

(excerpted from *Physicians of the Heart*, Chapter 5)

66. Ya Ahad (yaa A-ḥad)

يَا أَحَدَ

Al-Ahad means total and absolute oneness. It is the one of the one. It should not be confused with the conception of the totality of all things. Oneness is an essential characteristic of Allah. God is absolutely singular and unique. Al-Ahad is the one without a second. It is a unicity. You can't add the one of al-Ahad to itself and get two. In its concreteness, only one is. It has no opposite. Nothing is like this one. From the view of al-Ahad, of unity, no distinctions are made between the different prophets of God. Each one of them is a complete entity of the whole. Al-Ahad is the center of a circle without a circumference. See Ya Samad (67), with which it is often paired in recitation, and Ya Wahid (65). See Chapter 15, Names of Time and Eternity.

67. Ya Samad (yaa ṢA-mad)

يَا صَمَدَ

As-Samad is the continuity of eternity. It is the circumference of the circle that expands eternally, whose center is everywhere. It is infinite expansive space. The root form *samad(an)* means continuously. As-Samad is the relationship between al-Ahad, the One of the One, and al-Wahid, the One of the Many. Although it may be impossible to conceptualize the coexistence of these two kinds of oneness, in as-Samad they are reconciled. In recitation, you invoke Ya Ahad, the infinite dot or singularity, and pair it with Ya Samad, the infinite circle that expands eternally. Invoking them as a pair will assist in bringing you true balance in life. As-Samad is connected with the word *samdah*, which means castle or citadel. It conveys the sense that the ground on which you stand is infinite. See Ya Wahid (65) and Ya Ahad (66). See Chapter 15, Names of Time and Eternity.

(excerpted from *Physicians of the Heart*,
Chapter 15: Temporal and Eternal Aspects of the Divine Nature)

Ya Ahad Ya Samad,
(yaa A-ḥad yaa ṢA-mad)

يَا أَحَدَ يَا صَمَدَ

As-Samad is one of the most untranslatable words in the Arabic language. Roughly speaking, it means that everything depends on Allah, but Allah doesn't depend on anything else. We find as-Samad paired with al-Ahad in the Unity Surah of the Qur'an [see below for Imam Bilal's translation of Surah Ikhlas, Unity — Muiz] , and their similarity in sound emphasizes the strength of this pairing.

The eternal continuance of a thing is called *samadiyyah*. This is part of the meaning of *as-Samad*. However, we can't properly grasp the whole meaning of *as-Samad* without looking at it together with *al-Ahad*. Taken together they mean the One and the Infinite at the same time. The singularity of *al-Ahad* is the dot at the center of the continuous effulgence of the infinite circumference, which is *as-Samad*.

Must an infinite singularity that is at the same time one and infinite include each and every possibility without exception? Intuitively speaking, the answer is yes. And that would include even apparently contradictory possibilities such as the possibility of not being, or the possibility of the infinite being finite. This direction of inquiry again makes it clear that we should not reject the relative as illusory and unimportant, as it is clearly and directly a part of the God reality.

The reverse of the question we posed above might be stated: "Does the totality of all possibilities necessitate a singular and infinite oneness?" If so, that would posit the one as the source of all. This way of posing the question appears to be a kind of reformulation of the ontological argument for the existence of God first presented by Saint Anselm and generally expressed as: "I have an idea of a being than which no greater can be conceived; therefore God is."

Al-Ahad describes a state of being. It is a single, transcendental, and infinite singularity or oneness. This oneness of being is called *ahadiyyah*. *Ahad* and *ahadiyyah* refer to states, and *samad* (and *samadiyyah*) refer to processes. From the point of view of *al-Ahad* there is just the One.

Samdah, however, means to return to a place of origin. From its perspective, there is the continuous process of returning or reconnecting to the one. It is a perpetual movement toward the one, an activity that never ceases. **Al-Ahad means a unity that has no "toward the one" in it because there's no journey, there's no separation, there's no traveler, and there's no path.**

One surprisingly good thing about all this paradox-filled philosophical discussion is that you can sing it! We, the writers of this book, feel that none of the sublimity of these teachings truly penetrates without ecstatic chanting. Each of us should use the invocation of the sacred Names as a kind of a stepladder to the realities behind the words. A ladder is of no value if you just admire it but don't use it.

There is another kind of unity that is called *waahidiyyah*—the mystical and transcendental oneness that underlies not only all forms but each and every form. Everything is a mirror for God's face. That is called *waahidiyyah*. So the totality or infinite can be perceived within each and every finite element. It is the vision of infinity in a grain of sand. Every speck reflects the infinite. Consequently, you can see a thing as finite and you can see a thing as infinite at the same time.

God-realized beings can do this all the time with no effort, but the rest of us have to manipulate the symbols to perceive or unveil the infinite. The way this is done with time is called *at-talwaanee*. It basically means slowing down the flow of time, stretching it out using various techniques such as music, chanting, ritual prayer, dancing, and meditation.

The effect of these practices is to manipulate the experience of time itself. Using these ecstatic techniques, the units of time may be metaphorically perceived as beads on a string. Then, at one point, you may be able to slip between the moments to perceive timelessness. It is called *'ibn al-waqt*, the

“child of the moment.”

The moment, in some states of consciousness, is timelessness itself. It is a moment and yet it is not a moment because it contains all moments. It is like the metaphor of Indra’s net in Hinduism: a net with a jewel at each intersection, each jewel reflecting all the other jewels of the net. **In *waahidiyyah*, every Name is the greatest Name of God — because it is a Name, and thus contains all the rest of the Names.**

As-Samad expresses a complementary process in which each and every thing returns us to the One. Every Name, every plurality, is another opportunity to realize the *waahidiyyah* underneath it. By contrast, *ahadiyyah* is like the field of Oneness. It is all-inclusive, and there is no place where we can make distinctions, such as that a thing is other than Oneness.

A spiritual wayfarer may be going through the process of experiencing the divinity of their embodiment as an individuated soul. Before reaching the cosmic unity, they reach personal oneness. The personal oneness is experienced as a point of light. It is an inner being of light within them. In this sense, al-Ahad is the individuated identity, the individuated God within, the dot within the circle.

As-Samad can then be seen as the continual process of this individuality flowing into union with the infinite, pictured as the ever-expanding circumference. It is a continual sensing of unity, but you exist in this unity as an individual rather than existing in the infinite as the infinite. You become uniquely responsible for creation in the universe you embody.

Everything exists in the absolute, but there is a unique individuality. Ar-Rahman, for example, can refer to God not only as an oceanic loving mercy but also as an individual who is made of divine love, who actualizes it.

We strongly recommend the recitation of Ya Ahad, Ya Samad as a pair. We also recommend invocation of Ya Wahid, Ahad, Rahman. This latter practice emphasizes the individualization, or realization of one’s true soul essence that is the doorway to the oceanic. The ocean exists, but a unique fish is swimming in it. In doing this practice, vocalize “Ya” only before Wahid.

When you progress through your own narcissistic issues of hurt and lostness and disconnected identity, al-Ahad enters the picture and you experience your self as a unique entity. In a complementary way, as-Samad makes possible the constant communion or interaction between the fish and the ocean. What manifests is your own unique mandala or divine configuration. Seeing the whole picture enables you to awaken more as an individual, to become aware of the personality that you have composed in particular, and to understand how to transmute it.

Sura Ikhlas (Unity)

translation by Imam Bilal Hyde

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (١)

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (٢)

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (٣)

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (٤)

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (٥)

1. Bismi-llah ir-Rahman ir-Rahim.
2. Qul Huw Allahu **'Ahad**
3. Allahu us-**Samad**
4. Lam yalid, wa lam yulad
5. Wa lam yakul-la-hu kufuwan **'Ahad**.

Standard Translation

1. In the Name of Allah—the Most Compassionate, Most Merciful.
2. Say, [O Prophet,] "He is Allah—One [and Indivisible];
3. Allah—the Sustainer [needed by all].
4. He has never had offspring, nor was He born.
5. And there is none comparable to Him."

Imam Bilal's Translation

1. We begin in God's great name,
Infinite Love (ar-Rahman), Overwhelming Tenderness (ar-Rahim).
2. Say: [That the secret of secrets is this]:
God is One, The One and only One (al-Ahad).
3. God is Infinite Presence and Eternal Refuge,
in whom all things finally return (as-Samad).
4. God has no beginning, and never was begun,
5. And besides God, there is no one (al-Ahad) at all.