" said Ibraheem with a smile.



### Lesson Questions:

1. What are the four names of God that we have learned so far? (Allah, Ar-Rahmaan, Ar-Raheem, and Al-Malik)
2. What does Al-Malik mean? (The King. Everything belongs to Allah.)
3. What is a king? (Someone who rules over a kingdom and can tell his people what to do.)
4. How did Fir'own learn that he was not a very powerful king? (Allah sent Prophet Musaؑ to eat up all the little snakes that Fir'own's magicians made.)
5. What did the magicians do? (They stopped listening to their king Fir'own, and started listening to THE KING, Allah, by becoming Muslims.)