

Tafseer (commentary) on the Soorah of Al-Faatihah

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Tafseer Linguistically means: Explanation and making clear.

In Sharee'ah terminology: It means the explanation and commentary of the Quranic Verses, clarifying their meanings and making clear beliefs, secrets, wisdoms and rulings that are included in.

As for Soorah, it Linguistically means high standing, honor, sign, tall and beautiful building, and a pillar of the wall.

In the Noble Quran: Soorah means a part (or a chapter) of the Quran that its beginning and end are known. It also has a name. It is called "Soorah" because the reciter by reciting it gains high standing.

Ayah Linguistically means: Sign, set of letters and the wonderful matter.

In the Quran: Ayah is a set of Quranic words that are separated from what precedes and follows them, and it has no name. Thus, we have differentiated between it and the Soorah; as the Soorah has a name like Al-Faatihah, Al-Baqarah...etc.

Al-Faatihah: The opener of everything is its beginning. It is called "Al-Faatihah" because the recitation of the Quran is begun with, and because when the Companions gathered the Glorious Quran in one volume they made it the first Soorah in the Quran. It is also called "As-Sab' Al-Mathaanee;" As-Sab' because the verses of this Soorah are seven, and Al-Mathaanee because it is repeated in the prayer. It is called Umm Al-Kitaab (i.e. the Mother of the Book) because it is the origin of the Quran and because it includes the summary meanings the Quran concerning the monotheism, rulings, reward, punishment, paths of humankind and so on. Keep in mind that the mother of everything is its origin.

Soorah of Al-Faatihah is Makkan: This means that it is revealed when the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, was in Makkah.

A'udhu Billaahi mina Ash-Shaytaan Ar-Rajeem (I seek refuge with Allaah from the accursed Satan)

We have started talking about Isti'adhah because it is recommendable to begin the recitation with it. This will be made clear when discussing its rulings.

Isti'aadhah: It is the abbreviation of the sentence "I seek refuge with Allaah from the accursed Satan". This resembles our saying Al-Basmalah for "In the Name of Allaah", and Al-Hawqalah for "There is neither might nor power but in Allaah". This is known as the coinage which is the abbreviation of two words or more in one word.

Meanings of the words:

A'udhu: I seek refuge or protection.

Ash-Shaytaan: It is the Satan, and every dissident from among Jinn, humankind, animals and everything.

Ar-Rajeem: The accursed, the driven away and the expelled from the whole goodness.

The meaning of Isti'adhah: I seek protection and refuge with Allaah from the Satan who is driven away from the whole goodness. I seek refuge with Allaah from his harming me in my religion or life or hindering me to do Allaah's commandments or urging me to violate Allaah's prohibitions.

The ruling of Isti'adhah: It is recommendable for the reciter of the Quran to begin with Isti'adhah, as Allaah The Almighty says (what means): {"So when you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allaah from the accursed Satan."} [An-Nahl: 98]

This verse means that if you want to recite the Quran, you should seek refuge with Allaah The Almighty... etc. It is noteworthy that we did not say that it is obligatory because it is reported that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, recited the Quran and did not mention it (i.e., Isti'adhah). It is unanimously agreed upon that Isti'adhah is not from the Quran. However, we mention it as a form of obedience to Allaah The Almighty and a supplication to Him The Almighty to protect us from the accursed Satan. The most authentic wordings of it which are narrated from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, are the words which we have mentioned earlier.

Bismillaahi Ar-Rahmaan Ar-Raheem (In the Name of Allaah, the Compassionate, the Merciful).

The Arabic letter of "Baa'" in the word "Bismillahi" is a preposition and it has in the Arabic language several different meanings among them is the seeking of help which is meant here, and Allaah knows the best.

Ism: it refers to a specific name.

Allaah: It is the proper name of the Lord, Exalted be He, and no one can be named by it except Him. It is also derived from Aliha which means to worship. Allaah The Almighty says (what means): {"And He is Allaah in the Heavens and in the Earth..."} [Al-An'aam: 3]. He, Exalted be He, also says (what means): {"And He it is Who is God in the Heavens and God in the Earth..."} [Az-Zuhkruf: 84]. These two verses mean that He, Glory be to Him, is the only deity that is worthy of worship in the Heavens and in the Earth.

Bismillahi (In the Name of Allaah): This sentence must have a relevant verb by which it gives a true meaning. This verb is omitted and we can suppose it according to the action. For example, in case of reading, we suppose the verb "read" and as if we say: "In the Name of Allaah... I read." Also, in case of slaughtering, we suppose the verb "slaughter" and as if we say: "In the Name of Allaah... I slaughter," and so on.

Ar-Rahman (The Compassionate): The One Who has the great mercy which encompasses all creatures. This name is among His Names that belong to Him only, and no one can be called by it but Him.

Ar-Raheem (The Merciful): The One Who has the mercy which is exclusively bestowed upon the believers.

The meaning of Al-Basmalah: I recite while I am seeking the help of Allaah The Almighty Who has the general and particular mercy.

Is Al-Basmalah a verse from the Soorah of Al-Faatihah or not? Regarding this ruling, the scholars have differed. The most authentic opinion is that it is an independent verse that is not from the Soorah of Al-Faatihah. Rather, it is revealed for separating the Soorahs from each other.

The ruling of reciting Al-Basmalah: It is recommendable to recite Al-Basmalah at the beginning of

every Soorah except the Soorah of Baraa'ah (At-Tawbah).

{"Al-Hamdu lillaahi Rabb Al-`Aalameen (Praise be to Allaah the Lord of the Worlds)"}

Al-Hamd (Praise): To describe the Praised with the Perfection in addition to love and exaltation. The definite article "al" which is equivalent to "the" in English means in the word "Al-Hamd" the comprehensiveness of all kinds and forms of praise for Allaah The Almighty alone; praises for bringing goodness and praises for warding off the evil.

Lillahi (be to Allaah): Lam (An Arabic letter and the first letter of this word) here is for worthiness and specialty. It means that Allaah, Exalted be He, is worthy of the perfect praise and for Him only is all kinds of perfect praises.

Rabb: Rabb here means the Owner. It may also mean lord, master, provider, sustainer and caretaker. All these meanings are meant here; as Allaah The Almighty is the Owner and Provider of the all the worlds. No creature can be called "Ar-Rabb" by using the definite article but Allaah. The creature may be called "Rabb so and so"; namely the owner of so and so through the genitive construction; this is because the letters of alif and lam which are equivalent to the definite article "the" in English refer to generality and the possession of everything is belong to Allaah The Almighty alone.

Al-`Aalameen: All things in the Universe except Allaah; namely, the whole creation.

{"Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem (The Compassionate, The Merciful)"}

Ar-Rahman Ar-Raheem: We have explained them while talking about the explanation of Al-Basmalah.

Maliki Yawmi Ad-Deen (The Owner of the Day of Ad-Deen): Ad-Deen here means reward, punishment and accountability. It also means the Owner of the Day of Judgment. If He owns the Day of Judgment, He verily is the owner of everything. He, Exalted be He, has particularly mentioned the Day of Judgment because there is no one on that day can claim that he owns a thing, and no one on that day can utter a word without His permission.

The aforementioned verses and their explanations teach the servants how to praise and exalt Allaah The Almighty properly.

Iyyaka Na'Abudu wa-iybaka Nasta'een (It is You we worship and You we ask for help)

Iyyaka Na'Abudu (It is You we worship): It means that we worship You Alone, and we do not make a partner with You.

Worship: means the perfection of love, submission and fear.

Wa-iybaka Nasta'een (You we ask for help): It means that we ask You to help us to worship You and to help us in all our matters.

Ihdina Assirata Almustaqeem (Guide us to the Straight Path).

Ihdina (Guide us): Namely; we ask You to guide us. The guidance is of two kinds: the guidance of success and the guidance of making clear. The guidance of success is to ask Allaah The Almighty to grant you the guidance and success to the Straight Path that has no any crookedness in it, whereas the guidance of making clear is to ask Allaah The Almighty to make clear the path of truth for you and

thus, it will not be unknown to you. In our present time, we are surely in urgent need to these two kinds of guidance. We ask Allaah The Almighty to grant us them and do not withhold His favor and grace from us.

Assirata Almustaqeem (The Straight Path): It is the right path which has no any crookedness in it. Allaah The Almighty has clarified this path in the following verse. He The Almighty says (what means): {"The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor."}

It is the path of those upon whom You have bestowed several kinds of favors like the Prophethood, righteousness and martyrdom and so on. Those upon whom Allaah The Almighty has bestowed favors are mentioned in the Soorah of An-Nisaa'. Allaah, Exalted be He, says (what means): {"And whoever obeys Allaah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allaah has bestowed favors from among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good, and a goodly company are they!"} [An-Nisaa': 69].

Siraata Allatheena An'amta 'Alayhim Ghayri Almaghdoobi 'Alayhim wala Ad-Dalleen (Not the path of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray)

The meaning: Guide us to the Straight Path. The Path of those upon whom You have bestowed favors from among the persons who are mentioned in the earlier verse of the Soorah of An-Nisaa'. They are the people of guidance and righteousness. Not the path of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down. They are the people whose wills are spoiled, so they knew the truth but they abandoned it like the Jews. Nor the path of those who go astray; they lost the knowledge and, therefore, they are straying and moving away from the truth like the Christians. On the contrary, the believers knew the truth and conducted according to it.

As to Ameen: It is not from Al-Faatihah. However, it is a supplication means O Allaah! Answer my supplication!

In short, the Soorah of Al-Faatihah has included the following: Allaah The Almighty guides His servants to praise and exalt Him by mentioning the attributes of perfection along with loving and exalting Him. He The Almighty also guided them to the worship and obedience of Him Alone, and not to take a partner with Him, and to seek His help for this matter and for all their life matters, and to deny their might and power. He, Glory be to Him, guided them to way of His asking and praying Him, particularly their asking Him to guide them and to make them adhere firmly to the Straight Path; namely, the Straight religion of our Noble Predecessors. Their asking Him to turn them away from the path of those upon whom His wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray such as Jews and Christians. There is an indication to the adherence to learning the religious matters and Islamic rulings and their actual implementation, and to the avoidance of the paths of disbelief, disobedience and innovation in religious matters. This Soorah has included the three kinds of Tawheed (Islamic monotheism): Tawheed Ar-Ruboobiyyah (Oneness of the Lordship of Allaah), Tawheed Al-Uloohiyaah (Oneness of the Divinity of Allaah), and Tawheed Al Asmaa' Was Sifaat (Oneness of the Names and Attributes of Allaah). It also indicated that the best, securest and firmest paths are that of our Salaf As-Saalih (righteous predecessors) i.e. the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, his Noble companions, may Allaah be pleased with them all, and Allaah knows the best.