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Wāḥidī. *Wajīz*.

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See also: ACQUISITION; ĀDAM, UPON HIM PEACE; ‘ALAQA; ARTERIES AND VEINS; BASMALA; BEAUTIFUL NAMES OF ALLAH; BELIEF; BELIEVERS; BIRTH; BODY; COVENANT; DISBELIEF AND DOUBT; DISBELIEVERS; DREAMS AND THEIR INTERPRETATION; LANGUAGE AND SPEECH; THE NAME, THE NAMING, THE NAMED; NIGHT JOURNEY AND ASCENSION; AL-QUR’ĀN; REMEMBRANCE AND REMINDER OF ALLAH; SCIENCE OF QUR’ĀNIC RECITATION; SPEECH OF ALLAH; TAWHĪD; THRONE.

MUZAFFAR IQBAL
NASEER AHMAD



AHMAD

UPON HIM BLESSINGS AND PEACE

The second of the Prophet’s two proper names in the Qur’ān and, like “Muḥammad,” little used by the Arabs before him, “Aḥmad” is a comparative of superiority—the emphatic *af’al* form of (i) the participial adjective *ḥāmid*, “praiser,” and (ii) the verb *ḥamida*, “he praises/is praiseworthy,” aorist *yahmadu*, infinitive nouns *ḥamd*, *maḥmada*, and *taḥmīd*—mentioned only once in Sūrat al-Ṣaff, which is also called Sūrat al-Ḥawāriyyīn (cf. al-Suyūṭī, *Itqān*, Type 17), in the prophecy of Prophet ‘Īsā (*q.v.*) that *there would come a Prophet after me whose name is worthier of praise* (Q 61:6, *ismuhu Aḥmad*), such a Prophet being more praiseworthy than all Prophets, upon them blessings and peace, all of whom were eminent (*maḥmūdūn*) and intense praisers (*ḥammādūn*) (Baghawī and Qurṭubī, *Tafsīrs*,

sub Q 61:6; Rāghib, *sub ḥ-m-d*). The verse is usually translated along the following lines: *And when ‘Īsā son of Maryam said: Children of Isrā’īl! Behold, I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming whatever is before me of the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me and whose name is Aḥmad* (Q 61:6). Such a name, like that of Yahyā (cf. Q 19:7), was never given to any Prophet before (Aḥmad, Musnad al-‘asharat al-mubashsharīn bil-janna, wa-min musnad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib §763; hadith classed *ḥasan* according to Haythamī, *Majma’*, Ṭahāra, tayammum), so that the prophecy leaves no doubt as to whom is meant.

The Attribute of Praise

Ḥamd is homage (*thanā’*) paid for a voluntary gracious act, utter contentment (*riḍā*) (*q.v.*), and both the offshoot and apex of gratitude (*shukr*) (*q.v.*)—since, unlike the latter, praise (*q.v.*) publicizes past favors and can be gratuitous. Hence Ibn ‘Abbās (3BH-68/619-688) said: “He does not thank Allah, who does not praise Him” (*Tafsīrs* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ṭabarī, and Bayḍawī, *sub* Q 1:2; al-‘Askarī, *Furūq*, p. 39-40; al-Ṭanāhī, *Min asrār al-lughā*, *sub ḥ-m-d*). The form *aḥmad* can bear, moreover, one or more of the following meanings:

- the first person singular imperfect (present and future tense) conjugation of the verb “to praise”;
- a nominal descriptive in the passive sense of an inherent trait, as in *abyaḍ* (white) and *akhḍar* (green), to mean “praise-natured”;
- a nominal descriptive in the intensive active sense—similar to the participials *ḥāmid* and *ḥammād*—either comparatively or superlatively to mean “oft-praising” and “more/most praiseful”; and
- the same in the passive—identically with *muḥammad*, *maḥmūd*, and *ḥamīd*—to mean “one who is oft-praised” and “more/most praised” (Ibn Fāris, *sub ḥ-m-d* and *Asmā’ Rasūl Allāh*, p. 31; Ibn Sīda, *Muḥkam*, *sub ḥ-m-d*).

Al-Qurṭubī cites a verse of poetry he attributes to Abū Ṭālib (d. 3BH/619), the uncle of the Prophet, in which *aḥmad* is used either as a superlative adjective in genitive construct or as a proper noun followed by three attributes:

*Wa-Allāhu yashhadu anna a/Aḥmada muṣṭafan/
mustaqbalun fī-l-ṣāliḥīna karīmun
Allah bears witness that the most praised [of His] elect/
comes first among the righteous and is noble*

or



Q 61:6. *wa mubashshiran bi-rasūlin ya'tī min ba'di-smuhu aḥmad.*

announcing glad tidings of a messenger to come after me, his name Aḥmad (the Praised One).

(Sāmī Āffendī)

Allah bears witness that Aḥmad is chosen [by Him], / and comes first among the righteous, and is noble.

sub Q 6:26

A Glorious and Ancient Name

The name Aḥmad thus formally signals that the Prophet combines glory and primacy in his person, the status of one who praises Allah before, more, and better than any other creature, being himself praised by Him more deservedly and abundantly than any other creature, the exclusive possessor of the “Sura of Ḥamd” (the Fātiḥa) among Prophets (Nasā’ī, Ifitāḥ, ta’wīl qawl Allāh *wa-laqaḍ ātaynāka sab’an min al-mathānī*; Tirmidhī, Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān, mā jā’ fī faḍl Fātiḥat al-Kitāb, *ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ*), “the most magnificent of praisers, the best of those praised, the most abundant in praise (*aḥmad al-maḥmūdīn* and *aḥmad al-ḥāmidīn*); with him is the banner of praise on the Day of Resurrection, so that the perfection of praise shall be accomplished for him and his fame be proclaimed on those plains with the attribute of praise, whereupon Allah Most High shall raise him to an exalted station as He promised him. There, the first and the last shall praise him for his intercession for them” (‘Iyāḍ, *Shifā*, III, fī asmā’ih ‘alayh al-salām), which intercession and praise both encompass the



Q 68:4. *Wa innaka la-‘alā khuluqin ‘azīm.*

And truly you are of tremendous character.

(Hāshim Muḥammad al-Baḡhdādī)

unbelievers (*ahl al-jam‘ kulluhum* cf. Bukhārī, Zakāt, man sa’ala al-nās takaththuran).

More than five Companions have narrated that the Prophet said:

Truly I was [already], in the sight of Allah, the Seal of Prophets, when Ādam was still kneaded in his clay. I shall inform you of the meaning (*ta’wīl*) [or “beginning” (*awwal*)] of this. It is the supplication of my father Ibrāhīm (Q 2:129) and the glad tidings of my brother ‘Īsā to his people (Q 61:6); and the dream my mother saw the night I was delivered: she saw a light that lit the palaces of Syro-Palestine so that she could discern them.

Aḥmad, Musnad al-Shāmiyyin, ḥadīth al-‘Irbāḍ b. Sāriya—a *ṣaḥīḥ* report according to two different editors of the *Musnad*,

Ḥamza al-Zayn [13:282 §17086, 13:285 §17098] and Shu‘ayb al-Arna’ūt [28:382 §17151, 28:395 §17163] among others

Less established narrations in Ibn Sa’d (d. 230/ca.845) and al-Bayhaqī’s (384-458/994-1066) chapters on pre-Prophethood miracles specify that the Prophet’s mother Āmina bint Wahb was told in a dream to name him Aḥmad (*Ṭabaqāt* 1:125-126; *Dalā’il al-nubuwwa* 1:82).

Thus, in addition to its linguistic emphasis, the use of the name “Aḥmad” in the Qur’anic verse also reflects its historical and creational primacy over that of “Muḥammad,” the sequences of praise implied by the former, and their next-worldly connotations:

“Aḥmad” was singled out as his name instead of “Muḥammad,” although the latter is the no-