**SURAH AL-FATIHA**

1:1

* 1. IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE ALL-MERCIFUL,THE ALL-COMPASSIONATE

1:2

* 1. All praise and gratitude (whoever gives these to whomever for whatever reason and in whatever way from the first day of creation until eternity) are for God, the Lord of the worlds,

1:3

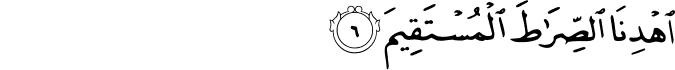
* 1. The All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate,

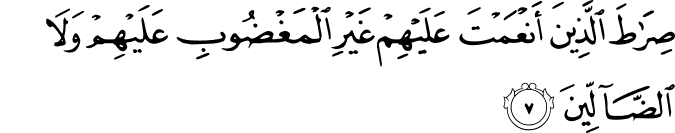
1:4

* 1. The Master of the Day of Judgment.

1:5

* 1. You alone do We worship, and from You alone do we seek help.

1.6. Guide us to the Straight Path,



* 1. The Path of those whom You have favored, not of those who have incurred (Your) wrath (punishment and condemnation), nor of those who are astray.(1)

**Names of the surah**

Surah al-Fatiha has various names. The Qur’an refers to this surah as the seven oft or doubly repeated verses (Sab’a al-Masani) because it is   repeated in the Prayers. Additionally, the Prophet referred to this surah as The Mother of the Book (Ummu’l-Kitab) because it is the essence of the Qur’an, The Healer (Ash-Shifa) because it is a cure for both physical and spiritual diseases, and The Opener (Al-Fatiha) because the Prayers and the Qur’an begin with this surah.

**Virtues of al-Fatiha**

According to a report by Abu Hurayra, Allah the Almighty speaks with His servant in Surah al-Fatiha: “Allah the Almighty has said: ‘I have divided Surah al-Fatiha between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says,

“All praise and gratitude are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds”

Allah the Almighty says: ‘My servant has praised Me. When he says, “The All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate,” Allah the Al-mighty says: ‘My servant has extolled Me.’ When he says, “The Master of the Day of Judgment,” Allah the Almighty says: ‘My servant has glorified Me,’ and when he says, “You alone do we worship, and from You alone do we seek help,” He says: ‘This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.’”

Abu Said al-Khudri related: “We were on a journey, we stopped to rest for a while. A person came and said ‘The leader of our tribe has been stung by a scorpion. Our men are not present, is there anyone among you who can treat him?’ One of the men went and recited Surah al-Fatiha. The   leader of the tribe recovered. The tribe gave him thirty sheep and gave us some of the milk to drink. We asked him, ‘Did you know how to cure?’ He replied ‘No, I cured him by reciting al-Fatiha.’ We warned him ‘Do not touch what they gave you without asking the Messenger of Allah first!’ When he came to Medina, we told the Prophet what had happened. He replied, ‘How did you know that Surah al-Fatiha was a cure? Take what they gave you and keep a share for me!’”

Surah al-Fatiha is indeed a Divine treasure. It beholds the cure for the suffering of the aggrieved. It is the first surah of the Qur’an. Thus, there is no surah prior to it, thus the reason why everything begins with Surah  al-Fatiha.

There is a close relationship between “Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim” and al-Fatiha. “Bismillah” is in a sense a verse from al-Fatiha. This is why many of the Islamic scholars classify “Bismillah” as one of the seven verses of Surah al-Fatiha.” There is a kind of poetical harmony between “Bismillah” and al-Fatiha. “Bismillah” begins in the Name of Allah. In the same way that we begin reciting of the Qur’an in the Name of Allah, we also begin the recitation of al-Fatiha proclaiming “Bismillah.” Indeed, any deeds or tasks that begin without reciting the Name of Allah are incomplete.

Surah al-Fatiha begins with the word “Praise.” As a  word, although this means glorification and gratitude, there is a difference. This is why Surah al-Fatiha begins with or Praise is the general denotation of gratitude towards the blessings of Allah whether they reach us or not, whether we perceive, if we are aware of these blessings or not. Therefore, such a word can be used to convey    gratitude for the Divine blessings in general.

Gratitude is our thanks for the blessings we perceive to the One Who bestows these favors.

Glorification means to exalt and praise. Allah is glorified due to His kindness and beauty, “O Lord! You are the possessor of beauty and kindness” is classified as praise. This can also be used to praise inanimate things such as trees and sustenance. Sometimes praise can be used in unnecessary instances, for example to flatter others. This is why we express our emotions of gratitude and praise to Allah with glorification.

The Prophet said: “Praise is the major means of thanking Allah.” If we are blessed with the favor of Allah or not, praise, in terms of turning towards Allah and sincerely expressing our emotions of gratefulness in a sense is superior to gratification.

The station of praise is an extremely important position, and this is why this is called “Al-Maqam al-Mahmud” or the Station of Praise. We supplicate to Allah following the adhan (call to Prayer) “O Lord! Raise him (Your Messenger) to the station of praise which You promised him.”

The habitants of Paradise will enter saying:

“All-Glorified You are, O Allah!” and their greeting will be: “Peace!” and their invocation will close with ‘All praise and gratitude are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds!’” (Yunus 10:10).

The Messenger of Allah said:

“Praising Allah fills the scales.”So what do we give praise and gratification for? That we are humans, we are believers, that Muhammad is our Prophet, that we are addressed by a universal Book such as the Qur’an, or for the blessings that we are, or are not aware of.

“Allah” means the One from whom everything is sought, the One who helps those in difficulty, the only One who is worshipped and the Giver of peace.

Lord (Rabb): Literally means the One Who disciplines. Allah is the One Who creates everything. He is the Creator, Provider, Trainer, Upbringer, and Director of all creatures. Allah is the One Who sends the Prophets and encourages complying with them, Who presents the principles of the Qur’an, Who awakens and stimulates the souls of humans, Who speaks of the universe in the Qur’an, Who describes the universe and clearly exhibits the truths before human beings.

Allah is the One Who raises the whole of existence, and every existence is raised within the boundaries of its own disposition. Indeed, the sole possessor of universal discipline is Allah, the Lord of the universe.

The All-Merciful (Ar-Rahman) and The All-Compassionate (Ar-Rahim) are two Names of Allah. Allah the Almighty describes Himself as Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim at the beginning of one hundred and thirteen surahs of the Qur’an, and in one of the verses of an-Naml. Ar-Rahman sig- nifies forgiveness, compassion and the bestowal of sustenance which in- cludes all, both believers and disbelievers. According to this, Allah grants blessings irrelevant of the people’s faith, and does not deprive anyone of the environment in which they are able to live. In these terms, if Allah was not the Owner of this attribute, it would certainly have been impossible for the disbelievers to obtain a mouthful of water to drink in this world, where as the attribute Ar-Rahim will manifest in the Hereafter rather than in this world. “Malik” means the Sovereign, the Owner. In other words, the sole Owner of the day of reward and punishment is Allah. Therefore, all other sovereigns are transient. It is virtually as if Allah is conveying a warning in this verse of the Qur’an: “O Pharaohs and Nimrods of this world, O those who boast of being rulers and show off, O kings… kings of kings! The day will come when the wealth and sovereignty you possess will disappear, and the sole Owner of that day will be Allah.”

Servitude is being systematically respectful and submissive before Allah. Whereas worship; is the humans obedience anticipating affinity with Allah and anticipating reward with pure intention. In these words there is clear indication that servitude is to Allah alone, and by saying at the same time if the servant is engrossed in heedlessness or follows the devil, he will compose himself and remember Allah. Again, by saying this, the individual is in fact declaring to Whom he will practice servitude from the very beginning.

Saying “us” rather than “me” is giving Muslims social awareness, and indicates that the Prayers should be performed in congregation.

“…from You alone do we seek help.” In this there is seeking the help of Allah in everything we do, the request for performing worship with ease and aspiring His help in all we do. Since Allah has taught us to ask, this means He will give. When saying by declaring that help is from Allah alone, the servant has reached the sincerity in his servitude. After saying “You alone do we worship,” again we seek refuge with“…from You alone do we seek help.”

Isti’ana means being dependent on Allah’s help in all matters, asking Allah to grant us ease in performing worship and in the general issues humans face.

“Guide us to the Straight Path.” Allah is advising us to ask Him to guide us towards the path of truth. Indeed, how could an individual establish order in his personal, social or family life without the guidance of Allah? As indeed, all of this depends on Allah’s guidance.

Guidance is the response of Allah to those in state of destitution that will suffice all their needs. The word ..  .11  “ihdi” in Arabic means awaiting command. It means “Guide us, guide us to reaching faith.” Occasionally, al- though all the means exist for this guidance, a person may not attain faith.

While the son of Nuh (Noah), who, although he was born and raised in the home of a Prophet was not blessed with faith, Ibrahim (Abraham) who was raised in the house of Azar, and Musa (Moses) who was born and raised in the home of the Pharaoh grew up and each became great Prophets. In one of his supplications, the Messenger of Allah prayed “O Lord! I ask You for guidance, piety and self-sufficiency” and by doing this was instructing us to ask this from Allah. “As-sirat” means a certain path or road. This means a path that millions of righteous believers, thousands of Prophets and hundreds of thousands of companions of Allah have followed before us; or a wide path upon which everyone can walk.

This means the middle or moderate path, the path of truth, the path of Islamic jurisprudence, of Islam, the path of the Messenger of Allah and the Companions, the path to Paradise, the bridge over Hell.

When  a  servant  says:

“Guide  us  to  the   Straight Path, ”this means O Lord! Sustain my faith and guidance, secure Your entrustment, my faith until I die, grant me success in retuning Your entrustment to You as a sound believer.

“The path of those whom You have favored.”

In’am means an individual benefitting from and experiencing the bestowal of favors. Allah bestows blessings, and we obtain pleasure and enjoy these blessings. This is what we call in’am, and undoubtedly the greatest blessing of all is Islam.

We cannot bestow blessings, kings or rulers cannot bestow blessings. Only the true Owner of favors, of Sovereignty, the One who holds the power of commanding everything can bestow favors. The path of those referred to in the verse, and as defined in verse sixty nine of Surah an-Nisa is the path of the Prophets, the truthful ones, the witnesses, the righteous ones and the martyrs. Ghayr means completely the opposite. Wrath means becoming angry, severity, displaying harshness and fury. So when we say, this is portraying the meaning “not the path of those who suffered the destruction of Allah or were subjected to the trial of Allah.”

As for the word; in Arabic, dalal” means deviation or going astray. “Dall” means a deviant person. “Ad-dallin” is the plural meaning deviant people. “Dalalat” means heedlessness, not using the mind or being in a state of bewilderment. Therefore, when we say ‘, we are asking Allah not to cast us onto the path of those in a state of bewilderment, those who are heedless to the clear scenes of truth and justice.

Again, these words refer to all those who deviated from the path of truth, and all those who were subjected to the wrath of Allah, so when we recite this, we are expressing that we seek the guidance of Allah from straying to the path the deviant one choose.

In one of his traditions, the Prophet said:

“When the imam says ‘Amin,’ then you should all say ‘Amin,’ for the angels say ‘Amin’ at that time, and he whose ‘Amin’ coincides with the ‘Amin’ of the angels, all his past sins will be forgiven.”

“Amin” means “Accept our prayers.” Therefore, by reciting al-Fatiha we are displaying our servitude, asking for our needs and as a result of these appeals, we say “Amin” which means “Accept our requests.”(2)

**References**

**(1)1:1-7.The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal**

**(2)Akgul, Muhittin. Tafsir: An Introduction to Qur’anic Exegesis. Tughra Books Press, Inc. 2013**