

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

Article taken and slightly adapted from: alibaanah.blogspot.co.uk

(Sharh Shuroot-is-Salaat (pg. 48-61, Dar-ul-Imam Ahmad)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ (١) الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢) الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ (٣) مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (٤) إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ
نَسْتَعِينُ (٥) اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (٦) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (٧)

1. In the Name of Allaah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. 2. All the praises and thanks be to Allaah, the Lord of the 'Alameen (mankind, Jinns and All that exists).
3. the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. 4. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection). 5. You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything). 6. Guide us to the Straight Way. 7. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).

The author states: "The Third Pillar: Then there occurs the recitation of Soorah Al-Faatihah, which is a pillar in every rak'ah (unit), as occurs in the hadeeth: 'There is no prayer for he who does not recite the opening (chapter) of the Book.' It is the foundation of the Qur'aan."

- The explanation:

Reciting Soorah Al-Faatihah in every one of the rak'aat (units) of prayer is obligatory upon the one leading the prayer (Imaam), the one being led in prayer (ma'moom) and the one praying alone (munfarid). This is based on the Prophet's statement (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him): "There is no prayer for he who does not recite the opening (chapter) of the Book."¹

The one being led in prayer should recite it behind his Imaam in both the silent and audible prayers. What proves that it should be recited behind him in the audible prayers is the hadeeth in which a man from among the Prophet's Companions reported that the Messenger of Allaah (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) said: "Perhaps you recite behind the Imaam while the Imaam is reciting?" They replied: "Yes, we

¹ Reported in Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree (756) and Saheeh Muslim (393)

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

do that.” He (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) said: **“Then do not do it, unless one of you is reciting the beginning (chapter) of the Book.”** Or he said: **“The Faatihah (opening chapter) of the Book.”**²

Something similar to this has been reported by ‘Ubaadah bin As-Saamit (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him) and in its chain of narration is Muhammad bin Ishaq who narrated hadeeth explicitly which made his tadlees safe. It was reported by Ahmad in al-Musnad (22745).

The way to combine between this report, the hadeeth that was reported about people refraining from reciting behind the Imaam, the hadeeth: **“Whoever has an Imaam, then his recitation serves as a recitation for him”**, and the hadeeth: **“When he recites, then remain silent”** is to understand all of these texts to refer to the recitation of any Soorah apart from Al-Faatihah.

Then the author, may Allaah have mercy on him, goes on to provide a brief interpretation of (Soorah) Al-Faatihah, saying:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“Bismillaah-ir-Rahmaan-ir-Raheem”

(In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, Bestower of Mercy) is a request for blessing and assistance.

- The explanation:

What is meant by this is that a Muslim says Bismillaah seeking blessing from Allaah’s Name and seeking assistance in Allaah for his recitation. This applies also to anything for which he mentions Allaah’s Name prior to doing it. He is stating Allaah’s Name in order to seek blessing and assistance (by it).

He should recite the Bismillaah silently even though it is an ayah from the Qur’aan. Is it an ayah in every Soorah (chapter) or is it just an independent ayah used as a divider between Soorahs? And is it an ayah in Soorah Al-Faatihah or is it not part of the Soorah at all? The scholars have many opinions on this. What indicates that it is part of the Qur’aan is that the Companions included it in the Mus_haf and they didn’t include anything in there except for the Qur’aan. It is reported in the Sunan of Aboo Daawood with an authentic chain (788) that Ibn ‘Abbaas (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him) said: “The Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) was not aware of the separation of a Soorah until Bismillaah-ir-Rahmaan-ir-Raheem was revealed to him.”

There is no disagreement amongst the scholars over the fact that the Bismillaah is part of an ayah within Soorah an-Naml.

² Reported by Ahmad in his Musnad (18070) with an authentic chain of narration

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

Soorah Al-Faatihah consists of seven verses. Those scholars that believe that it is an ayah in Soorah Al-Faatihah count the Bismillaah as being one of the seven verses. Those who believe that it is not part of Al-Faatihah make the seventh verse: **“Not of those who earned Your wrath nor of those who went astray.”**

From the proofs that are used to indicate that the Bismillaah is not an ayah from Al-Faatihah is the Prophet’s (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) statement in the Qudsee hadeeth: **“I have divided the Prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant will have what he asks for. So when the servant says: ‘Al-Hamdulillaahi Rabbil-‘Aalameen’, Allaah says: ‘My servant has praised Me...’”**³

So he (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) did not mention the Bismillaah in it.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

“Al-Hamdulillaah”

(All praise is for Allaah)

“Hamd” means praise. The definite article (Al) before Hamd is for including all the commendable acts He does. As for the good things that one has no role in bringing about, such as beauty and so on, then praising that is called madah and not hamd.

- **The explanation:**

The servants’ praising of their Lord is worship and it falls under Tawheed-ul-Ulooheeyyah, which is the Oneness of Allaah in His servants actions (i.e. worship). Allaah is the One deserving of praise and commendation for every blessing that the servants achieve regardless if one of the servants played a part in it or not. This is since all of the credit in that matter belongs to Allaah, as He says: **“And whatever blessings you have, it is from Allaah.”**⁴

In his advice to Ibn ‘Abbaas (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him), the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) said: **“And know that if the entire ummah were to gather together to bring you some benefit, they would not be able to benefit you except with something that Allaah has already decreed for you.”**

So therefore all commendable acts in reality belong to Allaah. So He alone is the One who deserves praise in every circumstance. And as for the servants, whatever good things they do out of their own free will and choice, such as nobility, kindness and doing good deeds, then they should be praised and lauded for that. And whatever good that is in them, which

³ Reported in Saheeh Muslim from Aboo Hurairah (May Allaah the Most High be pleased with him) (395)

⁴ سورة النحل – Soorah an-Nahl [16:53]

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

they played no part in producing, such as beauty and good appearance, then they should be commended for it but not praised.

رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Rabb-il-‘Aalameen”

(Lord of all that is created):

Rabb means the One who is worshipped, the Creator, the Sustainer, the King, the One who administers and brings up all of the creation through His favours. With regard to ‘Aalameen, everything that is apart from Allaah then that is considered ‘Aalam. He is the Lord of everyone and everything.

- **The explanation:**

This consists of Oneness of Allaah in His Lordship, Names and Attributes since Tawheed ar-Ruboobiyyah means the Oneness of Allaah in His Actions. So He is One in His creating, sustaining, giving of life, and causing of death. He has no partners in His Lordship nor does He have any partner in His Worship. To Allaah belong the most perfect of Names and Attributes. Two of Allaah’s names have been mentioned in this ayah: “All praise is for Allaah, Lord of all that is created.” They are Allaah and Ar-Rabb. In another ayah, Allaah says: “Salaam – a word from the Lord (Rabb), Most Merciful.”⁵

الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ

“Ar-Rahmaan” (The Most Merciful); “Ar-Raheem” (The Bestower of Mercy)

“Ar-Rahmaan” means He grants a general mercy for all of the created beings. “Ar-Raheem” (The Bestower of Mercy) means He gives a specified mercy for just the believers. The proof for this is Allaah’s statement: “And He is ever an All-Bestower of mercy to the believers.”⁶

- **The explanation:**

Ar-Rahmaan and Ar-Raheem are two of Allaah’s names that indicate one of His Attributes, which is mercy. All of Allaah’s names are derivatives that indicate meanings, which are attributes. So an attribute from among His many Attributes can be extracted from every one of Allaah’s Names.

The name Ar-Rahmaan is more general than Ar-Raheem and it cannot be applied to anyone except for Allaah. So it can’t be said to someone that he is Rahmaan. But as for Raheem, it

⁵ سورة يس – Soorah Yaseen [36:58]

⁶ سورة الأحزاب – Soorah al-Ahzaab [33:43]

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

can be applied to Allaah as well as others. Allaah said about His Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him): **“Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He is anxious over you. For the believers, he is full of pity, kind and merciful (raheem).”**⁷

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“Maaliki-Yawm-id-Deen”

(Master of the Day of Judgement):

Refers to the Day of Reward, Recompense and Accountability, the Day when everyone will be compensated for his deeds – if they are good, then there will be good (for him) and if they are evil, then there will be evil (for him). The proof for this is Allaah’s statement: **“And what will make you know what the Day of Recompense is? Again, what will make you know what the Day of Recompense is? (It will be) The Day when no person shall have power (to do anything) for another, and the decision that Day will be wholly with Allaah.”**⁸

There is also the hadeeth of the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him): **“The shrewd person is the one who subjects himself and works for what comes after death. And the feeble person is the one who allows his soul to follow its vain desires, while aspiring for Allaah to grant his ambitions.”**

- The explanation:

Allaah is the Owner of everything. He is the Owner of the worldly life and the Hereafter. Allaah has only particularised the Day of Recompense here as Him being the Owner of it because it is the day in which all of the created beings will submit themselves to the Lord of all that exists. This is contrary to the worldly life for there can be found in it those who are insolent and haughty and who say such things as “I am your lord, most high” and “I didn’t know you had a god besides me!”

The hadeeth mentioned by the author was reported by At-Tirmidhee (2459) and its chain of narration contains Aboo Bakr bin Abee Maryam who is weak.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“Iyyaaka Na’budu” (You alone do we worship); **“Wa Iyyaaka Nasta’een”** (And in You alone do we seek assistance)

⁷ سورة التوبة – Soorah at-Tawbah [9:128]

⁸ سورة الإنفطار – Soorah al-Infitaar [82:17-19]

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

“Iyyaaka Na’budu” (You alone do we worship): meaning we don’t worship anyone except You. This is a covenant between the servant and his Lord that he will not worship anyone besides Him.

“Wa Iyyaaka Nasta’een” (And in You alone do we seek assistance): This is a covenant between the servant and his Lord that he will not seek the assistance of anyone besides Allaah.

- The explanation:

Allaah says: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.”⁹

When you place the object of the verb (You alone) before the verb (we worship) in issues of worship and seeking assistance, this indicates a limitation and particularisation. So you are limiting the worship to only Allaah and particularising Him alone by it. So no one is worshipped except Allaah and no one’s assistance is sought except for Allaah’s.

Therefore, a servant (of Allaah) does not ask assistance from the angels or the jinn or anyone absent. But as for him asking assistance from a person that is present and who is able to assist him and help him achieve the benefit or repel the harm, this is permissible and not forbidden.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

“Ihdinaas-Siraat-al-Mustaqeem”

(Guide us to the Straight Path)

Means direct us, show us the way and keep us firm on as-Siraat (the Path), meaning Islaam. It is also believed that it refers to the Messenger (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) and likewise that it refers to the Qur’aan. All of these meanings are true. What is meant by Mustaqeem (Straight) is that which has no deviations in it.

- The explanation:

The people’s need for being guided to the Straight Path is greater than all of their other needs. And their requirement of it is above any other requirement they may have. Their need for it is greater than their need for food and drink since food and drink are only means for them to continue remaining in this worldly life. But as for their being guided to the Straight Path, then it is a cause for their success and happiness in both this worldly life and the Hereafter.

⁹ سورة الذاريات – Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat [51:56]

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

Asking to be guided to the Straight Path consists of requesting Allaah to direct and show you to the path of truth and guidance. It also entails asking Him to grant you the ability follow this Straight Path. When a servant asks his Lord in every rak'ah (unit) of the prayer to guide him to the Straight Path, this entails asking Him to keep him firm upon whatever he achieves from guidance. It also entails asking for an increased and additional guidance, as Allaah says: **“And as for those who are guided, He increases them in guidance and gives to them their Taqwaa (dutifulness).”**¹⁰

There is no contradiction between interpreting “Guide us” to mean “show us, “direct us” or “keep us firm” nor with interpreting the “Straight Path” to mean “Islam”, “the Messenger” or “the Qur’aan because that is only a difference of diversity and not a difference of contrast. This is why the author went on to say: “All of these meanings are true.” The interpretations of the Salaf are for the most part like this. Either their interpretation is by way of words that are close in meaning, which are all true and don’t contradict each other, as is the case here, or it is by way of example, which is done by interpreting a general word to mean some of the parts that fall under it, such as Allaah’s saying: **“Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good.”**¹¹

There is no contradiction in interpreting the “good” of this world to mean a righteous wife or a righteous child or pure wealth. This falls under interpreting by way of example.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

“Siraat-aladheena An’amta ‘alayhim” (The Path of those You bestowed Your Favour on);
“Ghayr-il-Maghdooobi ‘alayhim” (Not those who earned Your Anger); **“Wa laad-Daalleen”**
(Nor of those who went astray)

“Siraat-aladheena An’amta ‘alayhim” (The Path of those You bestowed Your Favour on): meaning the way of those who have received your Bounty. The proof for this is Allaah’s saying: **“And whoever obeys Allaah and the Messenger, then they will be in the company of those on whom Allaah has bestowed His Favour, such as the prophets, the first to believe (in the prophets), the martyrs and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are!”**¹²

“Ghayr-il-Maghdooobi ‘alayhim” (Not those who earned Your Anger): They are the Jews since they have knowledge but do not act on it. You are asking Allaah to protect you from their way.

¹⁰ سورة محمد – Soorah Muhammad [47:17]

¹¹ سورة البقرة – Soorah al-Baqarah [2:102]

¹² سورة النساء – Soorah an-Nisaa [4:69]

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

“Wa laad-Daalleen” (Nor of those who went astray): This refers to the Christians, who worship Allaah based on ignorance and misguidance. You are asking Allaah to protect you from their way. The proof for those who went astray is Allaah’s saying: **“Say: Shall we inform you of the greatest losers with respect to their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought they were acquiring good by their deeds.”**¹³

And there is also the hadeeth of the Prophet (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him): **“You will indeed follow the ways of those who came before you, in exactly the same manner, to the point that if they were to enter the hole of a lizard, you would also enter it.”** They said: **“O Messenger of Allaah, do you mean the Jews and the Christians?”** He said: **“Who else?”**^{14 15}

And the second hadeeth is: **“The Jews split up into seventy-one sects and the Christians split up into seventy-two sects. And this ummah (of Muslims) will split up into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in the Hellfire except for one.”** They said: **“Who are they O Messenger of Allaah?”** He said: **“Those who are upon the same way that I and my Companions are upon.”**

- The explanation:

The Straight Path that a Muslim asks his Lord to guide him to is the path of those whom Allaah bestowed His Grace upon, such as the prophets, the siddeeqoon (first true believers), the martyrs and the righteous people, as Allaah says: **“And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it. And do not follow the other paths, for they will separate you away from His path. This He has ordained for you so that you may become dutiful (Muttaqoon).”**^{16 17}

He asks Allaah in every one of the rak’aat (units) of his prayer to direct him to the path of truth and guidance and to protect him from the path of those who are astray and in error, such as the Jews and Christians.

What is meant by the word “ummah” in this hadeeth is the ummah (nation of people) that have responded to the Call. These seventy-three sects are Muslims. The “Saved Sect” are

¹³ سورة الكهف - Soorah al-Kahf [18:103-105]

¹⁴ Al-Bukhaaree and Muslim reported it.

¹⁵ The hadeeth: **“You will indeed follow the ways of those who came before you...”** was reported by Al-Bukhaaree (7320) and Muslim (2669) from Aboo Sa’eed. Its first part is found in Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree with the wording: **“You will indeed follow the ways of those who came before you hand-span by hand-span and forearm by forearm...”** and in Saheeh Muslim with the wording: **“You will indeed follow the ways of those who came before you inch by inch and cubit by cubit.”**

¹⁶ سورة الأنعام - Soorah al-An’aam [6:153]

¹⁷ The hadeeth about the splitting of the ummah has been reported by a group of the Prophet’s Companions. For the referencing of this hadeeth, see the comments to hadeeth no. 16937 in the Musnad of Imaam Ahmad. Also see Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah of Al-Albaanee (203-204) who quoted its authenticity on Ibn Taymeeyah, Ash-Shaatibee and Al-’Iraaqee.

Tafseer of Soorah Al-Faatihah

those who are upon what the Prophet and his Companions were upon. Seventy-two of the sects are under the threat of being placed in the Hellfire due to their deviating from the path of truth. Their affair is up to Allaah – if He wishes, He will punish them and if He wishes, He will pardon them.

As for the ummah (nation of people) that requires the Call, they consist of every human being and Jinn from the time of the Prophet's advent to the establishment of the Hour. Those who fall in this category are the Jews, the Christians and all of the other religions of disbelief. This is based on the Prophet's (May the peace and blessings of Allaah the Most High be upon him) statement: **"By the One in whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, no one from this ummah (nation of people) hears about me, whether he is a Jew or a Christian, then dies without believing in what I was sent with, except that he will be from the inhabitants of the Hellfire."**¹⁸

¹⁸ Reported by Muslim (386) from Aboo Hurairah; Also see the Fataawaa of Shaykh-ul-Islaam (7/218) and Fataawaa al-Lajnat-ud-Daa'imah (2/157)