

# Explaining Sūrah al-Fātiḥah

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## Sūrah al-Fātiḥah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

1	All praise and thanks are for Allah, the lord of all creations.	﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾
2	The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.	﴿ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴾
3	The owner of the Day of Recompense.	﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾
4	You alone we worship, and from you alone we seek help.	﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾
5	Guide us to the straight path.	﴿ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾
6	The path of those you bestowed grace upon.	﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾
7	Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are astray. <sup>1</sup>	﴿ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴾

<sup>1</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:1-7.

## Introduction

Sūrah al-Fātiḥah (“The Opening”) has been named this because the Quran is opened and begins with this Sūrah, or chapter. It is also been said that it was the first complete chapter to be revealed entirely.

The scholars say that this chapter comprises, in general, the meanings of the whole Quran with regards to Tawḥīd (monotheism, i.e. worshipping Allah alone), legislative rulings, rewards and recompense, the different paths the children of Adam take, and other issues. For this, it has been referred to as أمّ القرآن (Umm al-Qurān), or “The Mother of the Quran,”<sup>2</sup> as the foundation or origin of something is often referred to in Arabic as “mother.”

This chapter has some distinguishing characteristics which set it apart from other chapters. It is a main pillar of the prayers which are themselves the best pillar of Islam after the two testimonies (I testify that nothing has any right to be worshipped except Allah alone, and I testify that Muhammad is his messenger). There is no valid prayer for one who does not recite this opening chapter of the book. It is also a cure; if it is read over someone who is sick, he or she will be cured by the permission of Allah. The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said to someone who recited it over another person suffering from a scorpion sting who was healed by it:

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<sup>2</sup> The ḥadīth indicating this is recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 772), Muslim (no. 395), and at-Tirmidhī (no. 3124) with the wording, “al-Ḥamdu lillāh’ is the Mother of the Quran, the Mother of the Book, and seven often-repeated similar verses.”

« وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ أَنَّهَا رُقِيَّةٌ ؟ »

How did you know it was a cure?<sup>3</sup>

Today however, some people unfortunately do various innovated yet unsanctioned religious practices regarding this chapter. You find some of them ending their supplications by reciting this chapter, beginning their lectures with it, and reading it in specific circumstances as they see fit; this is all wrong. You may see, for example, when someone supplicates, he says to those around him, “al-Fātiḥah!” meaning: “Recite al-Fātiḥah.” Others make it a point to always begin their lectures with it or recite it religiously in certain situations they deem appropriate for it. This is wrong because any act of worship must be based upon what has authentically been reported to us (by way of the Quran or Sunnah) and it must be done in the manner the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did it or approved of.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 2276) and Muslim (no. 2201).

<sup>4</sup> This entire article was taken from the book “Tafsīr of Juz ‘Amma” by Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn. The original Arabic text can be found at: [http://www.ibnothaimen.com/all/books/article\\_17861.shtml](http://www.ibnothaimen.com/all/books/article_17861.shtml).

The Explanation of  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(Bismillāh ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm)

In the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.<sup>5</sup>

The statement of Allah, ﴿In the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy﴾ contains a preposition and an object of the preposition which are both actually connected to a delayed, missing verb appropriate to the situation in which the Basmalah<sup>5</sup> is used. For example, if you say, “In the name of Allah,” while you are beginning to eat, then the meaning with the missing verb included would be, “In the name of Allah, I eat.”

We say there must be a connected missing verb because a preposition and the object of the preposition, in Arabic, must both refer to an action. This delayed action or verb is deferred until after mentioning the name of Allah for two benefits: first, to seek the blessing of mentioning Allah’s name first and foremost; and second, a delayed action indicates that it is restricted, as if you are saying, “I do not eat in the name of anyone, and I do not seek blessings and help by any name except with the name of Allah.”

<sup>5</sup> The statement بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (Bismillāh ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm) “In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy” is referred to as the *Basmalah*.

We say that the delayed missing word is a verb because action words are verbs and this is known to the specialists of Arabic grammar. So because of this, nouns do not apply except with specific conditions.

We also say that it (the deferred, missing verb) is appropriate to the situation in which the statement is made because the statement itself indicates the intended verb which is according to the situation. For example, Allah's messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) specified the verb when he said:

« مَنْ لَمْ يَذْبَحْ فَلْيَذْبَحْ بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ »

Whoever has not already slaughtered (his animal), then let him slaughter in the name of Allah.<sup>6</sup>

Or he said:

« عَلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ »

...upon the name of Allah.<sup>7</sup>

﴿Allah﴾ (Allāh): "Allah" is the proper name for the lord of all the creations. No one else is named with this name. It is the base origin of all the other names (of Allah) and all of them follow and describe this name.

<sup>6</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 985) and Muslim (no. 1970).

<sup>7</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 5500) and Muslim (no. 1970).

﴿**the Most-Merciful**﴾ (ar-Raḥmān): This proper name of Allah means, “the one who is described with expansive, all-encompassing mercy.” Even the Arabic root form of the word that this name is based on indicates a sense of expansiveness according to the rules of Arabic conjugation.

﴿**The Bestower of all mercy**﴾ (ar-Raḥīm): This is another name meaning, “the one who bestows mercy on whomever he wills of his servants.” The Arabic form of the word here indicates the occurrence of the action.

So here, mercy is one of Allah’s characteristics and attributes indicated by the name, “ar-Raḥmān.” Mercy also relates to Allah’s action – bestowing mercy on the creation – and this is indicated by his name “ar-Raḥīm.”

ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm are both actual names of Allah with which he describes himself. They prove the attribute of mercy and its associated effect.

This attribute of mercy that Allah has affirmed for himself is an actual characteristic of mercy as is proven by the Islamic legislation and the intellect. As for the legislative proofs, they are those which have come in the Quran or the Sunnah confirming the attribute of Allah’s mercy and there are many proofs like this. As for the intellect, then whatever occurs of favors and whatever adversity is prevented, these are only the effects of Allah’s mercy.

Even after this, some people still deny and reject the idea of describing Allah with a real, actual characteristic of mercy. They distort its meaning and misinterpret it to mean “the bestowing of favors” or the “intent to bestow favors.” They claim that it is impossible for one’s intellect to describe Allah with mercy mistakenly saying, “...because mercy is a swaying emotion consisting of softness, humbleness, and sympathy. Such things do not befit Allah!” This statement of theirs is refuted in two ways:

1. First, this is untrue because we even find the characteristic of mercy among the powerful kings with no humbleness, sympathy, or being overcome with sorrow.
2. Second, even if this were the case with the attribute of mercy and what it indicates, this is regarding mercy as it pertains to the creation. As for the mercy of the creator, it is an attribute that befits his greatness and majesty, indicating no sense of deficiency in any way.

We then say that the intellect actually does indicate the affirmation of a real attribute of mercy to Allah ( سبحانه وتعالى ). Whatever we witness of mercy among the creation between themselves, this itself indicates the mercy of Allah. It is a perfect attribute of mercy and Allah is the most deserving of attributes of perfection. More so, we also witness particular acts of mercy that only pertain to Allah such as the sending of rain, ending drought, and similar acts that indicate his mercy.

The amazing thing is that these people who deny Allah’s attribute of mercy based upon their claim that the intellect does not rationalize it or make it possible, you find the same

people affirming an actual attribute of intent or decision to Allah based upon a similar intellectual proof. They say, “The fact that some of the creation have distinguishing characteristics specific to each of them indicates, from the intellect, the attribute of decision and will.” No doubt, this is correct. However, this indication is even much less than the effects of mercy we see among the creation because noticing such minute distinguishing features is specific to those of such fields. However, as for the effects of Allah’s mercy, even the common people notice this. If you were to ask a common, uneducated person in the morning after a rainy night, “Why did we receive rain?” he would probably reply with something like, “By the favor of Allah and his mercy.”

**Question:** Is the Basmalah an actual verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah or Not?

The scholars hold differing opinions about this issue. Some say that it is definitely a verse from al-Fātiḥah and it should be recited aloud in those prayers which are recited out-loud. They believe it is not correct unless the Basmalah is recited since it is part of the entire chapter of al-Fātiḥah. Other scholars say that it is not a verse of al-Fātiḥah, but it is a separate verse from the book of Allah. This latter opinion is the correct one and is proven by other texts as well as the context of the chapter itself.

As for the textual proof, Abū Hurayrah ( رضي الله عنه ) narrated a ḥadīth in which the prophet ( صلى الله عليه وسلم ) said:

« قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ ، إِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : حَمِدَنِي عَبْدِي ، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : أَتْنَى عَلَيَّ عَبْدِي ، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى :  
 مَجْدَنِي عَبْدِي ، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى : هَذَا بَيْنِي  
 وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ ، وَإِذَا قَالَ : ﴿ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾ إلخ ، قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى :  
 هَذَا لِعَبْدِي ، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ «

Allah ( تَعَالَى ) says, “I have divided the prayer in two parts between myself and my servant.” When the servant recites, **﴿All praise and thanks are to Allah, the lord of all creations﴾**, Allah says, “My servant has praised me.” And when he recites, **﴿The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy﴾**, Allah says, “My servant has honored me.” When he recites, **﴿The owner of the Day of Recompense﴾**, Allah says, “My servant has glorified me.” When he recites, **﴿You alone we worship and from you alone we seek help﴾**, Allah replies, “This is two parts between my servant and I.” When he recites, **﴿Guide us to the straight path...﴾** until the end of the chapter, Allah replies, “This is for My servant and he will have what he asks for.”<sup>8</sup>

This is a textual proof that the Basmalah is not an actual verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah (because it was not the first statement the servant says as mentioned in this ḥadīth).

There is another authentic statement of Anas ibn Mālik ( رضي الله عنه ) in “Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim” in which he said:

<sup>8</sup> Recorded by Muslim (no. 395).

I prayed behind the prophet ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ), Abū Bakr, and ‘Umar and none of them used to mention “In the name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy” at the beginning of their recitations (of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah) nor at the end of it.<sup>9</sup>

What is meant is that each of them used not to mention it aloud. The fact that there is a distinction between it not being recited aloud as the rest of al-Fātiḥah is recited indicates that it is not actually a part of the chapter.

As for the proof from the context of the other verses’ meanings, Sūrah al-Fātiḥah consists of seven verses as is unanimously agreed upon. If you wanted to measure out seven verses as they pertain to the topics of the chapter, you will find that the middle verse is:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

**You alone we worship and from you alone we seek help.**<sup>10</sup>

This is the same verse about which Allah says, “This is two parts between my servant and I” in the previous ḥadīth. This is because the first verse is:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

**All praise and thanks are for Allah, the Lord of all creations.**<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Recorded by Muslim (no. 399).

<sup>10</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:4.

<sup>11</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:1.

The second verse is:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

**The Most Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.**<sup>12</sup>

The third verse:

﴿ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾

**The owner of the Day of Recompense.**<sup>13</sup>

These three previous verses are all about the rights of Allah (his attribute, actions, etc.).

As for the verse:

﴿ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴾

**You alone we worship, and from you alone we seek help.**<sup>14</sup>

This is the fourth verse and the half-way point and it too is even divided into two parts, one part for Allah (“**You alone we worship...**”) and one part for the servant (“**...from you alone we seek help.**”).

The following verses are:

<sup>12</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:2.

<sup>13</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:3.

<sup>14</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:4.

﴿ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴾

**Guide us to the straight path.**<sup>15</sup>

This is for the servant.

﴿ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾

**The path of those upon whom You bestowed Your grace.**<sup>16</sup>

This is also for the servant.

﴿ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴾

**Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are  
astray.**<sup>17</sup>

And finally, this last verse is also for the servant.

So, three verses are for Allah ( عزَّ وجلَّ ) and they are the first three. And three verses are for the servant and they are the last three. One verse is between both the servant and his lord and it is the fourth and middle verse.

As for the proof from the context of the wordings, if we say that the Basmalah is a verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, then the seventh verse would be very long – as long as two of the

<sup>15</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:5.

<sup>16</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:6.

<sup>17</sup> Sūrah al-Fātiḥah, 1:7.

other verses (thus making the last and incomparably long verse, **“The path of those upon whom you bestowed your grace, not of those who earned anger, nor of those who are astray.”**). But it is known that the principle of the verses being similar to each other is also regarding their length.

So, the correct opinion no doubt is that the Basmalah is not a verse of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah just as it is not a verse (at the beginning) of every other chapter in the Quran.

## The Explanation of Verse 1:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

(al-Ḥamdu lillāhi Rabb al-'Ālamīn)

All praise and thanks are for Allah, the lord of all creations.

﴿**All praise and thanks**﴾ (al-Ḥamd): This word الْحَمْدُ (al-Ḥamd) is used only to describe someone, out of love and honor, with complete perfection of self, attributes, and actions. So, Allah is perfect in his self, his attributes, and his actions. This praising, however, must be with a condition, it must be made with love and honor. The people of knowledge say that simply describing someone with perfection yet not out of real love and honor for the praised one is not called حَمْدٌ (Ḥamd). Rather, in that case it would only be called مَدْحٌ (Madḥ) (a lesser degree of praise or admiration). Therefore, this (second) type of praising occurs often from people while they may not really love the one they are praising. Often, they only want to gain something from them. For example, some poets stand before their government leaders and recite poetry of amazing praiseworthy descriptions of them yet void of any real love for them. The poets' love is for the wealth they are given or they do this out of fear of the leaders. On the contrary, our praise for our lord is a form of praise out of love and honor. So, ﴿**All praise and thanks**﴾ is to praise the one described with total perfection out of love and honor for him.

The ال (al-) in الْحَمْدُ (al-Ḥamd) is inclusive, meaning that it includes *all* forms of praise and thanks.

﴿are for Allah﴾ (lillāhi): The ل (li) is to show possession and a sense of deserving. The name “Allah” is the proper name of our lord (عزَّ وجلَّ) and no one else is given this name; it means the one god that is worshipped out of love and honor.

﴿the lord﴾ (Rabb): The word “lord” here includes three main descriptions: the creator, the owner, and the controller of all affairs. So, he is the creator of all that exists, the owner of all that exists, and the controller of everything.

﴿of all creations﴾ (al-'Ālamīn): As for the word “Ālamīn”, the scholars say it refers to anything and everything other than Allah. Everything else besides Allah is described with this word because the very existence of everything is a sign or indication (in Arabic: Ālam) that they have a creator (سبحانه وتعالى).

In every form of creation there is a sign indicating the existence of its creator, his capability, wisdom, mercy, power, and the rest of his attributes of lordship.

### Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verse 1:

1. One of the beneficial points we gain from this verse is the affirmation of praise of perfection to Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ). This is shown by the “al-” in the word “al-Ḥamd” because this definite article in Arabic grammar is inclusive to include all forms of praise and gratitude.

2. It also shows that Allah alone deserves all forms of praise and gratitude. For this reason, the prophet ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ) used to say whenever something happened he was happy with:

« الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي بِنِعْمَتِهِ تُتِمُّ الصَّالِحَاتِ »

All praise and thanks are for Allah by whose favor righteous deeds are fulfilled.

And he would say when if something did not please him:

« الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ »

All praise and thanks are for Allah in all situations.<sup>18</sup>

3. Another point of benefit from the verse is the description of Allah with his sole right to worship first before describing him with his lordship. This is either indicated because the name “Allah” is his proper name, specific to him and the source of all the rest of His names; or it is due to the fact that the people the messengers were sent to used to only deny Allah’s sole right to worship. Most of the people did not deny Allah’s lordship (that he is the creator, owner, and controller of everything).
4. This verse also proves Allah’s complete lordship over all of the creations due to his statement: ﴿ **The lord of all creations.** ﴾

<sup>18</sup> Recorded by Ibn Mājah (no. 3803) and al-Ḥākim in his “Mustadrak” (1/449) and he said, “This ḥadīth has an authentic chain of narrators.” adh-Dhahabī agreed with him. The famous ḥadīth scholar, al-Albānī, said it is “ḥasan” in “Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah” (no. 3066).

## The Explanation of Verse 2:

﴿الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

(ar-Raḥmān ar-Raḥīm)

## The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

﴿**The Most-Merciful**﴾ (ar-Raḥmān): This is both a description and a proper name of Allah.

﴿**The Bestower of all mercy**﴾ (ar-Raḥīm): This is another description and name. ar-Raḥmān means the one who has all-expansive mercy and ar-Raḥīm is the one who bestows and is the source of all mercy. So, ar-Raḥmān refers to the description and ar-Raḥīm refers to the action. Yet when either of these two names comes separately, not connected with the other, then they each indicate both the description and action of mercy. But when joined together, ar-Raḥmān is explained as the description of mercy and ar-Raḥīm is the action of mercy.

**Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verse 2:**

1. From the virtues of this verse is that these two perfect names, ar-Raḥmān and ar-Raḥīm, are established and confirmed for Allah (سبحانه وتعالى). Their associated descriptions are also established: the description of mercy as a characteristic and the description of being merciful as an action.

2. The lordship of Allah is based upon all-encompassing mercy and this mercy constantly reaches the creation, because right before this verse, Allah says, ﴿**The lord of all creations.**﴾ So, one might ask, “What is this lordship based upon? Is it a lordship of retribution and revenge or one of mercy and favors?” So, immediately after, Allah then says, describing himself further, ﴿**The Most-Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.**﴾ indicating that his lordship is based upon mercy.

## The Explanation of Verse 3:

﴿مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ﴾

(Māliki Yawm ad-Dīn)

## The owner of the Day of Recompense.

﴿**The owner of the Day of Recompense.**﴾ (Māliki Yawm ad-Dīn): This verse is another description of Allah and “Yawm ad-Dīn” is the Day of Resurrection or the Day of Judgment.

﴿**The owner**﴾ (Mālik): Regarding the word مَالِكِ “Mālik,” there are two different ways of reciting it according to the seven permissible ways of Quran recitation. The second way of reciting it is: مَلِكِ (Malik) which means “the king.” The word “King” is more specific than “Owner.”

There is an amazing point here to be taken from both of these two different recitations. Allah’s kingdom and ownership are true and perfect. And even some of the creation may be a “king” yet not a true “owner.” Such a person is merely referred to as a king or ruler, yet has no real ownership or control over anything.<sup>19</sup> And similarly, there are many people who are owners (of something) yet not kings, like most of the people. But our lord is the true and complete owner and king.

<sup>19</sup> In explaining this same point on his cassettes, “Sharḥ ‘Aqīdah Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah”, Ibn al-'Uthaymīn mentioned the Queen of England as an example of this type. His recorded lectures of this can be found at: [http://www.ibnothaimen.com/publish/cat\\_index\\_79.shtml](http://www.ibnothaimen.com/publish/cat_index_79.shtml).

﴿**Recompense**﴾ (ad-Dīn): Here the word “ad-Dīn” means recompense, meaning that Allah is the only owner of that day on which the creations will be rewarded or recompensed (for whatever they earned of good or evil). On that day, there will be no other owner or decision-maker. Sometimes the word ad-Dīn is used to refer to recompense as in this verse, and other times it refers to actions (or religion) as in the verse:

﴿لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ﴾

**To you is your action (or religion) and to me is my action (or religion).**<sup>20</sup>

A form of the same word is also used to refer to both meanings in the well-known Arabic phrase: كَمَا تَدِينُ تُدَانُ meaning, “As you act, you will be recompensed accordingly.”

### Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verse 3:

1. From the benefits of this verse is the confirmation of a true and perfect ownership to Allah and complete authority on the Day of Recompense because on that day, all ownership, decision-making, judgment, and kingship of anyone else will vanish.

It may be asked, “But is not Allah the owner of this life as well as the Day of recompense? (If so, why specialize the Day of Recompense in this verse?)”

<sup>20</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Kāfirūn, 109:6.

The answer is without a doubt, “Yes,” but His complete ownership, kingship, and absolute authority will be totally apparent and realized by everyone on that day, the day he will ask:

﴿لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ﴾

**To whom belongs all kingship today?**<sup>21</sup>

No one would dare answer, so Allah himself replies:

﴿لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ﴾

**To Allah, the One, the Prevailing.**<sup>22</sup>

In this life, the kingship and power of worldly kings is apparent. In fact, some people even believe there is no king as powerful as their own. The Communists, for example, do not believe in the existence of a lord of the heavens and earth. They believe that life is only deliverance from the wombs to decay in the ground, and their president or leader is their lord.

2. Another point of benefit from this verse is the proof of resurrection after death and that everyone will be recompensed according to what they earned of good or bad.

This is based on the statement, ﴿**The owner of the Day of Recompense.**﴾

<sup>21</sup> The Quran, Sūrah Ghāfir, 40:16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

3. This verse also encourages mankind to act and prepare for that day on which they will be repaid according to what they have done.

## The Explanation of Verse 4:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

(iyyāka na'budu wa iyyāka nasta'in)

**You alone we worship, and from you alone we seek help.**

﴿**You alone**﴾ (iyyāka): This is a case in grammar when the direct object comes before the verb, ﴿**we worship**﴾ (na'budu). In Arabic grammar, when the direct object precedes the verb, it gives a sense of restriction, so the meaning would be, "We do not worship anyone or anything except you alone."

﴿**we worship**﴾ (na'budu): Meaning: We humble ourselves to you in complete humility. In this way, you find the believers placing the most honorable part of their bodies (their faces) at the level of their feet in humility to Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ). They prostrate on the ground, covering their foreheads with dirt. This is from their humbleness before Allah. And if another person were to say, "I will give you the whole world and what it contains, just prostrate to me once," you will never find true believers accepting this because this type of humility is a form of worship specifically for Allah alone.

The word "worship" includes doing everything Allah commands and avoiding everything he forbids. Whoever is not in accordance with this, not carrying out what he is commanded to do and avoiding what he is forbidden to do then he is not a true worshipper and servant. A worshipper is someone who obeys the one he worships in whatever he legislates. So, worship requires that mankind carry out everything they are commanded to do and avoid everything they are forbidden from doing. However, it is

not possible to fulfill all of these duties without the help and assistance of Allah. Because of this, Allah ( سبحانه وتعالى ) then says:

﴿and from you alone we seek help﴾ (wa iyyāka nasta'īn): Meaning, “We do not seek the help of anyone else in worship or in anything else.” This “seeking of help” is to request the help and assistance, and Allah combines between worship and the seeking of assistance or reliance in many places the noble Quran. This is because worship could not be completely established except with the help of Allah by entrusting one’s affairs to him, and relying on him.

#### Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verse 4:

1. From the virtues of this verse is the sincerity in worship that is due to Allah alone as he says, ﴿You alone we worship﴾. It shows that this worship is due only to Allah by the direct object (“You”) coming before the verb (“we worship”) according to the rules of Arabic grammar.
2. Another point is that seeking help is also sincerely and solely for Allah based on the statement, ﴿and from you alone we seek help﴾. Likewise, the direct object precedes the verb indicating a sense of restriction just like in the first part of the verse.

Those points being said, what if someone asks: How is it that seeking help is exclusively for Allah alone when there has come in another verse:

﴿ وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى ﴾

**And help one another in righteousness and piety.<sup>23</sup>**

So, how do we understand the previous statements about seeking help only from Allah when, here in this verse, Allah confirms that seeking help from other than himself is permissible (rather it is a command here)? Also, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« تُعِينُ الرَّجُلَ فِي دَابَّتِهِ، فَتَحْمِلُهُ عَلَيْهَا، أَوْ تَرَفَعُ لَهُ عَلَيْهَا مَتَاعَهُ صَدَقَةٌ »

Helping someone onto his riding animal, carrying him on it, or lifting his belongings up to him while he is on it - all of these are (considered) acts of charity.<sup>24</sup>

The answer to this question is that the act of seeking help and assistance is of two types. The first type is to request help while entrusting all affairs to the one you ask from. For example, you rely completely on Allah and you realize that any result you seek will not come from your own power or capability. This type of seeking help is specific for Allah (تعالى); he alone deserves this type.

The second type is to request help or cooperation in something you want to accomplish. This type is permissible as long as the one being requested is living and capable of

<sup>23</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:2.

<sup>24</sup> Recorded by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 2891) and Muslim (no. 1009).

doing what is asked of him. This is not considered a form of worship. This is the type that Allah refers to when saying:

﴿وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى﴾

**And help one another in righteousness and piety.<sup>25</sup>**

If it is further asked, “Is seeking help from the creation permissible at all times and in all situations?”

The answer is no. Requesting help from the creation is only allowed when the one being asked is fully capable of what he is being asked for, otherwise seeking his help is not permissible. An example would be asking help from someone dead in his grave; this is prohibited, rather it is major Shirk (the associating of partners with Allah in worship)! This is because the person in his grave does not even have the ability to help himself, so how could he help someone else? Similarly, if someone seeks the help of another person who is not present with him such as a person believing that someone else in the far eastern part of the world could help him with something in his (the one seeking help) land – this is also major Shirk because the person whose help is sought is not capable of helping the seeker while they are in different lands.

If it is now asked, “So, is it permissible to seek help from the creation if these conditions are met?”

<sup>25</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:2.

The answer is that it is better not to ask anyone for any help unless it is absolutely necessary or if it is known that the person would be happy to provide help. In this case, one could request his assistance in order to please him. The act that you seek another's help in fulfilling must also not be something sinful and prohibited.

## The Explanation of Verse 5:

﴿اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ﴾

(ihdinā aṣ-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm)

## Guide us to the straight path.

﴿the path﴾ (aṣ-Ṣirāṭ): Regarding this word, there are two permissible recitations, one with the Arabic letter س (sīn) as in السِّرَاط and another with the letter ص (ṣād) as it is here in the verse: الصِّرَاط. The meaning of aṣ-Ṣirāṭ is the way or path. The meaning of ﴿Guide us﴾ refers to the guidance of showing and directing to the right path as well as the guidance of granting success. So, by reciting, ﴿Guide us to the straight path﴾, you are asking Allah for beneficial knowledge (which is the guidance of direction) and righteous action (which is the guidance of success in following the knowledge).

﴿straight﴾ (al-Mustaqīm): This means the correct path with no crookedness or deviation.

## Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verse 5:

1. From the benefits we gain from this verse is the concept of mankind's resorting back to Allah. After requesting Allah's help in fulfilling his worship in the previous verse, mankind now asks Allah to guide them to the straight path. There must be sincerity solely to Allah in worship as indicated by the verse, ﴿You alone we worship﴾ and help must be sought in fulfilling and strengthening this worship as indicated by the verse, ﴿and from you alone we seek help﴾. Also, one must follow the Islamic

legislation and this is indicated by the verse, ﴿Guide us to the straight path﴾ because the straight path is none other than the complete legislation with which the messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) has come with.

2. Another point from this verse is that the eloquence of the Quran is shown in that there is no preposition after ﴿Guide us﴾ in the Arabic text.<sup>26</sup> This point is made so that the verse would contain both types of seeking guidance: the guidance of knowledge and direction, and the guidance of success and action. This first type is only the directing to and showing the straight path, and Allah guides all of mankind with this meaning of guidance as in his statement:

﴿شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ﴾

**The month of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed (as) guidance for mankind.**<sup>27</sup>

The second type of guidance is the granting of success along with the first type of guidance and the following of the Islamic legislation as Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says:

﴿ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

**That is the book, wherein there is no doubt, a means of guidance for the Muttaqīn (those who are constantly and fearfully conscious of Allah).**<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The author here refers to the original Arabic text. The verse would literally be translated as “Guide us the straight path” without the added English preposition “to.”

<sup>27</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:185.

<sup>28</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:2.

This second type of guidance may not be achieved by some people as Allah says:

﴿ وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ ﴾

**And as for (the people of) Thamūd, we guided them (i.e. showed them the right way), but they preferred blindness over guidance.**<sup>29</sup>

Here, ﴿we guided them﴾ means: We made clear to them the truth and directed them to follow it but they chose not to accept the guidance.

3. Another benefit we get from this verse is that the “path” is of two types: one straight and all others crooked. Whatever is in accordance with the truth, it is the straight path as Allah tells the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) to say:

﴿ وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ﴾

**And this is my straight path so follow it and do not follow (other) paths for they will separate you away from his (Allah's) path.**<sup>30</sup>

And anything that opposes the truth is a crooked path.

<sup>29</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-Fuṣṣilat, 41:17.

<sup>30</sup> The Quran, Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:153.

The Explanation of Verses 6 and 7:

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾

(Ṣirāṭ al-ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim)

The path of those you bestowed grace upon

﴿غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

(ghayri al-Maghḍūbi 'alayhim wa lā aḍ-Ḍālīn)

Not of those who earned anger upon themselves, nor of those who are astray.

﴿The path of those you bestowed grace upon﴾ (Ṣirāṭ al-ladhīna An'amta 'alayhim):

This verse is connected to the previous verse and provides further clarification of **the straight path**.

﴿those you bestowed grace upon﴾ (al-ladhīna an'amta 'alayhim): They are the same ones mentioned in the statement of Allah in another part of the Quran:

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾

And whoever obeys Allah and the messenger, then they will be with those Allah bestowed grace upon of the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous. And what excellent companions they are!<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The Quran, Sūrah an-Nisā, 4:69.

﴿**Not of those who earned anger upon themselves**﴾ (ghayri al-Maghḍūbi 'alayhim):

Such as the followers of Judaism and anyone else who knows the truth yet refuses to act according to it.

﴿**nor of those who are astray**﴾ (wa lā aḍ-Ḍālīn):

Such as the Christians before the mission of the prophet ( صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ) began. It also refers to anyone who works contrary to the truth, choosing to remain ignorant of it.

Regarding the word ﴿**upon them**﴾ ('alayhim), it has two acceptable recitations from the seven forms: one is with a ' (ḍammah) on the letter هُ (hā) making the reading عَلَيْهِمْ ('alayhum) and the other reading is the common one with a ِ (kasrah) on the هِ (hā) which is read as عَلَيْهِم ('alayhim).

It is important to know that any different form of recitation that is not within the copies of the Quran that most people have, this different recitation, even though it is permissible, should not be read among common people who may not be aware of the different ways of reciting. This is due to three reasons:

1. Even the common people, although unaware of the different forms of recitation, consider this Quran to be something amazing and honorable. Their hearts are filled with its greatness and respect for it. If they began to hear it read sometimes one way and then other times a different way, then this may result in the Quran being lower with them from the high status it was once given. This is only because they are not aware of the various recitations and therefore cannot distinguish between them.

2. If someone recites with the different forms of recitation, he may be accused of making mistakes and not knowing how to recite. This is because he recites in a way that is unknown to most people. So, this reader, even though may be correct, is then spoken about in a negative way amongst the majority of the people.
3. Even if a common person gives someone reciting in a different way the benefit of the doubt and believes that he knows what he recites, then such a person may begin to blindly follow the one reciting in the various ways of reading. So, perhaps he, the common person, may then mistakenly recite a way different from any of the permissible ways believing it to be one of the seven allowable recitations of the Quran. This would then be a form of distortion and corruption. For this reason, 'Alī (رضي الله عنه), one of the prophet's companions, said, "Speak to people according to what they know, (otherwise) would you like that they (unknowingly) deny what Allah and his messenger say (because you confuse them)?"<sup>32</sup>

And Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه), another companion of Prophet Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), said, "You will never speak to any people with something that they cannot comprehend except that it will become a Fitnah (negative trial or tribulation) for some of them."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhārī as notes to another ḥadīth (no. 127).

<sup>33</sup> Recorded by Muslim (no. 14).

And whenever 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb heard Hishām Ibn Ḥakīm recite a verse that he had never heard recited in that way before, he ('Umar) dragged him to the prophet (صلى الله ( عليه وسلم ) and informed him of this. The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم ) said to Hishām:

« اِقْرَأْ »

Recite.

When he finished reading, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم ) said:

« هَكَذَا أُنزِلَتْ »

It was revealed in this way.

Then the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم ) told 'Umar to recite and afterwards again said:

« هَكَذَا أُنزِلَتْ »

It was (also) revealed in this way.<sup>34</sup>

The Quran was revealed in seven different dialects and the people used to recite in all of them until 'Uthmān gathered the people together upon one common recitation because they were beginning to differ and dispute over each other's recitations. He feared that the differences would become severe, dividing the people. So, he gathered them all together upon one recitation which was the dialect of the Quraysh tribe because the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم ), upon whom the Quran was revealed, was sent

<sup>34</sup> Recorded by al-Bukhārī (no. 4992) and Muslim (no. 818).

from and among them. The other forms of recitation were somewhat forgotten by most people. So, if 'Umar ( رضي الله عنه ) did what he did to another companion, then what about an ordinary person who hears you recite in a way different from the familiar copy of the Quran he has?

And thanks to Allah, the scholars have always been in agreement that it is not compulsory for people to recite in all the different permissible ways. If a person remains reciting upon one particular recitation, there is no problem with this. So, avoid problems and what could lead to them.

#### **Points of Benefit of al-Fātiḥah, Verses 6 and 7:**

1. From the benefits we gain from these two verses is the mentioning of specific descriptive details after a general description. This is from the verse, ﴿ **Guide us to the straight path** ﴾ – this is a general description and ﴿ **The path of those you bestowed grace upon** ﴾ is a more specific and detailed description of the path. The benefit in mentioning something general and then afterwards more relevant details is that when a person hears of something general that could benefit him, he might eagerly anticipate more details and a clearer explanation. Then, after becoming aware of the detailed descriptions, he is ready to accept them and anxiously hopes to obtain what is mentioned. Another benefit is the explanation that the people upon whom Allah has bestowed his favors and grace, they are the same ones who are upon the straight path as a result of this grace.

2. Another point we learn from this verse is that the blessing of guidance, with which some people have been favored, is directly from Allah alone; it is a pure favor from Allah.
3. From the verse, we understand that all of mankind is of either one of three categories: those upon whom Allah has bestowed his grace, those who have earned anger upon themselves, or those who are astray. Each of these categories has already been explained previously.

The ways leading away from the straight path are either ignorance or arrogant disobedience. The ones who were taken away from the straight path due to arrogance and disobedience, they are those who earned anger upon themselves and the head of this group are the followers of Judaism. The other group, those who have deviated from the straight path due to ignorance, they are any people who do not know the truth, the main ones among these being the Christians. However, this was their (the Christian's) situation before the advent of the last prophet, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Now that the prophet's mission has been established and completed, they have known the truth but in spite of that, opposed it. So, they and the Jews both have become the same – all of them are those who have earned anger upon themselves (if they do not repent and accept Allah's religion).

4. These last two verses also illustrate the eloquence of the Quran in that the expression used to refer to those who have earned anger upon themselves, مَغْضُوبٌ (Maghdūb), is in the Arabic form (according to Arabic morphology) known as the

مَفْعُولٌ (maf'ūl) – an Arabic conjugal form that indicates that the anger upon them has already begun and is continuously occurring from Allah and from his close allies.

5. Another point we learn from these verses is that the severest type of misguided group is placed first, then the next in severity. Allah mentioned those who earned anger upon themselves before those who are astray because the first are more severe in opposition to the truth than the ones astray and misguided. Opposing something while being fully aware of it is much harder to return from than opposing something simply because of being ignorant of it.

In short, this is an amazing chapter and it is not possible for me or anyone else to fully encompass all its great meanings and virtues. This, what I have mentioned, is only a drop from an ocean. Whoever would like more details on this topic should refer to the book “Madārij as-Sālikīn” by Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah.