

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

What Are The Pillars of Faith In Allah's Names & Attributes?

Definition and Foundation:

Faith in Allāh's Names and Attributes (al-īmān bi-asmā'illāhi wa-ṣifātihi) is one of the core foundations of Tawḥīd and one of the six pillars of Īmān. This aspect of belief is referred to as Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa-ṣ-Ṣifāt (the Oneness of Allah's Names and Attributes).



Imām Ibn Qudāmah رحمه الله said: “And from belief in Allah is belief in what He has described Himself with in His Book and upon the tongue of His Messenger ﷺ, without distortion (taḥrīf), negation (ta'ṭīl), asking how (takyīf), or likening (tashbīh).”¹

The Pillars of Belief in Allāh's Names and Attributes

The scholars of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamā'ah have clarified that the correct faith in Allah's Names and Attributes rests upon four core pillars, derived from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the consensus (ijmā') of the Salaf:

¹ Lum'at al-I'tiqād

1. Affirmation Without Distortion (Tahḥrīf)

That one affirms all of the Names and Attributes that Allah has affirmed for Himself in the Qur’an, or that His Messenger ﷺ affirmed for Him — without changing or altering their meanings.

Allah said:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا

“And to Allah belong the Most Beautiful Names, so call upon Him by them”²

Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله said: “It is obligatory to affirm what Allah affirmed for Himself, without distortion or negation.”³

Distortion includes altering the words or meanings of the Names and Attributes — as the Jahmiyyah and Mu‘tazilah did. For example, they said: “Mercy (Raḥmah) means to want to reward,” rather than affirming Mercy as Allah described Himself.

2. Negation of Any Likeness (Tashbīh or Tamthīl)

Allah’s Names and Attributes are unique to Him. They are not like those of creation. This is a fundamental part of Tawḥīd.

Allah said:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing”⁴

Shaykh Ibn Bāz رحمه الله explained: “We affirm what Allah has affirmed for Himself, without likening Him to His creation. We say: He has a Hand, as befits His Majesty, not like our hands. He rose over the Throne, in a manner befitting His Glory — not like His creation rises.”⁵

² Sūrah al-A‘rāf 7:180

³ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā 3/3

⁴ Sūrah ash-Shūrā 42:11

⁵ Fatāwā Nūr ‘ala ad-Darb

Thus, Tashbīh (saying His attributes are like creation) and Tamthīl (claiming resemblance) are completely rejected by Ahlus-Sunnah.

3. Rejection of Negation (Ta‘ṭīl)

It is not allowed to deny any of Allah’s Names or Attributes that are authentically established in revelation. The Jahmiyyah and other sects rejected Attributes like Mercy, Anger, and Speech — but Ahlus-Sunnah affirm them all, as found in the Qur’an and Sunnah, without interpreting them away.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said: “The foundation of ta‘ṭīl is from disbelief and hypocrisy. Whoever negates what Allah affirmed, or affirms what He negated, has accused the Prophet ﷺ of lying.”⁶

4. Not Asking 'How' (Takyīf)

The manner (kayfiyyah) of Allah’s Attributes is unknown to us. We do not delve into how — because we do not know how Allah is, nor can our minds grasp the reality of His Essence.

When Imām Mālik ibn Anas رحمه الله was asked about the meaning of istiwa’ (Allah rising over the Throne), he said: “al-istiwa’ is known, how (kayf) is unknown, belief in it is obligatory, and asking about it is an innovation.”⁷

This golden principle was the standard of the Salaf in every attribute.

In Summary: The Four Pillars Are:

- **Affirmation** without distortion (taḥrīf)
- **Denial of likeness** to creation (tashbīh)
- **No rejection** or negation (ta‘ṭīl)
- **No delving into the how** (takyīf)

Each pillar preserves the majesty, perfection, and uniqueness of Allah — in line with the creed of Ahlus-Sunnah.

⁶ as-Ṣawā‘iq al-Mursalāh, 1/255

⁷ Reported by al-Bayhaqī in al-Asmā’ waṣ-Ṣifāt

Conclusion: The Way of the Salaf

Imām al-Barbahārī رحمه الله said: “Do not go beyond the Qur’an and Hadith. A man should not speak about Allah except with what He described Himself with.”⁸

Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله stated: “The correct position is what the early Imams were upon: affirmation without resemblance, and denial without rejection.”⁹

And Shaykh al-Albānī رحمه الله said: “Whoever affirms the Attributes of Allah as they are revealed — without distortion, denial, or resembling Him to creation — he is upon the path of the Salaf.”¹⁰

⁸ Sharḥ al-Sunnah

⁹ Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā 5/26

¹⁰ al-Ajwibah al-Nāfi‘ah

