

SURAT AL FATIHA

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ۝ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ۝
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ۝ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ
عَلَيْهِمْ ۝ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ۝

Surat Al Fatiha is the first chapter of the Quraan. It is the Opening chapter of the Quraan. Al Fatiha means The Opening. Al Fatiha is the opening of the Quraan. For every secure thing, there is an opening. The opening of the Quraan is The Opening or Al Fatiha. It is like the question, “What is the key to opening this puzzle?” The answer is, “The key!” The Opening of the Quraan is a subtle mystery. The Opening of the Quraan is the opening of the mouth of the reader and manifesting the words by bringing them to life by sound. The manifestation of the words is to give subtle forms to verses of the Quraan.

It is not enough to just recite the Quraan, even a parrot can be taught to do that. Therefore, the opening of the mouth is not enough to open the Quraan. We have to open up our hearts and minds and let Allah pour into our beings what He wants us to understand from the Quraan. It was stated in one of our earlier articles, we have to let go of any preconceived ideas. We have to read and understand the Quraan with an open mind. Hence the opening chapter of the Quraan is named Al Fatiha – The Opening. Open up your hearts and let Allah guide you!

There are 7 verses in Al Fatiha. There are 7 openings in the human head. Let us use them to better understand the Quraan, *Insha Allah*.

001 Surat Al Fatiha

Verses 1[1-7]

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (1:1)

(1:1) Bismillah Hir Rahman Nir Raheem

(1:1) I begin with the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

In every journey, there is a beginning and an end. In every book, there is a beginning and an end. The beginning is an opening and the end is a closure. The beginning of the journey is a departure and the end of the journey is the destination.

When we open the Holy Quraan, the Quraan begins with the Chapter or Surat Al Fatiha – the Opening. The Opening begins with Bismillah the Name of Allah. Allah is our Source, we have been created by Allah the Creator, who is not created. Allah is, as Allah was. There is no change in Allah.

So we begin or open with the Name Allah. We all respond to our names. Whenever someone calls out our name we turn towards the one who is calling our name. So it is with us calling out the Name Allah, and Allah turns towards us. Following the Name Allah, the Sifaat or Attributes of Allah are mentioned, that is we read or we call out to Allah who is Ar Rahman – the Compassionate, Ar Raheem – the Merciful.

When we call out to Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, Allah looks at His creature who is calling out His Name with Compassion and Mercy.

If for instance, someone calls out to us, “Hey you!”, what would be our reaction? Likewise, if someone calls out, “Abu Bakr, the Truthful”, what would be the reaction of Abu Bakr?

Whenever Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ recited a new revelation or related knowledge of the unseen, Hadhrat Abu Bakr used to reply, “Sadaqta Ya Rasool Allah – You have spoken the truth, Messenger of Allah.” Hence the Blessed Messenger of Allah ﷺ gave the title to Hadhrat Abu Bakr ؓ, “As Siddiq – the Truthful”.

Excuse me if we seem to be digressing here, but hopefully we shall see the connection between Bismillah Ar Rahman Nir Raheem and what is being mentioned. The love between Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ and Hadhrat Abu Bakr as Siddiq ؓ was such that on the Night of Miraaj – the Ascension, Allah spoke to His Beloved Muhammad ﷺ in Hadhrat Abu Bakr’s voice. Allah did that, in order to ease the heart and mind of His Beloved, Muhammad ﷺ, so that Muhammad ﷺ can feel at ease in the presence of Allah.

In our case, there is a change in position. When we utter the words Bismillah ar Rahman nir Raheem our voice has to be soothing and pleasing to Allah, it should be filled with love for Allah. In other words, when we say Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem, it should be like the words are spoken by Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ, and they are pleasing to Allah. It is not easy, because unfortunately for us we do not know how the blessed voice of Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ sounded. Also, Allah in His wisdom gave us distinct sounding voices. Hence we recognise a person that we know from the sound of his or her voice, over the telephone, for example. Allah has given different voices to children, young and old men and women. Each voice is different, so we cannot sound the same as Allah's Beloved ﷺ.

However, if we utter the words with real love, respect and honour like Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ, Allah will find our words pleasing, Inshaa Allah.

The Holy Quraan starts with Allah's Name, followed by His attributes of Compassion and Mercy for His creature. Compassion and Mercy are rooted with love, so we have to reciprocate by uttering the words Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem with real love for our Creator.

We have to recognise that our Creator is Allah. We exist, because Allah exists. Every Muslim mother used to teach her child to speak with the words, "La ilaha il Allah – there is no god only Allah".

Every Muslim child should be taught speech with the words "La ilaha il Allah".

As we are taught to speak with the Name of Allah, we begin the Quraan with the Name of Allah.

Maulana Abul Ala Maududi has mentioned the following about Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem in his Tafheem al Quraan:

One of the many practices taught by Islam is that its followers should begin their activities in the Name of Allah. This principle, if consciously and earnestly followed, will necessarily yield three beneficial results. First, one will be able to restrain oneself from many misdeeds, since the habit of pronouncing the Name of Allah is bound to make one wonder when about to commit some offence how such an act can be reconciled with the mention of Allah's holy Name. Second, if a man pronounces the Name of Allah before starting good and legitimate tasks, this act will ensure that both his starting point and his mental orientation are sound. Third - and this is the most important benefit - when a man begins something by pronouncing Allah's Name, he will enjoy Allah's support and help. Allah will bless his efforts and protect him from the temptations of Shaytan. For whenever a person turns to Allah, Allah turns to the person as well.

[Tafheem ul Quraan]

Let us venture slightly deeper into the words *Bismillah hir Rahman nir Raheem*.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Looking at the verse in Arabic, first and foremost, it is beautiful to look at!

Then we notice the verse starts with the letter Ba **ب**. When we count the letters in the verse, there are 19 letters in total.

ب س م ا ل ل ه ا ل ر ح م ن ا ل ر ح ي م

There are 10 unique letters used to construct the verse. Out of the 10 unique letters, there are 9 letters that are from 14 Huroof Muqattaat. Huroof Muqattaat are 14 letters used at the start of some chapters as abbreviation letters. The remaining odd letter out of the 10 letters is the letter Ba which is not one of 14 Muqattaat letters.

The Holy Quraan starts with Bismillah. Bismillah starts with the letter Ba. The letter Ba **ب** is the letter for creation.

After the letter Ba **ب** there are the two letters Seen and Meem **س م**, making the word Sam. If we add the letter Ayn **ع** after Seen and Meem we get the word Samaa **س م ع**, which in Arabic means hearing. If we add Alif before the Seen and Meem we get the word Ism **ا س م**, which in Arabic means name. Names are used to identify one thing from another. Names are used to identify one person from another. Names are mentioned and they are heard! What did Allah teach Hadhrat Adam[ؑ] after creating him? Allah taught Adam all the names! Allah is saying to the creation represented by the letter Ba in the verse, “Listen! My Name is Allah!” So we understand Bismillah is “I say the Name of Allah, (Allah) the Compassionate, (Allah) the Merciful”.

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (1:2)

(1:2) Al Hamdu Lillahi Rabbil Aalameen

(1:2) All praise is for Allah, Rabb (Lord) of the worlds.

All praise is for Allah. Allah is worthy of all praise because it is He who created us. If it was not for Allah, we would not be here.

When Allah created Adam[ؑ] and breathed His Spirit into Adam, Adam[ؑ] sneezed, and Allah taught Adam[ؑ] to say: “Al Hamdu Lillah – All praise is for Allah”.

Al Hamdu Lillah are the first words uttered by Adamﷺ on his creation. The Quraan contains all the knowledge from the creation of Adamﷺ to the creation of the last being. Therefore it is appropriate that the first words we are being taught through the Quraan are the first words spoken by Adamﷺ. So it follows that Sayyidina Muhammadﷺ could convey to us all the unseen knowledge from the creation of Adamﷺ to the Last Day, which he received through revelation. That knowledge has been gathered in the Quraan, and some of it has been explained further by the sayings Ahadees of Sayyidina Muhammadﷺ.

Allah Ta Ala is Rabbil Aalameen – Lord of the worlds. The praise is for Allah the Lord of the worlds. It is Allah who sent to us Muhammadﷺ as Rahmat ul lil Aalameen – Mercy for all the worlds. We only think of this world. Allah has created many worlds. There is the world of the human and the world of the spirit. There is the world of the animals on the earth and the world of the creatures in the sea. There is the world of planets and galaxies. There is the world of the Angels and the world of the Jinn. Then there is the world of afterlife. There is the world of heaven and hell. And there may be even other worlds, that only Allah knows.

All these worlds are Allah’s creation and Allah is praised in different ways, which only Allah knows. Allah is the Rabb (Lord) of all these worlds and Allah has created Muhammadﷺ as the Mercy for all worlds. Hence all praise is for Allah for His creation from His creation. Muhammadﷺ the praised one has taught us how to praise Allah.

There may be some people who would say, that we did not ask for this life, we are suffering in this way and that. The answer for them is to say “Al Hamdu Lillah Rabbil Aalameen.” When we praise and thank Allah in good times as well as bad times, in every condition, Allah will test us for a while and eventually, He will give us relief. The trials and tribulations are placed upon the believers to strengthen their moral characters, and their patience. Those that pass the test are blessed. Those that fail the test are the losers. May Allah treat us all with compassion and mercy.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (1:3)

(1:3) Ar Rahman Nir Raheem

(1:3) The Compassionate, the Merciful

We have already mentioned Allah’s Attributes Ar Rahman – the Compassionate, Ar Raheem – the Merciful in Bismillah at the start of this chapter – Surat Al Fatiha.

Allah wants us to mention these two Attributes again! Compassion and Mercy are based on love. Compassion and mercy are the opposite of wrath. What happened during Miraaj – the Ascension?

On the Night of Ascension Allah said His Mercy has exceeded His Wrath! We are told to mention these two Sifaat – Attributes of Allah, so that Allah covers us with His Compassion and Mercy and saves us from His Wrath.

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (1:4)

(1:4) Maliki Yaum id Deen

(1:4) The Master of the Day of Religion.

The literal meaning of this verse is, Master of the Day of Religion. Who is the Master of the Day of Religion? Allah is the Master of the Day of Religion. Ar Rahman, Ar Raheem – the Compassionate, the Merciful is the Master of the Day of Religion. All translations read Master of the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment in Arabic is Yaum il Qiyaamat. The words used in this verse are Yaum id Deen. The word Deen in Arabic means religion. What is this Day of Religion?

Religion in this world is a personal matter. It is a matter of what one believes in. If we see a person reciting the Quraan, or performing Hajj we assume that the person is a Muslim. What is in the person's heart, we cannot distinguish. There is a certain minority of people who have accepted others as their messengers after Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ. Yet they read the Quraan and perform Hajj. But the majority of us believe that there are no more messengers after Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ, since he is the Seal of the Messengers. Therefore the Day of the Religion is where our belief will be questioned by Allah. Where does this belief get questioned? This belief is questioned in the grave.

Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: When the dead body is buried in the grave the person is made to sit in his grave without entertaining any fear or agitation in his mind then he will be asked: "Which (religion) did you profess?" He will say: "I had been the follower of Islam." He will be asked: "Who is this man?" He will say: "He is Muhammad (Messenger of Allah) who came to us with clear signs from Allah. We testified he is the Messenger of Allah". He will be asked: "Have you seen Allah?" He will say: "It is not possible (for people) to see Allah." Then an opening will be made for him towards the Hell Fire and he will see parts of it consuming other parts. He will be told: "Look towards that from which Allah saved you." Then an opening will be made for him towards the Paradise and he will cast a glance at its freshness and what it contains. He will be told: "This is your abode, because of your firm faith which you had, on which you died and you will be resurrected if Allah so wills." The evil person will be made to sit in the grave in fear and anxiety. He will be asked: "What was your religion?" He will say: "I do not know." He will be asked: "Who is this person?" He will say: "I

heard people saying something which I said.” Then an opening will be made for him towards Paradise and he will see its freshness and what it contains. He will be told: “Cast a glance at that which Allah has withheld from you.” Then an opening will be made towards the Hell Fire and he will look at it, some parts of it consuming the other. He will be told: “That is your abode because of your skepticism which you had and on which you died and if Allah, the Exalted, so wills you will be resurrected on it.

Transmitted by Ibn Majah.

[At –Tirmidhi Hadees narrated by AbuHurayrah]

The questions that come to mind are: “What about those that are not buried but they are cremated?” “How does their Day of Religion happen?” They cannot be made to sit in graves or can they?

Those that are cremated have the questions posed to them while the body is laid out in the coffin or under the pyre. The body itself cannot feel pain. It is the spirit in the body that feels the pain due to its attachment to the body. We have seen how a potter makes pottery out of clay and then fires the pottery to solidify it. No screams are heard from the pot being fired up in an oven. Likewise, the screams of the spirit are not heard from the grave or from the crematorium, because it cannot attach to the dead body and use it as vessel to make the sounds. Yet the spirit does scream with pain. Wallahu Alim!

Allah tells us in Surat Fatiha to mention His attributes of Compassion and Mercy before we mention Him as the Master of the Day of Religion. It is so that, the Compassion and the Mercy will be invoked before we are questioned.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (1:5)

(1:5) Iyyaka Na Abudu Wa iyyaka Nastaen

(1:5) You alone do we worship and You alone do we turn for help.

There is only One Allah and we should serve only Allah. We should ask and seek help from Allah. Imagine having two masters. One master will say, “Do this first!” The other master saying, “Do that first!” Which master is the servant to obey first? Either way, one servant cannot please both masters, because he will have to do one thing before he does the other. Therefore, either one or the other master will be displeased because the servant did not obey him first. Al Hamdu Lillah, we do not have to please two masters. We have to please Allah, the One and only God. The way to do that is to worship Allah and only ask Allah for help.

There was a time when the Kaaba was filled with 360 idols. Each idol was worshipped for a different purpose. But after the arrival of Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ, all the idols in the Kaaba were destroyed, because they were man made statues and pictures. How can something that is created by a

creature be served or asked for help? Muhammad ﷺ, the Messenger of Allah and his community, are told to serve only Allah and ask Allah for help. Allah created everything in the heavens and earth, including the heavens and earth. So Allah is worthy of worship and servitude. We should seek Allah's help in all our conditions, good and bad.

إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (1:6)

(1:6) Ihdinas Siraat al Mustaqeem

(1:6) Guide us on to the straight path,

To pass the questioning of the grave, we need to know what answers we should give when questioned on the Day of Religion. In order to know the answers we ask Allah to guide us to the straight path. The answers are not just remembering them parrot fashion. No! The answers are to live a life where every action is good for the sake of Allah. Those good actions, which are for the sake of Allah, is the straight path. Only then will we remember the answers.

We have all been lost sometime in our life. There are times when we do not know our surroundings. We want to be guided to the place where we are trying to get. We ask someone for directions, "How do we get to the address we have from where we are at the moment." The person we ask for directions might reply, "I have no idea! I do not know this area."

Another person will reply, "I am not from this area." But if we persist, and ask others, eventually we will find someone who knows the area and he will tell us how to get to the place where we are going. He will tell us which road to take, in which direction.

So it is with this verse. We are lost! We ask Allah for directions, to guide us to the road or path that will lead us to our destination. What path or road is this that we are looking for, or want to be guided to? Mustaqeem!

Mustaqeem comes from Iqaam – to Rise. Qeemat means Value. Qiyaamat means Resurrection. Qayyim means Guardian. Siraat ul Mustaqeem is the path to rise, the path that has value in the presence of Allah, the path that makes us the guardians of Islaam.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (1:7)

(1:7) Siraat al Lazeena An Amta Alayhim Ghair il Maghdhubi Alayhim Wa Ladh Dhaaleen

(1:7) The way of those whom You have favoured, who did not incur Your wrath and who are not astray.

We ask Allah to guide us to the way of those whom He has favoured. The favoured ones are those who did not incur wrath, but were bestowed with compassion and mercy. The favoured ones are those who were not astray but were guided. In other words, we should be following the path or example of those people favoured by Allah.

Allah is not going to personally come and show us or guide us to this road, but He appoints someone whom He chooses to be the guide to show us the way to the destination. That guide is the one who is favoured by Allah. There is a subtlety here. The subtlety is that we ask Allah for guidance and help, and Allah appoints someone as His representative to guide us. There is a saying that the one who has no spiritual teacher or guide, his teacher is Shaytan.

Therefore it follows that this Siraat Mustaqeem or road Mustaqeem is to follow the guidance of Muhammad ﷺ who was guided by Allah. Following the guidance or example of Muhammad ﷺ will raise us to have high moral values and be the guardians of this teaching until the Day of Religion or the Resurrection. It is the way to use our judgment where we can distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong.

We do not want to follow the path of those on whom there is the wrath of Allah, neither the path of those who have gone astray.

Let us again visit the Night of Miraaj. Allah said: “My Rahmat has exceeded my Ghadhab – My Mercy has exceeded My Wrath.”

This chapter starts with Praise of Allah, Ar Rahman nir Raheem in the second verse, and it ends with seeking guidance from Allah to guide us to the correct path which is away from His Wrath.

It follows, that Surat Fatiha is a reminder of the Miraaj. Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: “Salaat is the Miraaj of the believer.” Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: “Salaat is not acceptable unless we recite Surat Fatiha in every Rakaat.” Salaat is the Miraaj. Surat Fatiha is part of what happened during Miraaj.

As we have seen from the above Ahadees of Sayyidina Muhammad ﷺ, that if Salaat is to be the Miraaj of the believer, we have to include the Surat Fatiha in every Rakaat which includes Allah's Mercy and the Surat is a means for us to be removed from Allah's Wrath.

There are 28 letters in the Arabic alphabet. Surat Fatiha is composed of 21 Arabic letters out of the 28. That is 7 letters have been omitted from this chapter of 7 verses. The letters that have been omitted in Surat Fatiha are as follows:

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1. | Jeem | ج |
| 2. | Za | ز |
| 3. | Fa | ف |
| 4. | Sheen | ش |
| 5. | Sa | ث |
| 6. | Kha | خ |
| 7. | Zoin | ظ |

Allah in His Wisdom has placed 14 Sajdaa (7 x 2) prostrations in the entire Quraan at certain places in certain chapters. Allah in His Wisdom has prescribed 7 circuits of the Kaaba for the Tawwaf. Allah in His Wisdom has made the colours of the rainbow equal to 7. Allah in His Wisdom has given us 7 days in a week.

Interestingly enough, the name of the chapter - Al Fatiha uses one of the omitted letters, the letter Fa ف. So that leaves 6 letters which are not used in this chapter.

We know there are 7 verses in this chapter from an Ayat in the Quraan and also from the sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But none of us is clear how the verses are numbered. If we look at different copies of the Quraan, the numbering may differ. But that is neither here nor there because the verse of the Quraan and the saying of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ confirm that there are 7 verses in Surat Al Fatiha. That is good enough for us.

Allah created the heavens and the earth in 6 days. Then Allah rose over the Throne. So we take our 7 day week from this reference. Al Fatiha is not just the

opening of the Quraan, but it is the opening or start of creation of the heavens and the earth in 6 days, and the 7th day is the day of Allah's Istawa rising over the Heavens.

Wallahu Aalamu Be Sawabay – Only Allah Knows Best.

May Allah accept our Duaa of Surat Al Fatiha and guide us all to the right path. Ameen.

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