

The MAQASIDIC TAFSIR

VOLUME 2

Pursuing the Higher Aim of
The Quranic Scripture



Volume II | Surah Al-Fatihah | Islam in Seven Verses



BY
KARIM ABU ZAID

The Maqasidic Tafsir

Pursuing the Higher Aim of the Quranic Scripture

Volume II Islam in Seven Verses

Part I Hardened Hearts

Part II Al-Fatihah

Editor's Note



Phonetic spelling of any language using other than its native alphabet cannot be standardized except by the use of the International Phonetic Alphabet, which is a specialized code unknown to most readers. The following text, therefore, attempts the use of spelling of Arabic words in the Latin script (English alphabet) using the commonly known spellings in English language print, and electronic resources. Vowel length markings, and the use of doubled vowel characters have been eliminated for simplicity. Glottal stops of any degree are marked with a single apostrophe. For example, references to the Kutub as-Sittah are spelled as follows: Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, Ibn Majah, Nasa'i, and Abu Dawud. Citations of Hadith from the six books, and Ibn Kathir are from Darussalam in ascending numerical order from narration (Hadith) number one in volume one, and increasing until the last volume. Translation into English of the meaning of the Quran is taken from Mohsin Khan, unless otherwise noted.

References of third-party contemporary, or classical scholarship within volume one of this book, or subsequent volumes are not intended as an endorsement of any book, author, creed, or ideology, but only as contextual information. The author encourages students of knowledge to exercise critical thinking, and to pursue knowledge from reliable texts under the direction of known scholars (Ulama), and upon the method of the praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin).



مقدمة

إن الحمد لله نحمده ونستعينه ونستغفره، ونعوذ بالله من شرور أنفسنا وسيئات أعمالنا، من يهده الله فلا مضل له ومن يضلل فلا هادي له، وأشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأشهد أن محمدا عبده ورسوله

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ؕ وَلَا تَمُونَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾﴾

﴿يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا رَجُلًا وَنِسَاءً ؕ وَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ

بِهِ ؕ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾﴾

﴿يَأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾﴾

﴿يُصَلِّحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾﴾

إن أصدق الحديث كتاب الله، وأحسن الهدي هدي محمد ﷺ، وشر الأمور محدثاتها، وكل محدثة بدعة، وكل بدعة ضلالة، وكل ضلالة في النار



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Preface | 1 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Part I: Hardened Hearts | 13 |
| Introduction | 14 |
| The phenomenon of “hardened hearts” | 14 |
| The first parable | 21 |
| The second parable | 24 |
| Expounding on the higher aim (Maqsid) of the parables | 25 |
| Symptoms of a hardened heart | 28 |
| Causes, and cures | 30 |
| The global implications of softened hearts | 33 |
| The intuition (Fitrah) | 34 |
| The intuition (Fitrah) is inside the heart | 37 |
| The Revelation | 39 |
| The Quran | 39 |
| The Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) | 40 |
| Understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin) | 40 |
| ‘Allah’ — the identifying Name | 41 |
| The Light (Nur) of the heavens, and the earth — نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ | 42 |
| The perceived light | 42 |
| The alternation of the day, and the night | 43 |
| The spiritual light | 47 |
| The likeness of Allah’s ﷻ Light in reference to ‘The Parable of Light’ — مَثَلُ نُورِهِ | 47 |
| The analogy | 48 |
| The dilemma, and the treatment | 50 |
| The remedy | 52 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Parable elements _____ | 55 |
| The first imagery set _____ | 55 |
| The second imagery set _____ | 57 |
| The parable explicates truth (Haqq), and falsehood (bathil) _____ | 58 |
| Assessing the condition of the heart _____ | 61 |
| The treatment process _____ | 61 |
| Turn back to Allah ﷻ _____ | 62 |
| Make supplication (Du'a) _____ | 62 |
| Choose the best place _____ | 63 |
| Choose the best time _____ | 64 |
| Maintain physical purity _____ | 64 |
| Learn the Quran in Arabic _____ | 64 |
| Focus on understanding the Quran _____ | 65 |
| Implement what is learned _____ | 65 |
| PART II: Al-Fatihah _____ | 68 |
| Pursuing the higher aim (Maqsid) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah _____ | 69 |
| Analysis of the current phenomenon _____ | 71 |
| Cultural dominance of ignorance (jahiliyah) _____ | 72 |
| Denial of the three fundamentals of faith (Iman) _____ | 75 |
| Denying Allah's ﷻ Existence _____ | 77 |
| Denying the hereafter (Aakhirah) _____ | 78 |
| Denying the Revelation _____ | 78 |
| The companions (Sahabah) were also victims _____ | 79 |
| The belief in Allah ﷻ _____ | 80 |
| The belief in the hereafter (Aakhirah) _____ | 81 |
| The belief in the Divine Guidance (Hidayah) _____ | 81 |
| Introduction to chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah _____ | 82 |
| Place of the Revelation _____ | 83 |
| Names of Al-Fatihah _____ | 84 |
| Virtues of Al-Fatihah _____ | 87 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 1. The greatest chapter (Surah) in the Quran _____ | 87 |
| 2. Virtues in descent _____ | 87 |
| 3. The rewards of Al-Fatihah _____ | 88 |
| 4. A spiritual cure _____ | 89 |
| 5. Security from evil _____ | 90 |
| 6. A model of Monotheism (Tawheed) _____ | 90 |
| Themes, and topics _____ | 91 |
| Expounding, analyzing, and outlining the concepts of the higher aims (Maqasid) _____ | 91 |
| Focus on the basics of worship (Ibadah) _____ | 96 |
| Mandatory individual knowledge (Fardu Ayn) _____ | 97 |
| Voluntary individual knowledge (Fardu Kifayah) _____ | 97 |
| Remove the remnants of ignorance (jahiliyah) _____ | 98 |
| Abu Dharr <small>رضي الله عنه</small>, and Bilal <small>رضي الله عنه</small> _____ | 99 |
| Ignorance (jahiliyah) of tribalism _____ | 100 |
| Make urgent appeals _____ | 101 |
| The means to accomplish the higher aim (Maqasid) _____ | 102 |
| Surah Al-Fatihah — Introduction: Beginning with ‘Basmallah’ _____ | 104 |
| Significance of the Basmallah _____ | 105 |
| Linguistic significance _____ | 106 |
| The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman), The Merciful (Ar-Raheem) _____ | 107 |
| Surah Al-Fatihah — Section One: Know your Lord _____ | 107 |
| The concept of the Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) _____ | 111 |
| Exclusivity of the Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) _____ | 112 |
| The concept of fear (Khawf) _____ | 119 |
| Surah Al-Fatihah — Section Two: Worship your Lord _____ | 120 |
| Surah Al-Fatihah — Section Three: Three types of people _____ | 124 |
| Variant responses to Guidance (Hidayah) _____ | 127 |
| Bestowed bounty (Naimah) _____ | 131 |
| The inheritors of bounty (Naimah) _____ | 132 |
| Final reminder _____ | 133 |
| Saying ‘Ameen’ after reciting Al-Fatihah _____ | 133 |
| Conclusion _____ | 136 |
| Executorial steps _____ | 136 |
| Effective thoughts _____ | 137 |
| Twelve practical lessons _____ | 140 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Focus on sincerity (Ikhlas), and adherence | 141 |
| Self-motivating with urgency | 142 |
| Adherence to worship (Ibadah) | 143 |
| Deliberate progress | 143 |
| Final thoughts | 144 |



Preface



All thanks, and praise are due to Allah ﷻ. We seek His Help, and forgiveness (Maghfirah). We seek refuge in Allah ﷻ from the evil within ourselves, and from the consequences of our evil deeds. Whomever Allah ﷻ guides will never be led astray, and whomever Allah ﷻ leads astray will never find Guidance (Hidayah). I bear witness there is no God but Allah ﷻ Alone, Who is without any partners, and I bear witness that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant, and His Messenger. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾﴾

“O you who have faith (Iman), fear Allah as it is His right to be feared, and do not die except as Muslims.”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَجِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾﴾

“O people, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul, and created from it its mate, and dispersed from both of them many men, and women. Fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and maintain family ties. Verily, Allah is ever watching over you.”⁽²⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

(1) Quran (3:102).

(2) Quran (4:1).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٧٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا

عَظِيمًا ﴿٧١﴾

“O you who have faith (Iman), fear Allah, and speak upright words. He will correct your deeds, and forgive your sins. Whoever obeys Allah, and His Messenger has won a tremendous victory.”⁽¹⁾

Verily, the most truthful speech is the Book of Allah ﷻ, the best Guidance (Hidayah) is the Guidance (Hidayah) of our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the worst of affairs are newly invented matters. Every newly invented matter is a religious innovation (Bid’ah)—every innovation (Bid’ah) is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the Hellfire (Jahannam).



(1) Quran (33:70-71).

Introduction

Alhamdulillah, volume I of *The Maqasidic Tafsir* identified the method used to explain the higher aims of the Quran (Maqasid Al-Quran). The method entails first identifying present-day challenges, phenomena, and problems. Secondly, the method sources one, or more verses (Ayat), chapters (Suwar), or parables of the Noble Quran that address contemporary issues. The process requires the exegete (Mufassir) to relate the reality of contemporary Muslims to an evidence-based understanding of the state of the first Muslim community (Ummah) who witnessed the Revelation. The Quran was revealed to rectify their condition, give Guidance (Hidayah) to the Prophet ﷺ, and his companions (Sahabah), and document a method for the generations of Muslims to inherit.

It was suggested that this method pursues the higher aim (Maqsid) of the Revelation, and we explained the method in a **five-phase process** outlined in volume I of *The Maqasidic Tafsir*, which was as follows:

1. The exegete (Mufassir) is to identify a real, and present problem, or relevant higher aim (Maqsid).
2. Presentation of the issue to the Quran to identify existent relevant major, and supporting higher aims (Maqsid), and logical, and textual evidence behind the chosen higher aim (Maqsid).
3. Expound, and analyze the nature of the problem, and present an outline of the concept of the higher aim (Maqsid).
4. Review of the body of a relevant chapter (Surah) to identify the supporting means to achieve the relevant higher aim (Maqsid).
5. Production of an executable action plan for an individual Muslim, or a community.

However, as we begin presenting the chapters (Suwar) of the Quranic scripture, we will consolidate the five phases into **four phases** to prevent redundancies, as follows:

- **Phase I:** The exegete (Mufassir) identifies the present-day phenomenon, or problem. In this phase, the exegete (Mufassir) should expound, and analyze the nature of the problem.

Furthermore, the exegete (Mufasssir) should refer to the Quran, which addresses the current present-day issue by identifying the selected chapter (Surah), verse (Ayah), parable, or story.

- **Phase II:** The exegete (Mufasssir) must provide logical, and textual evidence to validate his choice of the Quranic scripture to address the present-day phenomenon.
- **Phase III:** The exegete (Mufasssir) expounds on explaining the body of the Quranic scripture, while paying special attention to categorizing the Quranic scripture into harmonious means delivering the executable action items of the higher aim (Maqsid).
- **Phase IV:** Production of an executable action plan for an individual Muslim, or a community.

This current volume of the *Maqasidic Tafsir* introduces two current pressing, and relevant issues. Part I addresses an important present-day issue, which many Muslims experience: *hardened hearts*. This section will examine external barriers, and locks that cover the hearts. Our hearts have absorbed a growing list of religious misconceptions, doubts (shubuhaat), cravings for whims, and desires (shahawaat). This corruption hinders us from benefiting from the Quran, and separates us from a powerful means of vitalizing our built-in human spiritual intuition (Fitrah).

As Muslims, we believe that all hearts are in the Hands of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ can harden, and soften human hearts, demonstrating His total control of everything. The following evidence validates this aspect of Divine Will.

Umm Salamah رضي الله عنها asked the Prophet ﷺ, “**O Messenger of Allah, why do you supplicate so frequently: ‘O Changer of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your religion (Deen).’**” He said: “**O Umm Salamah! Verily, there is no human being except that his heart is between Two Fingers of the Fingers of Allah, so whomever He wills He makes steadfast, and whomever He wills He causes to deviate.**”⁽¹⁾ Mu’adh رضي الله عنه, one of the narrators (Muhaditheen) of this Prophetic Narration (Hadith), followed it with the recitation (Tilawah) of the verse (Ayah):

﴿ رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴾

“Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us.”⁽²⁾

In another Prophetic Narration (Hadith), Anas رضي الله عنه reported, “**The Messenger of Allah would often say, ‘Ya Muqallibal-qulub, thabbit qalbi ‘ala dinik (O Changer of the hearts! Strengthen**

(1) Tirmizi (3522). Graded authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته.

(2) Quran (3:8), Haleem trans.

my heart upon Your religion.)’ So I said: ‘O Prophet of Allah! We believe in you and what you have come with, but do you fear for us?’ He said: ‘Yes. Indeed the hearts are between two Fingers of Allah’s Fingers, He changes them as He wills.’”(1)

A similar Prophetic Narration (Hadith) was reported by Abdullah bin Amr رضي الله عنه, who heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say, “‘The hearts of the sons of Adam are all between two Fingers of the Most Merciful, like one heart, and He directs them as He wills.’ Then the Messenger of Allah said: ‘O Allah, Controller of the hearts, direct our hearts to obey You.’”(2)

Therefore, Allah ﷻ has control over the condition of the hearts, and has the ability to harden, and soften the hearts as a response to the intention (Niyah) of the individual who directs his heart upon Guidance (Hidayah), or chooses to fill his heart with evil.

﴿فِيمَا نَقَضُوا مِيثَقَهُمْ لَعْنَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً﴾ (١٣)

“For their disregard of their solemn covenant with God, We condemned the Israelites and made their hearts hard as stone.”(3)

Allah ﷻ granted humanity the freedom to choose (Al-Amanah). Hence, He hardens the hearts of those who harbor determined intentions which oppose His Guidance (Hidayah). Likewise, He can quickly soften the hearts of individuals who intend to adhere, and comply with His Guidance (Hidayah). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۗ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِمَّنْ ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ أُوْلِيكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾
 ﴿اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِيَ تَقْشَعُرُ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ﴾ (٢٢)
 ﴿وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ۗ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَمَنْ يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ﴾ (٢٣)

“So is one whose breast Allah has expanded to [accept] Islam and he is upon [i.e., guided by] a light from his Lord [like one whose heart rejects it]? Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah. Those are in manifest error. Allah has sent down the best statement: a consistent Book wherein is reiteration. The skins shiver therefrom of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts relax at the

(1) Tirmizi (2140), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله.

(2) Muslim (6750).

(3) Quran (5:13), Sarwar trans.

remembrance [Dhikr i.e., mention] of Allah. That is the Guidance (Hidayah) of Allah by which He guides whom He wills. And one whom Allah leaves astray—for him there is no guide.”⁽¹⁾

Upon reflecting on the above two verses (Ayat), we can easily conclude that Allah ﷻ justly responds to our freely chosen actions, and intentions. Allah ﷻ responds to wickedness by increasing the wicked in a resolution against Him, and He responds with Guidance (Hidayah) for the one who seeks Him in sincerity (Ikhlas).

Every mention in the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) of the hardening, or sealing of hearts is the consequence of decisions made by individuals, or collective cultural norms, and Allah ﷻ is free from blame for what they have been required. Consider the following two examples:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾﴾ ﴿خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾﴾

“Indeed, those who disbelieve—it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them—they will not believe. Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment.”⁽²⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاعَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٥﴾﴾

“So when they turned away (from the right path), Allah let their hearts go wrong. And Allah does not guide those who are rebellious and disobedient.”⁽³⁾

Hence, Allah ﷻ requites those who defy His Commands, and rebel against His legislative Decree to harvest the evil of their hearts’ desire because they did not cultivate higher motives. It is altogether groundless to infer that Allah ﷻ unilaterally hardens the heart of any of the children of Prophet Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام in the absence of their determined initiative towards disobedience. Consequently, When Allah ﷻ hardens a heart, we must be aware that by His **Universal Will**, He

(1) Quran (39:22-23), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (2:6-7), Sahih International trans.

(3) Quran (61:5), Ahmad trans.

permitted this consequence, but by His **Legislative Will**, He deplores, and proscribes the consequence. Allah’s ﷻ Universal Will granted Prophet Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, and his children the freedom to deliberate good, or evil.

Human deliberation often corrupts the heart’s exterior by absorbing religious misconceptions, and doubts (shubuhaat), and indulging in whims, and desires (shahawaat). These doubts (shubuhaat), and desires (shahawaat) form layers of spiritual darkneses, and prevent the Divine Revelation, and Guidance (Hidayah) from restoring the heart to soundness.

The negligence of parents significantly contributes to the growing corruption of a child’s heart by altering the inherent spiritual intuition (Fitrah) of the children through exposure to misconceptions, and corrupt path. This means generations inherit a blueprint that trains further hardened hearts. The inherent inclination towards asserting Monotheism (Tawheed) is dampened by environment, and misguides to such a degree that a heart is suppressed from the vital influence of the Quran, and the revealed Guidance (Hidayah). Such hearts may even struggle to suppress the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah).

Two parables identify this issue in the Noble Quran: one in chapter (Surah) An-Nur (24:35), and the other in chapter (Surah) Ar-Ra’d (13:17). Both parables beautifully illustrate the connection between the Quran, and the spiritual heart, and will be expounded in Part I of this volume, In Sha Allah (Allah Willing).

Part II of this volume addresses losing sight of the hereafter (Aakhirah), which sheds light on the disability of Muslims under the influence of a non-religious lifestyle in the dominating, deadening culture of materialism, and disbelief. The schema of secularism, and materialism distracts, and deters a Muslim from implementing the essential elements that can secure their happiness in this world (Dunya), and more importantly, success in the hereafter (Aakhirah). The vital elements of success are centered around knowing Allah ﷻ, and worshiping Him by choice—worship (Ibadah) which follows the path of the Messengers, the righteous (Salihin), the martyrs (Shuhudah), and the truthful (Sidiqun), to earn their companionship in Paradise (Jannah).

The believing Muslims are losing sight of the overall goal of Paradise (Jannah). Instead, they are fixating on transient objectives, which are only a small part of what is intended to achieve Paradise (Jannah). We see this phenomenon in many of the prominent Muslims in the lecture circuit, and their followers who dwell on secondary issues of social organization, and the pursuit of self-gratuitous means of establishing Islam in the West. Often, the means to the end replace the goal, in terms of decision making, when the higher aim (Maqsid) is abandoned from the means.

Allah ﷻ disclosed the reality of this world (Dunya) in many places in the Quran, that this life is a temporary testing ground, and not a place of rest. This life is not meant to be a place of indulgent

repose. Whatever we have in this life of wealth, children, and idle amusement will be cleft from us in one of two finalities: Allah ﷻ will take them away from us at once, or through depletion, or we will be taken away from them through death. These material distractions are more transient than our own flesh. However, we will never die in the hereafter (Aakhirah), nor will our belongings perish, or decrease:

﴿اعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا مَتَاعٌ وَزِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ أَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيجُ فَتَرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُونُ حُطَمًا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْعُرُورِ ﴿٢٠﴾﴾ ﴿سَابِقُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢١﴾﴾

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children—like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion. Race [i.e., compete] toward forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden whose width is like the width of the heavens and earth, prepared for those who believed in Allah and His Messengers. That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the Possessor of great bounty.”⁽¹⁾

Notice the connection between the above two verses (Ayat): knowledge (Ilm) of the nature, and reality of this world (Dunya) without self-deceit must lead to the earnest pursuit of the hereafter (Aakhirah).

Surprisingly, in this modern era, many Muslims who believe in the hereafter (Aakhirah) are expressing characteristics in the likeness of non-Muslims who disbelieve in it. This incongruity is the bitter harvest of Muslims who negotiate the world (Dunya) in a manner similar to the approach of non-Muslims. Muslims spend an incredible amount of time, and energy pursuing dream jobs, bigger paychecks, luxurious cars, bigger houses, and a higher worldly social status. Lavish homes, and fancy vacations are temporary pleasures, whereas investing time, and effort to harvest other than material rewards will return a sweet bounty, which will last an eternity. This is an incongruity against which Allah ﷻ repeatedly warns in multiple verses (Ayat):

(1) Quran (57:20-21), Sahih International trans.

﴿أَلْهَنُكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ﴾ ﴿١﴾ ﴿حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ﴾ ﴿٢﴾

“O mankind, you have been distracted by the rivalry of piling up worldly gains against one another. You will never be satisfied until you get into the grave.”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمْلًا﴾ ﴿٤٦﴾

“Likewise, wealth and children are an attraction of this worldly life; yet honorable deeds that last forever are better rewarded by your Lord and hold for you a better hope of salvation.”⁽²⁾

Muslims must heed these warnings, and calls. The successful are those who prioritize tasks, which lead to a blissful, and everlasting life ahead of the small gains of this temporary world (Dunya)—temporary gains from a transient, and brief corporeality will reflect like a day, or a part of a day on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Allah ﷻ attested to this:

﴿يَوْمَ يُفْعَلُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا﴾ ﴿١٠٢﴾ ﴿يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا﴾ ﴿١٠٣﴾ ﴿نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا﴾ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“On that Day, We will assemble the guilty with their eyes dimmed in fear of retribution. Whispering among themselves, ‘You have lived but ten days.’ We know best all they will say. The most perceptive of them shall say, ‘You have lived but a day.’”⁽³⁾

Muslims must avoid worries, and anxieties over status, and worldly provision, since Allah ﷻ assured them provision before they were even born. Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin al-‘As رضي الله عنه narrated, “I heard the Messenger of Allah say: ‘Allah decided the decrees of creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth.’ He said: ‘And His Throne (Al-Arsh) is above the water.’”⁽⁴⁾

(1) Quran (102:1-2), Malik trans.

(2) Quran (18:46), Malik trans.

(3) Quran (20:102-104), Ahmad trans.

(4) Sahih Muslim (6748).

Worries, and anxieties should never dominate a Muslim, so much so that we see many of them miss obligatory prayer (Fard Salah) for material reasons. This contradicts the Command of Allah ﷻ, and belies what He directs a believer to focus on, which is the hereafter (Aakhirah), except what is of this world (Dunya) which will help in achieving success in the afterlife (Aakhirah).

﴿بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ﴾

“However, (the disbelievers) prefer the worldly life even though the life hereafter will be better and will last forever.”⁽¹⁾

The tragic cause of the present-day Muslims’ mindset of self-defeat is identifiable. It is a secular constructed system that removes **three vital fundamentals** from a Muslim:

1. Conviction of belief in the heart of the existence of Allah ﷻ,
2. Conviction in the hereafter (Aakhirah),
3. Conviction in the Revelation.

Exegesis (Tafsir) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is ideally suited to analyze the causes, and effects of this critical deficit in the modern Muslim heart. Al-Fatihah summarizes, and encompasses the virtues of the entire Revelation. The Prophet ﷺ described chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah as the most significant Revelation ever sent, when compared with all the previous known Books, inclusive of the Tawrat (Torah), Zabur, Injil (Gospel), and Sahifah-e-Ibrahim. Hence, it is referred to as the ‘Mother of the Quran,’ and according to Abdullah Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه, it is the foundation of the Quran. Consequently, it is an obligation upon every Muslim to listen, or recite Al-Fatihah at least seventeen times every day to validate their five obligatory daily prayers (Fard Salawat).

The remedy to the self-defeat of the Muslims is to secure remembrance of death, and what comes after it. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Remember often the destroyer of pleasures: death.”⁽²⁾**

The clarity in understanding the resurrection, the hereafter (Aakhirah), and the Hellfire (Jahannam) is vital, but will not be a beneficial reminder until one can visualize, or imagine the goal of Paradise (Jannah) like the companions (Sahabah) used to do.

Hanzalah Al-Usaidi رضي الله عنه, one of the scribes of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, reported the environment of contemplation the companions (Sahabah) experienced in the company of the Prophet ﷺ.

⁽¹⁾ Quran (87:16-17), Sarwar trans.

⁽²⁾ Tirmizi (2307). authentic (Sahih) according to Al-Albani رحمته الله.

Hanzalah رضي الله عنه said, “We were with the Messenger of Allah and we spoke of Allah, and we spoke of Paradise (Jannah), and Hell (Jahannam) until it was as if we could see them. Then I got up and went to my family and children, and I laughed and played (with them). Then I remembered how we had been, and I went out and met Abu Bakr, and said: ‘I have become a hypocrite!’”⁽¹⁾

This showed the fear the companions (Sahabah) had of losing faith (Iman), or distracting from the goal of success in the hereafter (Aakhirah). Naturally, the companions (Sahabah) referred all concerns, and affairs to the Guidance (Hidayah) of the Revelation, so the Prophet ﷺ instructed Hanzalah رضي الله عنه in the middle path between the pursuit of the hereafter (Aakhirah), and the station of the present.

Hanzalah رضي الله عنه further reported, “Abu Bakr and I went and entered upon the Messenger of Allah, and I said: ‘Hanzalah has become a hypocrite, O Messenger of Allah.’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Why is that?’ I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, when we are with you, you remind us of Paradise (Jannah) and the Fire (Jahannam), (until) it is as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but when we depart from you, we attend to our wives and children and businesses, and we forget a great deal.’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘By the One in Whose Hand is my soul, if you continued as you are when you are with me, and continued to remember (Paradise and Hell), the Angels would shake hands with you in your homes and on the streets. But, O Hanzalah, there is a time for this and a time for that’ (he said it) three times.”⁽²⁾

Our middle path is to map out a plan upon the model of the companions (Sahabah) in pursuit of their goal of Paradise (Jannah). We are not with the company of the Prophet ﷺ as they were, and must, therefore, follow the example the Prophet ﷺ left as typified by the companions (Sahabah). We must pursue the obligatory (Fard) acts they took, such as learning Monotheism (Tawheed), establishing the five daily obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat), avoiding acts of injustice against others, and remembering our Lord abundantly. We must self-motivate, and assess our commitment to the middle path, and fix our sight on the hereafter (Aakhirah) through constant invocation of Allah ﷻ wholeheartedly in every unit (Rakah) of prayer (Salah). The normative model, therefore, for a Muslim to hold fast to a path towards success in the hereafter (Aakhirah) is sincerity (Ikhlas) upon the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). The guiding principles of such a model will help the servant of Allah ﷻ return to a balanced focus at least seventeen times a day with the recitation of the “Mother of the Book,” and our imploration with it to our Merciful Lord to **“Guide us along the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).”**⁽³⁾

(1) Ibn Majah (4239).

(2) Muslim (6966).

(3) Quran (1:6), Khattab trans.

We ask Allah ﷻ by the virtues of His Names, and lofty Attributes to inspire the hardened hearts through this work, to open the blind eyes, and the mute ears to receive the final truth, and to allay the malaise of this community (Ummah) into complete submission, acceptance, and compliance with the commands entailed in the revealed Guidance (Hidayah). We offer this benediction with sincerity, truthfulness, and love.

Imam Karim Abu Zaid



Part I

Hardened Hearts

﴿ ٢٤ ﴾ أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا ﴿﴾

“Then do they not reflect upon the Quran, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?”⁽¹⁾

(1) Quran (47:24).

Introduction

The heart is often referred to as the physical organ that pumps blood throughout our body, nourishes, and facilitates vitality. But in Islam, the heart is much more significant, as it is also the essence of the believer (Mu'min). This spiritual heart is the storer of Monotheism (Tawheed), Wisdom (Hikmah), and faith (Iman). The spiritual heart pumps faith (Iman) throughout our body, and nourishes our soul (Ruh) to keep it alive. Moreover, within the deepest depths of the spiritual heart, is the intuition (Fitrah) of the individual.

The spiritual heart can become unhealthy, and infected with various social diseases, such as the spreading of religious doubts (shubuhaat), succumbing to the alluring desires (shahawaat) of lust, hatred, anger, and so forth. These stains darken the heart, and if unrestrained, they can eventually block up, or harden the heart. A hardened heart prevents the circulation of vitality, and the intuition (Fitrah) can then rot, especially if it starts early in life due to carelessness, or ignorance of a child's caregivers.

Allah ﷻ addresses this issue in chapters of (Suwar) An-Nur, and Ar-Ra'd through two powerful Quranic parables that aptly explain the phenomenon, and offer the cure.

The phenomenon of “hardened hearts”

We will address the phenomenon of hardened, sealed hearts as the first higher aim-based exegesis (Maqasidic Tafsir). Muslims with good intentions, but poor methodology are confused about why they are not feeling the full impact of the Quran, or benefit from the mercy, blessings, and Guidance (Hidayah) in the Divine Message. Muslims with an erroneous methodology cannot establish a solid connection, or bond between themselves, and Allah ﷻ through the Quran. They struggle to feel peace, and tranquility, while reciting the Quran. They long for a positive emotional connection, or the sweetness of dropping a tear in prayer (Salah) while reciting the Quran.

The story of Maymun bin Mahran ؓ illustrates how careful our righteous predecessors (as-Salaf us-Salihin) were to self-evaluate, and nurture the condition of their hearts. Muslims today will rush to the emergency room to treat a minor nail injury, yet their hearts could be hardened for decades, and they fail to recognize the malaise, and attenuate the disease.

Maymun bin Mahran ؓ, who died in the year 117 A.H, used to be a scribe, and an assistant to the Caliph Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz ؓ. He walked among the most pious of people, and was a scholar (Aalim) who collected Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith) from Abu Hurairah ؓ, Aishah ؓ, and Ibn Umar ؓ, yet he knew the weakness of the human heart, and the importance of sincere self-

evaluation. He said, “A person cannot be a pious man with *Taqwah*⁽¹⁾ until he takes account of himself like he would account for his business partner.”⁽²⁾

It was reported that when Maymun ؓ felt he had a hardened heart, he asked his son to take him to Al-Hasan Al-Basri ؓ. He told Hasan Al-Basri ؓ that he felt his heart had hardened, and asked for his advice to soften it. Al-Hasan Al-Basri ؓ recited the following three verses (Ayat):

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِن مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ﴾ ﴿ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ﴾ ﴿مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَمْتَعُونَ﴾

“Then have you considered if We gave them enjoyment for years. And then there came to them that which they were promised? They would not be availed by the enjoyment with which they were provided.”⁽³⁾

The lesson from this story is that upon hearing just three verses (Ayat) of the Quran, Maymun bin Mahran ؓ was reminded of the hereafter (Aakhirah), and as a result, spiritual vitality entered, and softened his heart.⁽⁴⁾

Another pious predecessor, Al-Fudayl bin Iyad ؓ, had been a thief, who one day heard the following verse (Ayah), which softened his heart, and changed his entire life:

﴿أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَن تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ﴾

“Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth?”⁽⁵⁾

When Al-Fudayl ؓ heard those words, he said, “Indeed, the time has come,” which caused him to change his life, ultimately becoming one of the most pious of predecessors (Salaf) known to us.⁽⁶⁾ The above verse (Ayah) also warns us against becoming like the People of the Book (Ahl Al-

(1) ‘Taqwah’ is an Islamic term for being conscious, and cognizant of God, of truth, "piety, fear of God." It is often found in the Quran.

(2) Waki' bin Al-Jarrah ؓ, Al-Zuhd (vol. 1, p. 270), trans. unknown.

(3) Quran (26:205-207), Sahih International trans.

(4) Ibn Al-Jawzi ؓ, History of the Sahabah (p. 151).

(5) Quran (57:16), Sahih International trans.

(6) Tafsir Ibn Jarir At-Tabari. Surah Al-Hadeed 57:16.

Kitab)⁽¹⁾ before us who distanced themselves from the Revelation, refused to take heed, and thus, Allah ﷻ caused their hearts to harden.

Amazingly, in the following verse (Ayah), Allah ﷻ gives the believers (Mu'minun) hope through the Revelation in an analogy of the heart, with the earth. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾⁽¹⁷⁾

“Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death! Indeed, We have made clear the verses (Ayat) (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) to you, if you but understand.”⁽²⁾

Ibn Kathir ﷺ explained, **“Just as Allah brings life back to the dead, and dry earth by sending the needed abundant rain, He also guides the hardened hearts with the proofs, and evidences of the Quran.”⁽³⁾** When the dead earth absorbs the rain, it becomes lush, green, and full of life; likewise, as soon as the heart is connected with the Quran, and absorbs the Guidance (Hidayah), the heart will soften with vitality.

To begin to connect our hearts to Allah ﷻ through the Quran, we first need to remove the barriers that have hardened our hearts. Allah ﷻ said in chapter (Surah) Muhammad:

﴿أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا﴾⁽²⁴⁾

“Then do they not reflect upon the Quran, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?”⁽⁴⁾

There are many locks that prevent the heart from softening, and restoring to vitality, even as Muslims try to connect with the Quran. This is because the hardened heart is a vicious disease that affects the body, and soul, to the extent that Allah ﷻ uses it as a punishment, and Allah ﷻ is the Most Just. He said:

(1) ‘People of the Book’ is an Islamic term referring to those religions which Muslims regard as having been guided by previous revelations, generally in the form of a scripture. In the Quran they are identified as the Jews, the Christians, the Sabians, and according to some interpretations, the Zoroastrians.

(2) Quran (57:17), Sahih International trans.

(3) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (57:17), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(4) Quran (47:24), Sahih International trans.

﴿فِيمَا نَقَضُوا مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَلْسِيَةً ۚ﴾ (١٣)

“So for their breaking of the covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts hard.”⁽¹⁾

The phenomenon of hardened hearts, and its remedy is elaborated in two parables in the Quran: the first is in chapter (Surah) An-Nur, and the second is in chapter (Surah) Ar-Ra’d. The hardened hearts are remedied through Divine Guidance (Hidayah) from Allah ﷻ—Who created, Who possesses, and controls the hearts. The Prophet ﷺ said, “The hearts of the sons of Adam are all between two Fingers of the Most Merciful, like one heart, and He directs them as He wills.”⁽²⁾ Allah ﷻ directs towards success whoever accepts, and follows His revealed Guidance (Hidayah). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قَالَ أَهِيطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ فَأَمَّا يَا نِينَكَم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا

يَشْقَى﴾ (١٦٣)

“And if there should come to you Guidance from Me—then whoever follows My Guidance (Hidayah) will neither go astray [in the world (Dunya)] nor suffer [in the hereafter (Akhirah)].”⁽³⁾

Allah ﷻ revealed the Quran as Divine Guidance (Hidayah) to mankind until the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). The Quran incites, and challenges our intellect (Aql) to reflect, and ponder over indications of Divine Guidance (Hidayah) in the evidence of creation:

﴿أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى

الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ﴾ (٤٦)

“So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.”⁽⁴⁾

(1) Quran (5:13), Sahih International trans.

(2) Muslim (6750), similar in Ibn Majah (199, 3834), Tirmizi (3522). Ahmad (315/6).

(3) Quran (20:123), Sahih International trans.

(4) Quran (22:46), Sahih International trans.

Shaykh Shanqiti رحمته الله said, “In parables in the Quran, there are great lessons, and rebukes which make the truth clear.”⁽¹⁾ He also said, “Allah explains that by means of these parables, and their explanation of the truth, Allah guides some people, and sends others astray.”⁽²⁾

﴿ وَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْذَكُرُونَ ﴾ ﴿٢٧﴾ ﴿ قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴾ ﴿٢٨﴾

“And We have certainly presented for the people in this Quran from every [kind of] example—that they might remember. [It is] an Arabic Quran, without any deviance that they might become righteous.”⁽³⁾

Parables presented in the Quran often allude to those from the previous scriptures. Allah ﷻ presents many similitudes, and parables in His final Revelation, to humanity to convey a consistent message, and to illustrate with profound representation, a universal Divine truth. The parables, and similitudes often combine several messages, using metaphors, and analogies from the natural environment to illustrate a moral, or religious lesson. Parables are not to be interpreted literally. The individuals, time, or place mentioned are of lesser importance. Instead, the focus is on grasping the more profound, and meaningful intended lessons—the higher aim-based (Maqasidic) message. In many cases, we find that the Quran uses examples that were familiar to the Arabs of that time, such as agriculture, livestock, the sun, moon, stars, rain, water, children, wealth, trade, and so on. The great Wisdom (Hikmah) in these referents is that the familiarity with the desert life in which the final Messenger ﷺ was sent became external evidence to the logical process of acceptance of the message of those who would convey it to the world after the Messenger ﷺ.

The following examples of insightful parables show the richness of this representational approach. The first verse (Ayah) is a parable for the world (Dunya), and the hereafter (Akhirah):

﴿ إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ نَبَاتُ الْأَرْضِ مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ النَّاسُ وَالْأَنْعَامُ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُخْرُفَهَا وَازَّيَّنَتْ وَظَنَّ أَهْلُهَا أَنَّهُمْ قَدِرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَمْرٌ نَا لِيْلًا أَوْ نَهَارًا فَجَعَلْنَاهَا حَصِيدًا كَأَن لَّمْ تَغْنَبِ بِالْأَمْسِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَنْفَكُرُونَ ﴾ ﴿٢٤﴾

(1) Adwa' al-bayan (4/143), Muhammad al-Amin ash-Shanqiti رحمته الله, trans. unknown.

(2) Adwa' al-bayan (4/144), Muhammad al-Amin ash-Shanqiti رحمته الله, trans. unknown.

(3) Quran (39:27-28).

“The example of [this] worldly life is but like rain which We have sent down from the sky that the plants of the earth absorb—[those] from which men and livestock eat—until, when the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified and its people suppose that they have capability over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day, and We make it as a harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday. Thus, do We explain in detail the signs for a people who give thought.”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ depicts the world (Dunya) as an attractive adornment that tantalizes our eyes, which makes us susceptible to it, crave, and desire it to the point that we exert ourselves to increase possession, and our control of it. The reality of this pursuit is our enslavement, because when we think we are in control, the material objects of corporeal life can be snatched away from us. Indeed, we will leave this life while taking nothing from this world (Dunya), except our deeds.

The changing, and unpredictable nature of weather is a salient analogy to a pastoralist, or agrarian people, but the analogy has universal truth. The example of the world (Dunya) is that of transient precipitation falling on the earth by the Permission of Allah ﷻ to raise a vast array of vegetation, and fulfill our worldly needs for sustenance. The ease, and beauty of the growth captivates, and deceives the needy to assume they have control over an abundance of wealth in excess of basic needs. Yet, the Command of Allah ﷻ comes down upon everything in creation, and can ripen vegetation for harvest, or destroy it. This parable is a timely reminder of the condition of the world (Dunya), and the one who invests his misplaced focus, and dependence on it, instead of remembering Allah ﷻ, and the surety of the hereafter (Aakhirah), which will not be transient.

Another example is the following parable which highlights the difference between Monotheism (Tawheed), and infidelity (kufr). This parable is key to understanding that even a monotheist (Muwahid), who falls into polytheism (shirk) by intention, remains in self-defeat until they rectify their infidelity (kufr). A polytheist (mushrik) is like a worker who has multiple bosses, or masters who dispute with one another over issues of policy, and leadership. In contrast, a monotheist (Muwahid) has only one master, and their Guidance (Hidayah) is clear, and easily facilitated:

﴿ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ (٢٩)

“Allah gives you another example: There is a man who deals with several disputing supervisors, compared to a man who deals with only one consistent supervisor. Are these two

(1) Quran (10:24), Sahih International trans.

**equal as regards their condition? All praise is due to Allah (the One Master of all mankind!)
Nay, but most of them know not (the bliss of strict Monotheism).”(1)**

There are many benefits of using similitudes, and parables in a narrative structure to illustrate moral, and religious lessons. A story structured as a parable, or similitude around key metaphors, and imagery can be visualized, and remembered because it evokes the senses, and emotions to signify meaning. Often the information being presented can be incorporated with the existing knowledge, which also makes it easier to understand, and therefore, more likely to be remembered. This is known in cognitive psychology as **“fast mapping.”** Importantly, research into this model of learning suggests that there is a greater chance we will retain, and therefore, reflect upon that story. Once we reflect on, and comprehend the parable which Allah ﷻ presents, we can fully grasp the message, increase our knowledge (Ilm), and embrace the intended theistic principle behind it. Additionally, the strategic placing of parables alongside verses (Ayat) of admonishing, or legal rulings allows those who contemplate to appreciate the miraculous linguistic structure of the Quran. This approach is a sacred gift from Allah ﷻ that helps our mind blossom, recognize, and submit to the comprehensive Divine Guidance (Hidayah).

﴿وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ﴾

“...And indeed, we have set forth for mankind, in this Quran every kind of parable...”(2)

Amr bin Murrah ؓ eloquently confirmed that reflection, and understanding of these parables is indeed a precious gift. Ibn Abi Hatim ؓ recorded that Amr bin Murrah ؓ said, **“I never came across a verse (Ayah) of the Book of Allah that I did not know, but it grieved me, because I heard that Allah says:”(3)**

﴿وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ﴾

“And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge (Ilm).”(4)

One of the toughest challenges Muslims are faced with today is the spiritual anathema of a hardened heart, and must be addressed through means of that which Allah ﷻ sent to illuminate our

(1) Quran (39:29), Ahmad trans.

(2) Quran (30:58), Sahih International trans.

(3) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (29:43), trans. unknown.

(4) Quran (29:43), Sahih International trans.

hearts with Guidance (Hidayah). The higher aims (Maqasid) of the following parables are utility by which Muslims may soften their hearts.

Essential to the higher aim-based (Maqasidic) process is the support of scholastic opinion with evidence. Identification of the main supporting evidence to defend a chosen higher aim (Maqsid) can be made in selected verses (Ayat), chapters (Suwar), stories, or parables. There is much evidence to substantiate the higher aims (Maqasid) of the two Quranic parables selected to address the issue of the connection of the Quran to the human spiritual condition. The first is the **“Parable of Light”** in chapter (Surah) An-Nur, and the second is the **“Parable of Foam on Water”** from the 14th verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Ar-Ra’d.

The first parable

The Parable of Light in chapter (Surah) An-Nur illustrates the makeup of the heart, and the nature of the interaction between it, and the Revelation, and how it vitalizes the intuition (Fitrah) deep within the heart. Furthermore, the parable is about the spiritual light, which is the Guidance (Hidayah) that Allah ﷻ illuminates inside the hearts of the believers (Mu’minun) when His Word inspires vitalization:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوتٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ
 مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ
 مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Allah is the Light (Nur) of the heavens and the earth. His Light (Nur) is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, (located) neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon Light (Nurun Al’a-Nur)! Allah guides whoever He wills to His Light (Nur). And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things.”⁽¹⁾

In this context, the word ‘Nur,’ which means ‘Light,’ refers to Guidance (Hidayah) which emanates from the Revelation that comes from Allah ﷻ.

(1) Quran (24:35), Khattab trans.

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Allah guides whoever He wills to His Light (Nur).”⁽¹⁾

Abdur-Rahman As-Sa’di ؒ said, “His Book is Light, His Law is Light, faith, and knowledge in the hearts of His Messengers, and His believing servants is Light. Were it not for His Light, darkness would have accumulated.”⁽²⁾ The word ‘Light’ is symbolic of Guidance (Hidayah), while disbelief (kufr) is a veil of darkness, as seen in numerous verses (Ayat) of the Quran.

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥٧﴾

“Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkneses into the light. And those who disbelieve—their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darkneses. Those are the companions of the Fire—they will abide eternally therein.”⁽³⁾

The Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah), therefore, is not inconsistent with the explanation of As-Sa’di ؒ, since it infers that the source of Light (Nur) is Allah ﷻ, but it is reflected in two kinds of Guidance (Hidayah). These include Guidance (Hidayah) that can only come from the Revelation, and that which can come from a caller to Islam (Da’i) from among its believers (Mu’minun). Both sources are a Mercy (Rahmah) for the non-believers, whom He can send astray to increase in darkness if they choose to follow transgression.

The word ‘Nur’ is identified at least ninety-four times in three derived forms in the Quran with a meaning that varies, depending on the context, and usage. Nur refers to faith (Iman), Islam, the Quran, justice (Adl), or it can be a reference to the Guidance (Hidayah) from the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In some derived forms, the root letters represent the light of a fire. However, the light of a created thing should not be conflated with the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah), or the light of spiritual vitality that waxes in the heart of a believer (Mu’min).

Light is of two kinds: (1) the created visually perceived light, and (2) the uncreated light. The created light is found in the light of the sun, moon, and stars, and the manufactured light from electricity, and fire, all of which function by the Permission of our Lord.

(1) Quran (24:35), Khattab trans.

(2) Tafsir As-Sa’di (24:35), (vol. 6, p. 412), al-Khattab trans.

(3) Quran (2:257), Sahih International trans.

The second form of light is real light, but an uncreated Attribute of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ is far exalted with praiseworthy Attributes of the Creator, which are unlike the attributes of His creation. Therefore, the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ is expressed in a manner that suits His Majesty, like His Hearing, Sight, Hand, and other lofty Attributes. Light (Nur), in the form of His Guidance (Hidayah), is a real thing that can only be understood in abstraction as spiritual illumination.

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه explained the spiritual illumination when he said, **“Allah is the Light (Nur) of the heavens and the earth,”** that it means He is The Guide to the dwellers of the heavens, and the earth.⁽¹⁾

The light which Allah ﷻ, by His Mercy (Rahmah), sent down into the hearts of the believers (Mu'minin) is nurtured by awareness, love, and faith (Iman). This is a light that increases in remembrance (Dhikr), and consciousness of Allah ﷻ (Taqwah). Its gestation is in the hearts of the believers (Mu'minin), but then Allah ﷻ strengthens, and increases that light until it appears upon their faces.

Shaykh As-Sa'di رحمته الله summarized the opinions of Ubay bin Kaab رضي الله عنه, Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه, and As-Suddi رحمته الله in his exegesis (Tafsir) of the light of the believer (Mu'min). He said that **“in whose heart is the Light (Nur) of Allah,”** refers to the natural disposition, or with which Allah ﷻ created mankind. This intuition (Fitrah) is likened to the pure oil—it is pure, and is receptive to Divine teaching, and prescribed actions. When knowledge (Ilm), and faith (Iman) reach a believer's (Mu'min) heart, that light will begin to shine in his heart, like the fire in the wick of the lamp. This refers to the heart that is pure, and free of bad intentions, and misunderstandings of the Divine Text. If faith (Iman) reaches that heart, it will be illuminated greatly, because it is pure, and free of contamination, like the purity of the shining glass. Thus, in that heart are combined the light of sound natural inclinations, the light of faith (Iman), the light of knowledge (Ilm), and the purity of proper understanding of faith (Iman): Light upon Light (Nurun Al'a-Nur).⁽²⁾

Most of us have met a person whose face is illuminated with radiance, and light, complementing a concrete surety in the existence of their Lord, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and the recompense of the hereafter (Akhirah). The mystical interpretation is that such people have perceived the light of Allah ﷻ, meaning they sensed the growth of light in their hearts. This is the softening of the heart, which is nurtured through contemplation of the coming of the Guidance (Hidayah) from our Lord.

(1) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(2) Tafsir As-Sa'di (24:35), (vol. 6, p. 413), al-Khattab trans.

The second parable

The second parable confirms the intense interaction between the Revelation, and the heart. This parable is evidence of how consistent exposure to the Quran can remove the stains of darkness from the heart's surface to return vitality to the intuition (Fitrah), which lies buried in the depth of the hardened heart.

﴿ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَهُ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حُلِيٍّ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ كَذَلِكَ يُضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ

الْأَمْثَالُ (١٧)

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus, Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples.”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ states that His Revelation brings life to the hearts, and He compares this with water that brings life to the earth with plants.

The comparison is between ‘hearts’ and ‘valleys.’ A large heart can accommodate a large amount of knowledge (Ilm), just as a large valley can accommodate a large body of water. Conversely, a spiritual heart with a small capacity can only take on a small amount of knowledge (Ilm), just like a small valley takes on a small body of water. The rushing of water over the hardened surface of a small earthen valley will foam up, and cleanse the surface, but only a little will be absorbed for germination.

The second part of the parable is, **“And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it.”⁽²⁾** This refers to fire as the cleanser. When refining valuables from ores, such as gold, or silver, dirt is also picked up from the earth, and fire is used to separate the valuable metals from dirt, and filth that is cast aside. The foaming of flux, and oxides is shed from a brittle steel ore, until the metal is tempered, and annealed into a useful implement. So

(1) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

also, the heart is cleansed, and its hardness is softened by knowledge (Ilm), and illumination in capacities it can accommodate.

When Guidance (Hidayah), and knowledge (Ilm) interact within the heart, the presence of filth, such as desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat) become disturbed, and the heart sheds these harmful elements. In this similitude, Allah ﷻ likens His Divine Knowledge (Ilm) to that of the rain from the sky. Thus, the sacred Revelation fills the believer's (Mu'min) spiritual heart according to his capacity. Likewise, the rainwater fills the streams, creeks, and rivers, also according to their capacity.

Doubts (shubuhaat), distractions, and misguidance that the enemies of Islam bring forth are likened to a swelling foam with a transient volume that dances, and swirls on the surface, but eventually vanishes. Likewise, evil people, and their insinuations, and temptations rise to the surface, and take a prominent part in persecuting the good people who are passed through the furnace of persecution for their purification. Contemplation of this verse (Ayah) amends the believer (Mu'min) with a steely resolve to shed doubts (shubuhaat), and distractions, and refocus on the goal of purifying the heart into a softened tool with which to absorb the Revelation.

Expounding on the higher aim (Maqsid) of the parables

The physiological heart is a powerful organ that pumps blood throughout the body in an amazingly regulated way. Blood reaches all parts of the body, from the top of the head to the tips of the toes. This autonomic process commences from the first day of inception inside the womb, until the last breath we take in this world (Dunya) when our Lord stops our pulse. However, in the spiritual interpretation of Islamic higher aims (Maqasid), the spiritual heart is a greater contributor to vitality. The spiritual heart is the central unit in which the believer (Mu'min) enters a contractual relationship with Allah ﷻ. This heart is the container in which the believer (Mu'min) formulates, develops, and maintains a bond of love, fear, and hope in Allah ﷻ. The spiritual heart is a real thing with inherent qualities, and conditions, despite being intangible by our scientific metrics. Importantly, the spiritual heart is seen by Allah ﷻ. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Allah does not look at your (outward) forms and your wealth, rather He looks at your hearts and your deeds.”**⁽¹⁾

Presenting with a sound heart on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) must be the mission of every believer (Mu'min), as it will be the most beneficial component on that day. A sound heart will allay us from disgrace, and is the means for us to gain admittance into Paradise (Jannah).

(1) Muslim (6542, 6543); Ibn Majah (4143).

﴿۸۷﴾ وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿۸۸﴾ ﴿۸۹﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“And do not disgrace me on the Day they are [all] resurrected—the Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.”⁽¹⁾

A hardened heart is a punishment from Allah ﷻ inflicted upon those who are reminded of His Revelation, but continue in heedlessness, and those who arrogantly contest what was revealed. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿۳۴﴾ كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُرْتَابٌ ﴿۳۵﴾ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَتْهُمْ كَبْرٌ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ

“Thus does Allah leave astray he who is a transgressor and skeptic. Those who dispute concerning the signs of Allah without an authority having come to them—great is hatred [of them] in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who have believed. Thus does Allah seal over every heart [belonging to] an arrogant tyrant.”⁽²⁾

The example of Fir’aun (Pharaoh) illustrates the hardened heart, which is impervious. Allah ﷻ described the sealed heart of the tyrant of Egypt as an affliction upon an individual in spiritual blindness. The Fir’aun (Pharaoh) was a tricky figure in a captivating narrative. Allah ﷻ presented this tyrant with undeniable evidence, such as plagues, drought, and floods, but no calamity softened his heart towards the message brought by Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses).

﴿۴۸﴾ وَمَا نُزِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“And not a verse [Ayah (sign, etc.)] We showed them, but it was greater than its fellow, and We seized them with torment, in order that they might turn [from their polytheism (shirk) to Allah's religion (Islamic Monotheism)].”⁽³⁾

Fir’aun (Pharaoh) became an example of spiritual blindness despite trials, and tribulations, which he recognized had a Divine origin. The tyrant’s hardened heart was sealed completely after Prophet

(1) Quran (26:87-89), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (40:34-35), Sahih International trans.

(3) Quran (43:48), Khan trans.

Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses), and Prophet Harun عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Aaron) supplicated against him, and his allies, and Allah ﷻ answered their supplication (Du'a). The task of Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses) was to soften their hearts, and invite them to Islam (Da'wah). Therefore, such a supplication (Du'a) was conditional on two requisites.

The first was to escape evil, as explained by Ibn Uthaymeen رحمه الله. He said, **“If the disbeliever (kafir) is harming the servants of Allah, and transgressing against their rights, then there is nothing wrong with praying against him, and asking that he be destroyed, so as to ward off his evil. If that is not the case, then it is better to pray for him to be guided instead of praying against him to be destroyed.”**⁽¹⁾

The second condition was explained by Ibn Battal رحمه الله in his book *Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari*. He wrote that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ did not hasten to supplicate against them as long as he hoped that they would accept to embrace Islam.⁽²⁾

Allah ﷻ described the hardening of the heart of Fir'aun (Pharaoh):

﴿ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ ءَأْتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَيَّ أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَيَّ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّىٰ يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴾ ﴿٨٨﴾ ﴿ قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَت دَعْوَتُكُمْ فَاَسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَانَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ ﴿٨٩﴾

“And Musa (Moses) said: ‘Our Lord! You have indeed bestowed on Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and his chiefs splendor and wealth in the life of this world, our Lord! That they may lead men astray from Your Path. Our Lord! Destroy their wealth, and harden their hearts, so that they will not believe until they see the painful torment.’ Allah said: ‘Verily, the invocation of you both is accepted. So, you both keep to the straight way (i.e., keep on doing good deeds and preaching Allah's Message with patience), and follow not the path of those who know not (the truth i.e., to believe in the Oneness of Allah, and to believe in the Reward of Allah: Paradise, etc.).”⁽³⁾

Another example in the Quran of hardened hearts was that of the Children of Israel (Bani Israel). Allah ﷻ mentions that despite giving them many great signs, and miracles, they advanced into

(1) Ibn Uthaymeen رحمه الله, Fatawa Islamiyah, (4/232).

(2) Ibn Battal رحمه الله, Sharh Sahih Al-Bukhari, (5/114), Ar-Rashid Publishing.

(3) Quran (10:88-89), Shakir trans.

their heedlessness. Hence, Allah ﷻ afflicted them with hardened hearts, and they stumbled in circles in spiritual blindness.

Allah ﷻ resurrected the body of a murdered member of the community, and caused him to identify his killer. Despite witnessing this event, the Children of Israel (Bani Israel) did not heed Guidance (Hidayah), and Allah ﷻ punished them with hardened hearts.

﴿فَقُلْنَا أَضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾﴾ ﴿ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشْقُقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾﴾

“So We said, ‘Strike him [i.e., the slain man] with part of it.’ Thus does Allah bring the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you might reason. Then your hearts became hardened after that, being like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some of them that fall down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.”⁽¹⁾

This highlights the importance of keeping our hearts sound as a key goal of every believer (Mu'min). However, this is a lifelong investment that requires motivation, persistence, and patience. Therefore, continually assessing the soundness of our spiritual heart is critical to gaining tranquility in this world (Dunya), and the ultimate success in the hereafter (Akhirah), culminating in a joyous meeting with Allah ﷻ, and being admitted into Paradise (Jannah) among His chosen servants. This lofty goal first requires knowledge of identifying the symptoms of a hardened heart, and the means to a cure.

Symptoms of a hardened heart

The hardening of the heart is a disease that strikes the spiritual center of the human body, and it infects, and corrupts the entire body—every limb, every organ, our sight, and hearing, our thoughts, actions, and emotions.

(1) Quran (2:73-74), Sahih International trans.

Nu'man ibn Bashir رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“There is a piece of flesh in the body, if it becomes good (reformed), the whole body becomes good, but if it gets spoilt, the whole body gets spoilt, and that is the heart.”**⁽¹⁾

Hardened hearts also equate to walking around with both our eyes, and ears closed. People who walk with deaf ears, and blind eyes are not equal to the animals which are ruled by the instinct Allah ﷻ places inside them. What would happen to someone who was blind, and deaf if they walked near a dangerous mountain top? This would undoubtedly be a life-threatening risk. The deprivation of senses involved with a hardened heart is a risk in this world (Dunya), and more importantly, a risk in the hereafter (Aakhirah). The most striking danger of a hardened heart is that the one afflicted is often so absent of spiritual insight, or misled by self-pride, and arrogance that they are inattentive of their condition.

﴿وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ﴾
 ﴿١٧٩﴾

“And We have certainly created for Hell (Jahannam) many of the Jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.”⁽²⁾

The scholars (Ulama) stated that we suffer from an ailing hardened heart if we have one, or more of the associated symptoms, and characteristics of spiritual blindness. Therefore, the one who seeks a cure must identify the symptoms of a hardening heart, before developing practical actions to remove the locks that threaten to seal our hearts.

An individual at risk of a hardening heart exhibits one, or more of the following incipient symptoms. For example, the individual:

- is unaware of their deficits, or misguidance.
- does not obey Allah ﷻ.
- is unwilling to perform righteous deeds.
- despairs, and lacks tranquility.
- does not benefit from advice.
- does not reform after receiving relief from hardships.

⁽¹⁾ Bukhari (52); Muslim (4094).

⁽²⁾ Quran (7:179), Sahih International trans.

- does not recognize the Power of Allah ﷻ.
- is in desperate need of the Help of Allah ﷻ, but does not know how to reach for it.
- expects Islam to fail, and does not have certainty in its success.
- remains hardened, even under severe pain.
- does not recognize the heart's chaotic condition.
- always blames Allah ﷻ, His Messenger, and the Revelation for failure, instead of identifying personal errors.
- is negligent in remembering Allah ﷻ.
- does not get angry when the Commandments of Allah ﷻ are violated.
- loves to be in gatherings that indulge in idle talking.
- is arrogant.
- is stingy, and greedy.
- falls into doubtful matters.
- belittles good deeds.
- does not care about the affairs of Muslims.
- is deprived of friendship within the Muslim community (Ummah).
- shows anxiety, grief, and fear when afflicted by hardship, or when in difficulty.
- is attached to the world (Dunya).
- has speech that is void of the etiquette of the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah).
- always disputes, and argues unnecessarily.
- chases desires with minimal limits, or efforts to abstain.
- avoids seeking knowledge (Ilm), and cherishing reminders of the Almighty.

Identification, and contemplation of these specific symptoms of spiritual malaise may allow us to self-evaluate, and adopt the most suitable strategies from the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) to return to Allah ﷻ with a softening heart.

Causes, and cures

The etiology of the hardening of the heart based on the above symptoms has one underlying denominator. Allah ﷻ mentioned this primary descriptor in the following verses (Ayat), which reoccur in multiple places of the Quran in varying contexts.

After Prophet Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام, and Hawwa رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا (Eve) sinned, they also repented. Hence, Allah ﷻ sent them down to earth with their sworn enemy, Shaytan (Satan). Allah ﷻ said the following as He Commanded them to get down to earth:

﴿قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

“We said, ‘Get down from the Paradise (Jannah), all of you. (Wait) till the Guidance (Hidayah) comes to you from Me. Then, whoever follows My Guidance (Hidayah) shall have no fear. Nor shall he ever grieve.’”(1)

In another context:

﴿ قَالَ أَهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا

يَشْقَى ﴿١٢٣﴾

“(Allah) said, ‘Get down from here! Both of you [Adam and Shaytan (Satan)]! You are each other’s enemy. Whoever follows the Guidance (Hidayah)—when the Guidance (Hidayah) from Me arrives—will not go astray, and will not be miserable.’”(2)

In the following verse (Ayah), Allah ﷻ describes the medium of His Guidance (Hidayah):

﴿ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Oh children of Adam! Messengers will surely come to you from among your own, and they will relate My revelations to you. Then, those who refrain from evil and mend their ways shall have nothing to fear; nor shall they (ever) grieve (or be sorry).”(3)

The consequence of neglecting this Guidance (Hidayah) is explained in the following verse (Ayah):

﴿ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَمَحْشَرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾

“While a wretched (unwholesome) livelihood will be the lot of the one who turns away from My advice and warning. He will be blind when We round him up on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah).”(4)

(1) Quran (2:38), Munshey trans.

(2) Quran (20:123), Munshey trans.

(3) Quran (7:35), Munshey trans.

(4) Quran (20:124), Munshey trans.

﴿ وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نَقِيضٌ لَهُ، شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ، قَرِينٌ ﴾ ﴿٣٦﴾ ﴿ وَإِلَيْهِمْ لِيَصُدُّوهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ ﴾ ﴿٣٧﴾

“And We let the Shaytan (Satan) become an intimate companion of anyone who remains unmindful of the remembrance (Dhikr) of Ar-Rahman, (the Most Merciful). They turn people away from Allah, and yet they consider themselves the rightly guided (Al-Muhtadeen).”⁽¹⁾

We can conclude that the main cause of the hardened heart in a Muslim is the disconnection between the spiritual heart, and the Revelation. Therefore, the cure for a hardened heart is to revisit our understanding of the Quran, and our method of remembering our Lord through His Word.

Success in this task is only by the Permission of our Lord. Success is not by our own effort, but by His Mercy (Rahmah). Returning to Allah ﷻ must begin with making sincere supplication (Du'a) to Him to aid us on this journey of breaking the locks on our hearts. It is only Allah ﷻ that can soften our hearts, and turn them into tools to absorb the sweetness of faith (Iman).

Shahr bin Hawshab ؓ asked Umm Salamah ؓ which supplication (Du'a) the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said most frequently. She said, **“The supplication (Du'a) he said most frequently was: ‘O Changer of the hearts, make my heart firm upon Your religion (Deen).’”⁽²⁾**

Abdullah ibn Masud ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ recommended the following supplication (Du'a) when an individual loses stoic insight:

“O Allah, I am Your servant, son of Your servant, son of Your female servant, my forelock is in Your Hand, Your Command over me is forever executed, and Your Decree over me is Just. I ask You by every Name belonging to You which You named Yourself with, or You taught to any of Your creation, or revealed in Your Book, or You have preserved in the knowledge (Ilm) of the unseen (Ghayb) with You, that You make the Quran the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety.”⁽³⁾

(1) Quran (43:36-37), Munshey trans.

(2) Jami At-Tirmizi (3522 Book 48, Hadith 153).

(3) Ahmad (3704), authenticated by Al-Albani ؓ.

The health of a reconciled heart is not guaranteed based on our knowledge (Ilm), or actions. Rather, we acknowledge it is dependent on taking action (Aml) upon the Guidance (Hidayah), and Mercy (Rahmah) of our Lord.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ إِنَّكَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِعَادَ ﴿٩﴾

“Our Lord, do not make our hearts deviate after You have guided us, and grant us from You a Mercy (Rahmah); You are the Grantor. Our Lord, You will gather the people for a Day in which there is no doubt; Allah does not break His appointment.”⁽¹⁾

Significantly, this supplication (Du’a) connects the health of the heart with remembrance (Dhikr), and acknowledgment of the Day of Gathering (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) after the resurrection. The higher aim (Maqsid) of this reference will be explored in the later part of this volume, In Sha Allah (Allah Willing).

The global implications of softened hearts

In today’s material world, nations are racing one another to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) to attack, threaten, or defend. Hence, they advance an ideology that justifies the global order based on nuclear hegemony. A small collection of nations with nuclear technology dominates global policy, and enforces their understanding of peace, and stability, based on self-interest. However, another technology is more valuable, which, if promoted, and proselytized to individuals, and nations, will spread peace on earth. This is submission to peace that is not established on the monopoly of technology, or the tyranny of the majority, but submission to our Lord, and engaging with His Guidance [Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah)], based on the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin).

Nuclear scientists succeeded in developing the atomic bomb, the most powerful human-built technology, and since that time, our world has been in turmoil. The world order established under this destructive weaponry has increased anxiety, increased inequity, and left the people in fear, grief, and self-defeat. The method of establishing peace through connecting our intuition (Fitrah) with Divine Guidance (Hidayah) has always existed—it is not a recent ‘man-made’ solution. However, those who want to maintain hegemony throughout history have attempted to distort, and destroy this peaceful pursuit of Divine Guidance (Hidayah). Allah ﷻ consistently restored it

(1) Quran (3:8-9), The Monotheist Group (2011) trans.

through sending Messengers, and Prophets, one after another, until the final restoration through sending Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The establishment of a settled, and lasting peace must begin first, in the softened hearts of believers (Mu'minin), and then follow in the establishment of a global community in harmony with the Will of our Creator. Allah ﷻ said:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ
وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَن كَفَرَ
بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

“Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that—then those are the defiantly disobedient.”⁽¹⁾

The gravity of this formula for peace requires understanding its fundamental component parts: the intuition (Fitrah), and the Revelation.

The intuition (Fitrah)

‘Fitrah’ is an Arabic word that means ‘disposition,’ ‘nature,’ ‘constitution,’ or ‘instinct.’ It is an inherent ethical insight that is symbiote within an uncorrupted intellect (Aql). Individuals who examine themselves, consult their conscience, and ethical motivations will find those positions that result in settled peace, and absence of fear, or grief, and will not contradict the Islamic schema of settled peace.

When a child is born, they have a genuine belief (Aqeedah) in Allah ﷻ. This inborn belief is the ‘Fitrah.’ In Islam, it also refers to the natural inclination toward good, and aversion towards evil. We will be using the term ‘intuition’ for ‘Fitrah,’ since it is the closest English-translated word for it.

(1) Quran (24:55), Sahih International trans.

Islam, also called the Religion of Intuition (Deen Al-Fitrah), is the religion (Deen) of human nature because its laws, and teachings are in total harmony with the normal, and the natural inclination of the human intuition (Fitrah) to believe in, and submit to the Creator.

Allah ﷻ created us with this perfect intrinsic capacity, and He referred to the intuition (Fitrah) in the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) as the state of purity, and innocence every human being was upon when they came into this world (Dunya). Hence, when a child is born, he is already programmed to recognize Allah ﷻ. The newborn hearts are filled with oceans of love, glorification, and recognition of Allah ﷻ which are maintained in a visceral sense, on the condition that it is left alone without introduced biases. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ﴿٧﴾ فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ﴿٨﴾﴾

“By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right.”⁽¹⁾

This means the condition Allah ﷻ created for the soul (Ruh) was awareness of its own discernment. There is no excuse, therefore, to follow the misguidance of false worship after the soul (Ruh) has known right from wrong. Allah ﷻ describes the seeding of the intuition (Fitrah) in mankind. He said:

﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِن بَنِي آدَمَ مِن ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا﴾
﴿يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾﴾

“When your Lord asked all the offspring of Adam (before their birth), ‘Am I not your Lord?’ All of them testified and bore witness to their testimony that on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), they would not say, ‘We were not aware of this (fact).’”⁽²⁾

The following Prophetic Narration (Hadith) points out the role of the devils in tarnishing a child’s intuition (Fitrah). Iyad bin Himar رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Behold! My Lord has commanded me to teach you that which you do not know of what He has taught me: ‘On this day, all the wealth that I have bestowed upon a servant (of Allah) is permissible. I have created all My servants *Hunafa* (with the inclination to worship Allah Alone), but the**

(1) Quran (91:7-8), Ali trans.

(2) Quran (7:172), Sarwar trans.

devils come to them and turn them away from their religion (true path). They forbid to them that which I have permitted to them, and they tell them to associate others with Me for which I have not sent down any authority.”⁽¹⁾

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, “There is no child who is not born in a state of intuition (Fitrah), then his parents make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, just as animals bring forth animals with their limbs intact. Do you see any deformed one among them?”⁽²⁾ Then Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه recited the following verse (Ayah):

﴿ فَأَقَمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ ﴾

“(This religion is) the original disposition from Allah upon which He originated (Literally: constituted) mankind. There is no exchange for the creation of Allah. That is the most upright religion, but most of mankind do not know.”⁽³⁾

Parents, and their environment will affect, and influence the children, whether directly, or indirectly. We recognize the important role parents must play to protect the state of purity children are born upon, meaning intuition (Fitrah). Indeed, the provision of an Islamic upbringing, and a basic level of knowledge are the first right of a child upon their parents. We also recognize the big mistake of the Western culture in legislating restrictions that limit a parent’s authority over their children. Reconciliation of these positions is the responsibility of a parent, as the Islamic right of the child is greater than the expectations legislated by the state. Parents are responsible for teaching their children the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) to protect, and enhance their children’s intuition (Fitrah). Allah ﷻ adjured:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا
أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ ﴾

“O believers! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones, overseen by formidable and severe Angels, who never disobey whatever Allah orders—always doing as commanded.”⁽¹⁾

(1) Muslim (7207).

(2) Muslim (6755-6758, 6760, 6761); Bukhari (1358, 1359, 1385).

(3) Quran (30:30), Ghali trans.

Ali bin Abi Talib رضي الله عنه said, **“Protect yourselves and your families from a fire.”**⁽²⁾ What is meant here is to teach them the religion. Parents must protect their family from the Hellfire (Jahannam) by protecting their intuition (Fitrah) in this world (Dunya), telling them to remember Allah ﷻ, obey Him, and avoid violating His prohibitions. The following is further evidence that displays the parental responsibility towards nurturing a child to remain in submission (Istislam) to our Lord.

Amr bin Shuaib رضي الله عنه reported from his father, who reported from his grandfather, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Command your children to pray when they reach the age of seven, and discipline them for it when they reach the age of ten, and (at that age) separate between them in their beds.”**⁽³⁾

Hence, we conclude that parents have two responsibilities. The first responsibility of a parent is to guard their children’s intuition (Fitrah), then connect this intuition (Fitrah) with the Revelation in the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) based on the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin). Unfortunately, many parents fail tremendously to deliver both duties because of their own spiritual illness. Consequently, when we neglect our intuition (Fitrah), and disassociate ourselves from the Revelation, our own heart becomes tarnished, or hardened, and our children inherit the same ignorance regarding the understanding of the Revelation. Mending the visceral disconnect from the Revelation begins with understanding, and accepting with complete submission the reality that the heart is a vehicle designed to contain spiritual vitality. The means to convey a solution to the hardening of our heart through the higher aim-based (Maqasidic) method is built on evidence that describes the nature of the heart as shapable. This implies a moral obligation upon the *self* (Nafs) to nurture our hearts appropriately.

The intuition (Fitrah) is inside the heart

Abu Saeed Al-Khudri رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“There are four kinds of hearts: a polished heart as shiny as a radiant lamp, a sealed heart with a knot tied around it, a heart that is turned upside down, and a heart that is wrapped. As for the polished heart, it is the heart of the believer, and its lamp is the light of faith (Iman). The sealed heart is the heart of the unbeliever.”**⁽⁴⁾

As mentioned before in the Parable of the Lamp, this imagery refers to spiritual vitality. The reference in this Prophetic Narration (Hadith) confirms the station of Guidance (Hidayah) in the

(1) Quran (66:6), Khattab trans.

(2) Tafsir At-Tabari (66:6), translation

(3) Abu Dawud (494) authentic (Sahih) according to Al-Albani رضي الله عنه; Tirmizi (407).

(4) Ahmad (11129), trans. unknown.

heart. The Guidance (Hidayah) may be followed, or neglected, and that decision will strengthen, or neglect the intuition (Fitrah).

Al-Nawas bin Saman al-Ansari رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ related a lengthy parable to explain the complex, but essential elements of our intuition (Fitrah). He said, **“Indeed, Allah has described a parable of the *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* (straight path to Allah’s pleasure and Paradise): On the two sides of the path are walls with many unlocked doors, each door having a curtain. There is a caller appointed at the head of *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* who calls out, ‘O people keep to this straight path, Don’t look at or go on the crooked paths breaking off from it,’ When a person traveling this path wishes to open one of these doors then a caller calls out, ‘Beware, do not open it, If you open it then you will adopt this path and leave the *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem*.’ The *Sirat Al-Mustaqeem* is Islam, and the walls are Allah’s Hudood (legal limits), and the open doors are the Haram (unlawful) things forbidden by Allah, and the caller at the doors is the Quran Kareem, and the caller on the straight path is the living conscience gifted as a guide from Allah (Tawfiq) to the heart of every person Allah deems as possessing faith (specific guidance).”⁽¹⁾**

This caller on the straight path (*Sirat Al-Mustaqeem*) of Islam is the living conscience, which we call intuition (Fitrah), and is gifted to us from Allah ﷻ as a moral compass. Allah ﷻ, in His Mercy (Rahmah), placed inside us a programmed alarm system—the intuition (Fitrah)—that warns us whenever we consider deserting the straight path (*Sirat Al-Mustaqeem*). Our intuition (Fitrah) is the moral steadfastness (Istiqamah), which returns the soft heart to the right way whenever it departs from the straight path (*Sirat Al-Mustaqeem*) of submission (Istislam) to our Lord.

Hudhaifah bin Al-Yaman رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Al-Amanah (the trust or the moral responsibility or honesty, and all the duties which Allah has ordained) descended from the heavens and settled in the roots of the hearts of men (faithful believers), and then the Quran was revealed and the people read the Quran, (and learned it from it) and also learned it from the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah).”⁽²⁾**

The word ‘Amanah’ (trust) is an inclusive term that encompasses everything Allah ﷻ placed inside the innermost, or the roots of the hearts of the believers (Mu’minun), such as knowing Allah ﷻ, obeying His Commands, fairness in dealing, maintenance of mutual rights, and more. Both the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) built, amended, and strengthened this trust (Al-Amanah) in the believers (Mu’minun). This means it nurtured the intuition (Fitrah) in their hearts. This Prophetic Narration (Hadith) is evidence of the changing state of the heart, the station of intuition

(1) Ahmad (4/184); Tirmizi (2859).

(2) Bukhari (7276, 6497, 7086); Muslim (367, 368).

(Fitrah) in the heart, and the connection of the heart to the second component of our higher aim-based (Maqasidic) approach to the hardened heart.

The Revelation

The term ‘Revelation’ refers to the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) as understood, and implemented by the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin) of this community (Ummah). Hence, the Revelation in the form of the Quran, or the authentic Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) is inseparable. Allah ﷻ suggested the equivalency of the two forms of Guidance (Hidayah) in practical affairs, with His Statement:

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

“Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, belongs with those blessed by Allah: the Prophets, the first supporters of the truth (Haqq), the martyrs (Shuhudah), and those who helped humanity. Ah! How beautiful is their company!”⁽¹⁾

The Prophet ﷺ also said, **“The truest of word is the Book of Allah, and best of Guidance (Hidayah) is the Guidance (Hidayah) of Muhammad.”⁽²⁾**

The Quran

The Quran is the final message from Allah ﷻ to humanity, appealing to the hearts, and calling them to submit. It is the Speech of Allah ﷻ. Even its mere recitation (Tilawah) gains reward as an act of worship (Ibadah), yet attentiveness of its content in Guidance (Hidayah), and prohibitions is at once spiritually rewarding, and functionally essential. The final message in the content of the Quran can guide us to distinguish the truth (Haqq) from the falsehood (bathil), the right from the wrong, and the lawful (Halal) from unlawful (Haram). It is the nourishment, and remedy for the body, and soul, and the source of treatment for moral decay. It is the guide that shows the way of attaining happiness in this world (Dunya), and the hereafter (Akhirah). Finally, it is the remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah ﷻ that reminds people of the purpose of creation.

⁽¹⁾ Quran (4:69), Ahmad.

⁽²⁾ Nasa’i (1312, 1579); Bukhari (6098, 7277); Ahmad (319/3).

The Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah)

The Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) is the compilation of reports on the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, inclusive of his words, acts, and tacit approvals. While the entire Quran is authentic, and preserved, there are hidden, weak, and fabricated accounts in the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). Therefore, scholars (Ulama) have examined all accounts, to discern what has been authentically transmitted to us through known, and reliable sources. Transmission of the oral, and written conveyance of these traditions from generation to generation has been scrutinized with the highest academic standards. Specialists in Islamic studies began in the earliest era of Islamic scholarship to critically analyze the academic ability, and integrity of the conveyors of the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). The result is a classification of reliable, or authentic Prophetic Narrations (Sahih Ahadith) which have no contradiction within their corpus, nor do they conflict with the meaning of the Quran.

Understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin)

Unfortunately, we live at a time in which deviant sects claim that they follow the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), while their understanding of its interpretation is innovative (Bid'ah). The orthodox position is to restrict the interpretation of the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) to what is known from the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin), and those who adopted this understanding regarding beliefs, rituals, and character. This interpretive method is justified by the lofty endorsement of the Muslims who lived with the Prophet ﷺ, and those who learned from them. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأُولُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾⁽¹⁾

“The first and foremost (to embrace Islam and excel others in virtue) among the immigrants (Muhajireen) and the helpers (Ansar), and those who follow them in devotion to doing good, aware that Allah is seeing them—Allah is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them Gardens throughout which rivers flow, therein to abide forever. That is the supreme triumph.”⁽¹⁾

Abdullah ibn Masud رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“The best people are those of my century (generation), and then those who will come after them [the next century (generation)], and then those who will come after them [i.e., the next century (generation)],**

(1) Quran (9:100), Unal trans.

and then after them, there will come people whose witness will precede their oaths, and whose oaths will precede their witness.”⁽¹⁾

The evidence in the above Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith) and verses (Ayat) have defined terms that support an interpretive approach to the contemporary phenomenon. The phenomenon of hardened hearts results from disconnects between the intuition (Fitrah), which lies deep within the heart, and the Revelation. These terms are relevant component parts of a higher aim-based exegesis (Maqasidic Tafsir) of two Quranic parables which address the dilemma of hardened hearts.

The interaction between the intuition (Fitrah), and the Revelation is mentioned by Allah ﷻ in many verses (Ayat) in the Quran, and expounded in multiple Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith). The foremost of these examples is the Parable of Light, which is the first model for rectification of the disconnect between the intuition (Fitrah), and the Revelation. However, more importantly, it confirms that the intuition (Fitrah) is intrinsic in the heart.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوتٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ
 مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ
 مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Allah is the Light (Nur) of the heavens and the earth. His Light (Nur) is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree, (located) neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon Light (Nurun Al’a-Nur)! Allah guides whoever He wills to His Light (Nur). And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has (perfect) knowledge (Ilm) of all things.”⁽²⁾

‘Allah’ — the identifying Name

‘Allah’ is the identifying Name, or title (Al-Alam) of the indivisible, and majestic true God. This exclusive proper noun can apply to none other than Him. He, the Most Majestic, and High, and has different Names, none of which approach the unique quality of His Name: ‘Allah.’ Among other Names of our Lord, we may derive adverbial qualities that refer to aspects of the creation in a linguistic sense. For example, there is only one Ar-Rahman who is the Most Merciful Allah ﷻ, yet humanity expresses some form of mercy. The Name ‘Allah’ is unique, and cannot refer to any

(1) Bukhari (6429, 2652, 3651, 6658), Muslim (2533, 6469-6478). Also see Muslim (179).

(2) Quran (24:35), Khattab trans.

quality, or aspect of the creation. Hence, the meaning of the Name ‘Allah’ is unique, indivisible, and underivable. This is the only pronoun in which the definitive is inclusive with the attribute, and in which the attribute refers to nothing else in creation. Allah ﷻ is the *Ma’luh*—The One Who deserves all worship (Ibadah)—out of love, magnification, deification, and longing. Consequently, He is worthy of worship (Ibadah), despite our inability to perceptually know this from our own sight. The worthiness is known through the perception of the intellect (Aql), and the intuition (Fitrah) of the heart.

To the westerner, this name is familiar, yet foreign sounding, although it is globally known as a unique reference to our Creator. It is essential to note that ‘Allah’ is the same word that Arabic-speaking Christians, and Jews use for God. Every Arabic Bible uses the name ‘Allah’ whereas the word ‘God’ would be used in English. The English word ‘God’ is a noun that is not exclusively pronominal, or linguistically unique, and has a morphology ascribed through translation. The name ‘Allah’ originates in sound, and meaning from Allah ﷻ Himself, and its exclusivity is known.

The Light (Nur) of the heavens, and the earth — نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

Allah ﷻ is the source of the Light that illuminates the heavens, and the earth. Naturally, all perceivable light in the creation is from Allah ﷻ. There are two types of light: perceived light, and spiritual light.

The perceived light

No doubt, the heavens, and the earth are illuminated by the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ. However, the word ‘perceived’ refers to the light that emanates from the objects of the universe, and would not exist without His Light (Nur).

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه said that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ woke up to pray at night, he would say, **“O Allah, to You be praise, You are the Light (Nur) of the heavens and the earth, and whoever is in them. To You be praise, You are the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth, and whoever is in them.”**⁽¹⁾

In this Prophetic Narration (Hadith), the Prophet ﷺ was reported calling Allah ﷻ the Light (Nur). Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه added details to the description. He reported, **“There is no night or day with your Lord; the Light (Nur) of the Throne (Al-Arsh) comes from the Light (Nur) of His Face.”**⁽²⁾

(1) Nasa’i (1620); Bukhari (1120, 7385); Muslim (1808-1810).

(2) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35).

The above evidence shows that light upon the creation is Light (Nur) from Allah ﷻ. There is no night, or day because Allah ﷻ is not a part of creation that rotates around a light source, and there is not absence of light for Allah ﷻ because He is the source of Light (Nur).

The alternation of the day, and the night

Out of the Mercy (Rahmah) of Allah ﷻ, He set the universe in motion with stellar bodies of light from His Light (Nur) so that we experience a portion of day, and night to benefit the pursuit of work, and sleep. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِضِيَاءٍ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧١﴾﴾ ﴿قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾﴾ ﴿وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلِعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾﴾

“Say: ‘Have you (ever) pondered, if Allah made night continuous for you till the Day of Resurrection, who is an *ilah* (a god) other than Allah who will come to you with light? Will you not then listen?’ Say: ‘Have you (ever) pondered if Allah made day continuous for you till the Day of Resurrection, who is an *ilah*, other than Allah who will come to you with night wherein you take rest? Will you not then open your eyes (and see the reality)?’ And out of His Mercy: He has set for you the night and the day, so that you may rest therein (during the night) and so that you may seek of His Bounty (during the day) and in order that you pay (Him) thanks.”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾﴾

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.”⁽²⁾

Whenever the word ‘sign’ is used in singular, or plural in the Quran, it refers to Guidance (Hidayah) that can be gained from something knowable through contemplating the verses (Ayat).

(1) Quran (28:71–73), Omar trans.

(2) Quran (3:190), Sahih International trans.

That is why when Allah ﷻ mentions the word ‘sign,’ He qualifies it as a sign for people of understanding, or people who reflect, or people of knowledge. None but Allah ﷻ, our Creator, and Sustainer, calls upon us to do this type of reflection. Therefore, whenever we see such words, we should take a moment, and reflect upon the signs mentioned in the verse (Ayah).

The days, and nights are perceivable due to the rotation of the earth on its axis. One rotation completes in 23 hours, 56 minutes, and 4.09053 seconds, which is called the **sidereal period**.⁽¹⁾ During rotation, the face of the planet exposed to the sun experiences daylight, while the face away from the sun experiences the absence of sunlight. Humankind was given the intellect (Aql) to produce light from various forms of available energy to illuminate their nights. This accommodation is from the Permission of our Lord to produce light that emanates from His Light (Nur).

Allah ﷻ is the source of the perceived light, and His Veil is Light (Nur). This is a Veil of Light (Nur) which shields creation from the intensity of the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ.

Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari رضي الله عنه reported that Allah’s Messenger ﷺ stood up from amongst his companions (Sahabah), and mentioned five matters. He said, **“Allah does not sleep, and it is not befitting that He should sleep. He lowers the Scales and raises them. The deed done during the day is taken up to Him before the deed done during the night, and the deed done during the night before the deed done during the day. His Veil is Light (Nur), and if He were to remove it, the Glory of His Face would burn everything of His creation, as far as His gaze reaches.”**⁽²⁾

The Veil of Light (Nur) is known through numerous authentic Prophetic Narrations (Sahih Ahadith). Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه asked the Prophet ﷺ if he saw his Lord, and the Prophet ﷺ replied, **“(He is) Light (Nur); how could I see Him?”**⁽³⁾

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ، قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۗ قَالَ لَنْ تَرِنِي وَلَكِنِ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ، فَسَوْفَ تَرِنِي ۗ فَلَمَّا تجلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ بُنِي ۗ﴾

﴿إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

(1) Herman (1986), How fast is the Earth moving? Scientific American.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-fast-is-the-earth-mov/>

(2) Ibn Majah (195, 196); Muslim (445).

(3) Muslim (443, 444); Tirmizi (3282).

“When Musa (Moses) came at the appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, ‘My Lord, show [Yourself] to me, so that I might see You.’ [God] said, ‘You can never see Me. However, behold this mountain. If it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.’ As soon as his Lord revealed His limitless Glory to the mountain, He caused it to crumble to dust, and Musa (Moses) fell down unconscious. After he recovered, he said, ‘May You be exalted in Your Glory! I repent! I will be the first of the believers (Mu’minun)!”⁽¹⁾

The significance of this verse (Ayah) to the meaning of light in the higher aim-based exegesis (Maqasidic Tafsir) of the two selected parables is as follows. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قَالَ لَنْ تَرَنِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظِرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَنِي﴾^(١٤٣)

“You can never see Me. However, behold this mountain. If it remains firm in its place, then you will see Me.”⁽²⁾

Allah ﷻ said definitively that He cannot be seen in His Essence in this life. Then to put forth an example of this impossibility, He posed a verbal condition subordinate to the effect of a manifest example beginning with the word ‘if’ to establish the impossibility, rather than plausibility.

﴿فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا﴾^(١٤٣)

“As soon as his Lord revealed His limitless Glory to the mountain, He caused it to crumble to dust, and Musa (Moses) fell down unconscious.”⁽³⁾

When the revealed light appeared, the mountain was destroyed because, **“His Veil is Light and if He were to remove it, the Glory of His Face would burn everything of His creation, as far as His gaze reaches.”⁽⁴⁾**

Tirmizi ؒ, and Ahmad ؒ recorded a Prophetic Narration (Hadith), which conveys that Anas ؓ reported, **“The Prophet explained the Words of Allah:**

﴿فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ﴾^(١٤٣)

(1) Quran (7:143), Kaskas trans.

(2) Quran (7:143), Kaskas trans.

(3) Quran (7:143), Kaskas trans.

(4) Ibn Majah (195, 196); Muslim (445).

‘As soon as his Lord revealed His Limitless Glory to the mountain.’⁽¹⁾

Like this [All narrators (Muhaditheen) of this Prophetic Narration (Hadith) held a thumb to expose only the tip of the finger on the right hand]. So the mountain fainted. And Musa (Moses) fell down unconscious.”⁽²⁾

Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه corroborated that what Allah ﷻ exposed to the mountain was only the extent of the little finger.⁽³⁾

Prophet Musa عليه السلام (Moses) then made the statement:

﴿تَبَّتْ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾⁽¹⁴³⁾

“I repent! I will be the first of the believers (Mu’minun)!”⁽⁴⁾

Mujahid رضي الله عنه said that Prophet Musa عليه السلام (Moses) repented from asking to see Allah ﷻ. Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه added that because of the experiential evidence, Prophet Musa عليه السلام (Moses) emphasized his faith (Iman) in the quality of impossibility to see the Essence of Allah ﷻ in this life.⁽⁵⁾ Prophet Musa عليه السلام (Moses) said:

﴿وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾⁽¹⁴³⁾

“I am the first of the (true) believers (who realize that You are beyond any resemblance to any creature and beyond the grasp of any creature’s senses).”⁽⁶⁾

Hence, the exposed light was unperceivable, and ungraspable. This collection of information is a conundrum for those who do not have an understanding of certain Islamic principles regarding the unfathomable Qualities of Allah ﷻ. For example, one might negate that the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ could be exposed to the mountain while Allah ﷻ was not present, and this is a negation of an

(1) Quran (7:143), Kaskas trans.

(2) Tirmizi (3074), Hasan Sahih Gharib by Abu Eisa رضي الله عنه; Ahmad (125/3).

(3) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (7:143), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(4) Quran (7:143), Kaskas trans.

(5) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (7:143), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(6) Quran (7:143), Ünal trans.

Attribute of Allah ﷻ because the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ is from Him. Shaykh as-Saleh ؒ said that those who negate Allah’s ﷻ Attribute of An-Nur (The Light) erred by thinking that if they affirmed the Attribute of An-Nur (The Light), it would mean that Allah ﷻ is the Light (Nur) falling upon walls, and gardens, etc.⁽¹⁾

Shaykh As-Saleh ؒ explained, based on the principles of understanding the Attributes of Allah ﷻ, **“We know that Mercy (Rahmah) is an Attribute of Allah established with Him. The Mercy (Rahmah) present on earth is an effect of Allah’s Attribute of Mercy (Rahmah), separated from Him. The knowledge of the creature is a distinct, and separate effect of Allah’s Attribute of Knowledge. The saying of Abdullah ibn Masud⁽²⁾ does not mean, or imply that the light on walls, and on the surface of the earth is the essence of the Light (Nur) of Allah’s most honorable Face.”⁽³⁾**

The spiritual light

The spiritual light reaches the hearts, hearing, and vision, and constitutes the beneficial light for the servants, at peace in this world (Dunya), and the hereafter (Akhirah). This is contrary to the perceivable light that has an external radiance in the creation. Spiritual light is the light described in the Parable of Light, and it is the Guidance (Hidayah) that Allah ﷻ vitalizes inside the hearts of the believers (Mu’minun) as a response to their sincerity (Ikhlās), and specific actions.

The likeness of Allah’s ﷻ Light in reference to ‘The Parable of Light’ — مَثَلُ نُورٍ

Ibn Abbas ؓ said that the parable of Allah’s ﷻ Light (Nur) is the parable of His Guidance (Hidayah) in the heart of the believer (Mu’min).⁽⁴⁾

This statement near the outset of Ibn Kathir’s ؒ exegesis (Tafsir) of the Parable of Light infers the symbiosis between spiritual light in the heart, and the Guidance (Hidayah). We can measure the depth of this analogy in this verse (Ayah) by dissecting its component parts.

The parable is built on **five component symbols**: the niche, the bulb, the glass, the tree, and the oil. To grasp the depth of this parable, we can choose to visualize a glass-globed oil lamp, or a present-day table lamp:

(1) Dr. Saleh As-Saleh ؒ, An-Nur (The Light) One of Allah’s Names (p. 9).

(2) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35); Tabarani (8886/9); Darimi, Ar-Rad ‘ala Bishr al-Marisi (p. 449); Al-Haythami, Majma’uz Zawa’id, (vol. 1, p. 85); Authenticated by Ibn Taymiyah.

(3) Dr. Saleh As-Saleh ؒ, An-Nur (The Light) One of Allah’s Names, (p. 9).

(4) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

1. **The niche** (Mishkah) is a hollow, or an opening that we create in a wall to place an oil lamp. It focuses the light, and prevents it from being diluted, or directed to areas that are not beneficial. It is like the shade on the top of a table lamp.
2. **The wick** (Fatilah) is the cord, or thread from which a fuel burns. In a table lamp, it is the filament of the bulb.
3. **The glass** is the globe in an oil lamp that houses, and refracts light, or the glass bulb of a table lamp. It is radiant, shining, and looks like a brilliant star.
4. **The tree** is from a blessed olive tree, an olive, neither of the east, nor the west.
5. **The oil** is fuel oil coming from a tree that is so pure that it would almost glow forth (of itself) without fire touching it.

The analogy

Finally, we examine the signification of each component of the parable:

1. **The niche, or the shade** is the chest in a human body; the chest contains the heart. The human chest contains the heart precisely like the shade in a table lamp, or the opening in a wall where we place the light. We often hear people say, “I found my niche.” What is meant by this statement is that they found the one thing they are planning to concentrate on, directing their full attention to doing it.
2. **The bulb filament of the lamp wick** is the intuition (Fitrah) that contains the knowledge (Ilm) of right, and wrong, and is nurtured in the heart of a believer (Mu'min) like an oil lamp wick absorbs fuel. Ubay bin Kaab رضي الله عنه said, “**The lamp is the light, and this refers to the Quran, and the faith (Iman) that is in his heart.**”⁽¹⁾
3. **The glass** that surrounds the bulb, or the flame is like a brilliant star made from pearls due to its crystal clarity, with light shining in clear, unstained glass. A fuel lamp that burns from any fuel renders the glass globe stained, and discolored with heat, and carbon. The atypical cleanliness of the globe in this image refers to the soundness of a clean heart. Ubay bin Kaab رضي الله عنه, and others said, “**This is the likeness of the heart of the believer (Mu'min).**”⁽²⁾ The believer’s (Mu'min) heart is solid flesh, yet soft at the same time to allow permeation of the light of the Quran to fuel spiritual intuition (Fitrah), and such a heart shines with intuition

(1) Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(2) Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(Fitrah). As Ubay bin Kaab رضي الله عنه described, **“It is like a shining star.”**⁽¹⁾ Hence, Allah ﷻ said towards the end of the verse (Ayah), **“Light upon Light (Nurun Al’a-Nur).”**

4. **The tree** which bears the oil fruit is neither western, nor eastern. Al-Baghawi رحمته الله, and At-Tabari رحمته الله said this means the tree was nurtured with a balanced array of sunlight throughout the day, and will have an even exposure, giving it soft fruit with no discoloration, and a bright oil. Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه said, **“This is a tree in the desert which is not shaded by any other tree, or mountain, or cave, nothing covers it, and this is best for its oil.”**⁽²⁾

The symbol of a tree has metaphoric meaning elsewhere in the Quran. Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمته الله said, **“Allah likened the tree of Monotheism (Tawheed) in the heart, to the good tree whose roots are firmly fixed, and its branches reach high in the sky, continually bearing fruit whenever a good deed is raised high.”**⁽³⁾ Such a tree is best prepared to receive nurturing from the sunshine, and such a Muslim, firmly entrenched with Monotheism (Tawheed), is well prepared for the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah).

5. **The oil** is the fuel that sustains the luminosity of a lamp. The purist oil will burn cleanly, and brightly with a glass housing that has no carbon residue. This oil represents the purity of the Revelation, and the meaning that one deduces from the Quran. The tree is perfect, its oil is perfect, and bright, and the Quran is perfect, and both produce perfect light. Shaykh Sa’di رحمته الله described that the accumulative product of this purity, and perfection upon the believer (Mu’min) in whose heart is the Light (Nur) of Allah ﷻ, refers to the natural disposition, intuition (Fitrah), with which Allah ﷻ created him. That intuition (Fitrah) is likened to the pure oil; it is pure, and receptive to Divine teaching, and prescribed action (Aml)—the light of faith (Iman), the light of knowledge (Ilm), and the purity of proper understanding of faith (Iman): Light upon Light (Nurun Al’a-Nur).⁽⁴⁾

Ibn Kathir رحمته الله said, **“The light of the Quran, and the light of faith (Iman) give light when they are combined, and neither can do so without the other.”**⁽⁵⁾ Both are required to produce an abundance of light in the heart. According to the analogy of the lamp, both the lamp, and the oil are required to burn brightly—the uncorrupted intuition (Fitrah), and the exposure to the Revelation. Both come from Allah ﷻ by his Mercy (Rahmah).

(1) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

(2) Tafsir Ibn Jarir At-Tabari (24:35).

(3) Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمته الله, Amthal fi’I Qur’an al-Karim, (p. 75), Khalid trans.

(4) Tafsir As-Sa’di (24:35), (vol. 6, p. 413), al-Khattab trans.

(5) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (24:35), Darussalam, Mubarakpuri abridgment.

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ﴿٣٥﴾

“Allah guides whoever He wills to His Light (Nur).”⁽¹⁾

It means that Allah ﷻ shows the way to the ones whom He chooses, and He knows best who deserves to be guided.

Abdullah bin Amr رضي الله عنه described this aspect of the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah) with the words of the Prophet ﷺ, who said, “**Indeed Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, created His creation in darkness, then He cast His Light (Nur) upon them, so whoever is touched by that Light (Nur), he is guided, and whoever is not, he goes astray. It is for this reason that I say that the pens have dried with Allah’s Knowledge.**”⁽²⁾

وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

“And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has (perfect) knowledge of all things.”⁽³⁾

The dilemma, and the treatment

The intuition (Fitrah) can become tarnished due to environment, and can distance from the Divine Guidance (Hidayah). The tarnish inhibits Guidance (Hidayah) from the heart, and yet the treatment of this deficit is in that which is inhibited. The paradox in this is only in our understanding, as the Guidance (Hidayah) from our Lord is unlike the guidance from among creation; our Lord provides Guidance (Hidayah) without limit, and by His Mercy (Rahmah), our hearts have an inherent capacity to recover. This capacity is known by us only through experience after first understanding the nature of the corruption of the heart, and turning to Him for recovery.

Obviously, the innermost of the heart—which is the reference to the intuition (Fitrah) in our parable—is inclined to corruption if not delicately nurtured, and protected. Look carefully at these words in context of the following Prophetic Narration (Hadith). The corrupt heart will be like a worn-out vessel, neither acknowledging good, nor rejecting evil, rather, absorbed in its desires (shahawaat).

(1) Quran (24:35), Khattab trans.

(2) Tirmizi (2642); Ahmad (176/2); also in Al-Hakim, and Ibn Hibban.

(3) Quran (24:35), Khattab trans.

Hudhaifah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ typified the hearts motivated by desire (shahawaat). The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Tribulations will stick to people’s hearts like the fibers of a reed mat, one by one. Any heart that imbibes them will get a black spot, and any heart that rejects them will get a white spot, until there will be two types of hearts. One will be white like a smooth stone, which will not be harmed by any tribulation so long as heaven and earth endure. And the other will be black and gloomy, like an overturned vessel, not acknowledging any goodness nor rejecting any evil, except what suits its own whims and desires.”**⁽¹⁾

Abu Saeed Al-Khudri رضي الله عنه categorized the hearts into **four types**, which indicate a potential for change, by the Permission of Allah ﷻ:

1. **The heart that is clear like a shining lamp:** It is the heart of the believer (Mu’min), which is a lamp filled with light.
2. **The heart that is covered, and tied up:** This is the heart of the disbeliever (kafir).
3. **The heart that is upside-down:** This is the heart of the hypocrite (munafiq), who recognizes then denies.
4. **The heart that is clad in armor:** This is the heart in which there is both faith (Iman), and hypocrisy (nifaq). The parable of the faith (Iman) in it is that of legume, a sprout that is irrigated with good water, and the likeness of the hypocrisy (nifaq) in it is that of sores that are fed by blood, and pus. Whichever of the two prevails is the characteristic that will dominate.⁽²⁾

A Muslim should fear the manifestation of an armor-clad heart, inside which is seeded hypocrisy (nifaq); and he should be vigilant of the heart with a blackened exterior, stained with the influence of desires (shahawaat), and religious doubts (shubuhaat). Like the oxides of a lampshade, this covering can be cleansed.

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Verily, when the servant (of Allah) commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart. When he refrains from it, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart is polished clean. But if he returns, it increases until it covers his entire heart. And that is the ‘Ran’ which Allah mentioned [then he recited]:”**⁽³⁾

(1) Muslim (369).

(2) Ahmad (3/17), trans. unknown; At-Tabarani, As-Saghir (1075).

(3) Tirmizi (3334); Ibn Majah (4244); Nasa’i in Al- Kubra (11658); Ibn-Hibban (1771, 2448); Al-Hakim [in shurut of Muslim] (517/2).

﴿كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٤﴾﴾

“No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning.”⁽¹⁾

The remedy

The intuition (Fitrah), represented in the analogy as the wick of a lamp, is consumed, and darkened. The heart, represented by the radiant lamp glass, is covered with layers of dirt due to the absorption of desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat), which dulls, and darkens the illumination of the lamp. In the heart, the Quran illuminates the stained heart, but little of its message permeates through to touch those who are unwilling to clean their chest from corruption. The chest restricts, and restrains the passage of the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah) as would the flame of a lamp be dulled by a carbon-filled globe. The solution to the lack of vitality is the Quran. The Quran ignites the heart with a pure light that does not oxidize, or produce toxic pollution. Allah ﷻ revealed the Quran to treat our heart, and remove from it desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat).

﴿وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾﴾

“We send down in the Quran that which is healing and a mercy to those who believe; as for the evildoers, it only increases their loss.”⁽²⁾

Allah ﷻ sent in the Quran, a quality of power to heal, and cure physical, and spiritual illnesses beyond what human knowledge can facilitate. It is a comprehensive Guidance (Hidayah), and a benefit for the believer (Mu'min). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي هَدَىٰ ءَامَنُوا هُدًىٰ وَشِفَاءٌ ﴿٤٤﴾﴾

“Say, it is a guide and a healing to those who believe; but for those who do not believe, there is a deafness in their ears, and a covering over their eyes: they are [as it were] being called from a very distant place.”⁽³⁾

(1) Quran (83:14), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (17:82), Khan trans.

(3) Quran (41:44), Khan trans.

The heart of a disbeliever (kafir) is stained, and darkened, yet there is a possibility of some diffuse light entering, muffled, and faint like a caller from a distant place. The heart is the hotbed of our belief (Aqeedah), and the foundational base of our actions. If the actions are pure, the activity will agitate the heart, anneal it, and ready it for the Revelation. The actions of a sealed heart calling to our Lord for Guidance (Hidayah), and asking for forgiveness (Maghfirah) from under layers of darkness is sincere worship (Ibadah). Hence, remedy begins with earnestly asking Allah ﷻ to make the Quran the spring of our hearts, from which may come a powerful vital light. Sincerely asking Allah ﷻ without associating Him with anything from creation is an act of worship (Ibadah), which purifies our heart. The best of hearts call to our Lord to ask for the benefit of His Words, as known in the imploration of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, **“Oh Allah! Indeed I am Your servant, son of Your male servant and female servant, My forelock is in Your Hand (i.e., You have control over me), and Your Judgment upon me is assured, and Your Decree upon me is Just. I ask you with every name that You have named Yourself with or revealed in Your Book (Quran), or taught to any of Your creation or kept with Yourself in the knowledge of the unseen (Ghayb) that is with You that you make the Quran the life of my heart, and the light of my chest and the banisher of my sadness and the reliever of my distress.”**⁽¹⁾

It is our responsibility to prepare our hearts for Guidance (Hidayah) by cleansing our hearts from spiritual disease, and the black spots on them caused by our accumulated sins. Thus, the second parable comes to provide the guidelines on how to penetrate the covering around the heart. The goal is to illuminate the heart with Guidance (Hidayah) so that it reflects outward from the believer (Mu'min) who can engage with humanity, revealing this light in their character.

﴿أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾⁽²⁾

“Is he who was dead (without faith by ignorance and disbelief) and We gave him life (by knowledge and faith) and set for him a light (of Belief) whereby he can walk amongst men, like him who is in the darkness (of disbelief, polytheism, and hypocrisy) from which he can never come out? Thus, it is made fair-seeming to the disbelievers that which they used to do.”⁽²⁾

Asking for Guidance (Hidayah), and forgiveness (Maghfirah) is a resolution of the heart. The work of repairing, or cleaning the innermost, and exterior of the heart is through the use of the Revelation to ignite the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah). The Quran also imparts to a believer (Mu'min)

(1) Ahmad (1/391; 3528), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ﷺ; also see Sahih Abu Hatim, Abu Fajr trans.

(2) Quran (6:122), Khan trans.

the energy to endure hardships associated with spreading this light amongst humanity. Surprisingly, this begins with humility, not bravado, and brawn. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿ أَلَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَنسَوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ ﴿ أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

“Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah, and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened; and many of them are defiantly disobedient. Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its lifelessness. We have made clear to you the signs; perhaps you will understand.”⁽¹⁾

Those who are sincere, and who call to our Lord in humility, and need, and who ask for the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah) undergo a process of cleansing. Allah ﷻ said in the following parable:

﴿ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُتُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴾

“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam. And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it. Thus, Allah presents [the example of] truth (Haqq) and falsehood (bathil). As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples.”⁽²⁾

This fascinating parable is replete with themes, and emotions in one verse (Ayah), a whole load of similes, metaphors, and similitudes which are meant to invite contemplation.

(1) Quran (57:16-17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

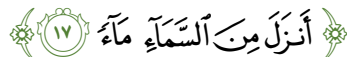
This parable comprises two similar, and relevant sets of imagery. The first set depicts the rainfall upon the earth, and the second depicts the fire, and the ornament. However, both illustrate the reaction the heart has when it connects with the Revelation.

Parable elements

Using the same approach implemented for the parable of the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah) of Allah ﷻ, the first stage of analysis is to dismantle the parable elements. Discerning minimal contrasting elements enables us to assess the depth of this verse (Ayah) by looking at the symbols mentioned within. Identification is then followed by a relational analysis of component parts of the image sets.

1. The first set: **“He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity, and the torrent carries a rising foam.”⁽¹⁾**
2. The second set: **“And from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, desiring adornments and utensils, is a foam like it.”⁽²⁾**

The first imagery set



“He sends down from the sky, rain.”⁽³⁾

Allah ﷻ sends down the rain, which flows into lowland valleys according to their capacity over the hardened earth surfaces. Throughout the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), rain, and water are frequently used as metaphors to illustrate the Revelation. The interpretation of the symbol of rain as knowledge (Ilm) is supported by a Prophetic Narration (Hadith) reported by Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه, who said that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“The example of Guidance (Hidayah) and knowledge (Ilm) with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth.”⁽⁴⁾**

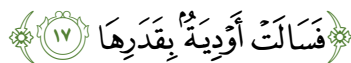
Likewise, in the parable at hand, the rainwater which Allah ﷻ brings down from the sky illustrates the Guidance (Hidayah) in the Revelation. The valleys of the earth represent the various human hearts that connect with the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). This interpretation is based on the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin). Consider then:

(1) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(3) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(4) Bukhari (79); Muslim (5953).



“...and valleys flow according to their capacity.”⁽¹⁾

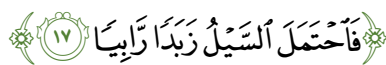
Rain may fall on the surfaces of different parts of the earth. However, various biomes can accept, and absorb water, depending on their qualities. So, likewise Allah ﷻ revealed Guidance (Hidayah) for all mankind, and Jinn, but the hearts differ in how they can absorb, and retain it. Some hearts can contain the volume of a puddle, and some an ocean.

Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “**Some of it is good ground which receives the water and brings forth a great deal of herbage and grass. Some of it is hard but it retains the water, and Allah benefits people by it, and they drink it and give it to their animals to drink, and they use it for irrigation and grazing. And another part of it is barren, it does not retain the water or produce herbage.**”⁽²⁾

Such is the example of the Divine Revelation, and the human heart. The Wisdom (Hikmah), and Guidance (Hidayah) from the Almighty descends for everyone, but each human being accepts, and derives benefit from it according to their capacity, or willingness to accept the Guidance (Hidayah).

Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “**The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allah’s religion (Islam) and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which Allah has revealed through me (the Prophet) and learns and then teaches it to others. The (last example is that of a) person who does not care for it and does not take Allah’s Guidance (Hidayah) revealed through me (he) is like that barren land.**”⁽³⁾

The heart which is overwhelmed, having been filled over capacity, will spill out much Guidance (Hidayah), and absorb little because it is not prepared to assimilate, and utilize it.



“But the flood bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface.”⁽⁴⁾

(1) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Muslim (5953); Bukhari (79).

(3) Bukhari (79); Muslim (5953).

(4) Quran (13:17), Khan trans.

The water then flows along, with foam forming on top. To comprehend this portion of the parable, consider picturing a plot of dryland. It will be cracked, or sandy soil as on the floor of a valley. The dryland will have a dirty residue of filth, dirt, and possibly dangerous, and poisonous scorpions, and snakes. The dryland illustrates the heart void of the Revelation. Such a heart accumulates falsehood (bathil), desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat), which cover it, and possibly wound, or corrupt the innermost intuition (Fitrah). Rushing water will lift, and carry this accumulation of dirt, agitating it into a foam on the surface.

﴿فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۗ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ﴾ (17)

“As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth.”⁽¹⁾

The image of a cleansing torrent over a hardened surface represents the hardened heart under the stream of the Revelation. If the Revelation continues pouring on the heart, and the heart responds with sincerity (Ikhlas), the hardened surface will be softened, the scum will wash away, opening the pores of what is underneath to be softened, and absorbent. The falsehood (bathil), desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat) will float to the surface, and will be gradually removed from the hearts, and the certain truth (Haqq) will settle into the heart.

The second imagery set

﴿وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ ۗ﴾ (17)

“And, likewise, from that [metal] which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils, [there rises] scum.”⁽²⁾

Gold, and silver ore is heated with fire to make adornments. The foam rises to the surface of these ores when oxides, and impurities are removed under a sprinkle of flux. When iron, and copper ore are heated to make pots, and utensils they are hammered, then annealed in quench-water, which consequently raises bubbles of carbon, and oxide on the surface. The tempering of the ore in this image set represents the effect of the Revelation on the intuition (Fitrah). It will expel the scum mixed with the metal until it becomes pure, and softened again. The more the metal is exposed to the fire, and annealed, the more refined it becomes. Likewise, the more the heart is presented with the Revelation, the clearer it becomes.

(1) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (13:17), Asad trans.

﴿١٧﴾ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ﴿١٧﴾

“Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth (Haqq) and falsehood (bathil).”⁽¹⁾

As for the scum, it passes away while that which has value, and utility abides. Allah ﷻ uses this imagery to explain the nature of the actuality of the Revelation through examples. Allah ﷻ likens the foam, and the scum to falsehood (bathil) which obscures the surfaces of reality, while the water that washes it clean is beneficial, and is likened to truth (Haqq).

The parable explicates truth (Haqq), and falsehood (bathil)

1. When the truth (Haqq) and falsehood (bathil) coexist, the latter cannot remain, just as foam in floodwaters gradually dissolves with the running stream, or the gold, and silver ores are annealed, and cleaned. Instead, foam disseminates, and eventually vanishes.
2. Truth (Haqq) and falsehood (bathil) are sometimes difficult to distinguish. Often falsehood (bathil) is disguised as a form of truth (Haqq) by the testimony of many advocates distracting beautiful adornments, and much flowery discourse. Truth is abused in the modern world, to represent desires (shahawaat) as a reality, and morality as relative.
3. Truth (Haqq) has absolute value, and benefit. Like the flowing water that is a source of life, there is no utility for those who seek the hereafter (Akhirah) in falsehood (bathil), but only a distraction. The foam on top of the water cannot nurture growth, and neither can the oxides cast off an ore to benefit a forged ornament. The falsehood (bathil) has no benefit for human beings.
 - Although falsehood (bathil), deception, and lies could appear dominant with noise, activity, and perceived signification like the bubbling of foam. On the other hand, truth (Haqq) is a process that functions through patience, perseverance, and constancy. As Allah ﷻ said:

﴿٢﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ ﴿٣﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالحَقِّ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

“The human being is doomed to suffer loss, except the righteously striving believers (Mu'minun) who exhort each other to truthful purposes and to patience.”⁽²⁾

(1) Quran (13:17), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (103:2-3), Sarwar trans.

- The truth (Haqq) is sustainable from sources that are inexplicable, which energize its supporters, while falsehood (bathil) is intransient, and must be supported by its adherents at costs that consume the adherents.
 - The people of falsehood (bathil) have superficial success on the surface, and they use this illusory material power to persecute the supporters of truth (Haqq) who are subjected to persecution, and *fitan*⁽¹⁾ which strengthens the followers of truth (Haqq), as a means of purification.
4. The truth (Haqq) will always overcome falsehood (bathil), as Allah ﷻ said:

﴿بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ وَلَكُمْ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا نَصِفُونَ﴾ (١٨)

“In fact, We hurl the truth against falsehood, leaving it crushed, and it quickly vanishes. And woe be to you for what you claim!”⁽²⁾

It is just like foam, and flux melts away, and leaves purity.

5. When the rushing of water settles in an absorbent area, the foam subsides, and soon disappears. Clear, and pure water remains, and nurtures the soil underneath. When human beings become tranquil, and are ready to see the truth (Haqq), the falsehood (bathil) on top eventually subsides, and disappears. Truth (Haqq), in all its purity, is then recognized, and accepted.

Allah ﷻ uses parables to improve our comprehension of key concepts. The higher aim-based (Maqasidic) approach illustrates the benefit of the parable of the foam to prove that truth (Haqq) remains, and falsehood (bathil) perishes. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ﴾ (١٧)

“Thus, Allah sets forth parables (for the truth and falsehood, i.e., belief and disbelief).”⁽³⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

(1) The term ‘fitnah’ has etimological roots in the description of purification of metal through the smelting, and refining in heat.

(2) Quran (21:18), Khattab trans.

(3) Quran (13:17), Khan trans.

﴿ ٤٣ ﴾ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

“And these similitudes We put forward for mankind; but none will understand them except those who have knowledge (Ilm).”⁽¹⁾

Ibn Kathir رحمه الله reported, “Some of the Salaf (rightly guided ancestors) said, ‘When I would read a parable in the Quran that I could not comprehend, I would cry for myself because Allah, the Exalted, says:

﴿ ٤٣ ﴾ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

‘But none will understand them except those who have knowledge.’”⁽²⁾

The responsibility of a scholar (Alim), or student of knowledge (Ilm) is to impart wisdom in a functional sense, rather than issuing opinions, and edicts, which fail to facilitate in the Muslim community (Ummah) a personal connection with the Divine Guidance (Hidayah). The seeking of useful knowledge (Ilm), and Guidance (Hidayah) is incumbent upon every Muslim as a process, not as an achievement. Useful knowledge (Ilm) is a process that brings us closer to our Lord while useless knowledge (Ilm), devoid of spiritual utility, may separate us from our Lord, and even contribute to hardening our hearts. Allah ﷻ invites reflection upon the two parables, and all of the Quran, to invite mankind to benefit.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, “While I was sleeping, I had a vision as if Jibreel (Gabriel) was at my head and Mika’il was at my feet. One of them said to his companion: ‘Make a parable for him’ so he said: ‘Listen so that your ears may hear. Hearken so that your heart may understand! The parable of you and your community (Ummah) is but the parable of a king who conquers a land. Then he constructs a house in it. Then he places a table-spread in it, then he sends a messenger to call the people to eat from it. Among them are those who answer the call of the messenger, and among them are those who forsake it.’”⁽³⁾

Therefore, the task of a scholar (Alim), or student of knowledge (Ilm) is to invite towards beneficial action (Aml) through the teaching of parables—and teaching of all of the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) —in the form of executional steps. The path must be made clear through

(1) Quran (29:43), Khan trans.

(2) Quran (29:43).

(3) Tirmizi (2860).

interpretation of the Quran for those who have less knowledge (Ilm), and this is the benefit, and aim of the higher aim-based exegesis (Maqasidic Tafsir). The task of accepting knowledge (Ilm), and facilitating it is upon all Muslims.

Assessing the condition of the heart

Seeking knowledge (Ilm), and Guidance (Hidayah) must begin with sincerity (Ikhlas). Therefore, it must involve a fair, and just self-assessment of the condition of our own heart. Abdullah Ibn Masud رضي الله عنه suggested measuring the timbre of our heart by exposing it to illuminating conditions. He said, **“Submit your heart in three situations: when listening to the Quran, during gatherings of remembering Allah, and during times of solitude. If you do not find your heart in these three situations, ask Allah to grant you with a heart, as you do not have one.”**⁽¹⁾

Self-assessment involves abandoning arrogance, and ignorance (jahiliyah) to free the intellect (Aql) to self-identify any of the symptoms of a hardening heart mentioned earlier in this book. To facilitate ease, this exhaustive list is consolidated into the following **ten points**:

1. The state of despair, anxiety, and lack of tranquility.
2. The inability to connect with Allah ﷻ, recognize, and love Him, or the inability to have fear and hope in Him.
3. The lack of knowledge (Ilm) of how to reach out for Allah’s ﷻ Help, or Insight to recognize our desperate needs.
4. Blaming our personal, or community failures on a perceived deficiency in the religion (Deen).
5. Lack of concern when the Commandments of Allah ﷻ are violated.
6. Arrogance, stinginess, and greed.
7. Excess fondness for this lowly world (Dunya), and carelessness regarding the everlasting abode of the hereafter (Aakhirah).
8. Belittling good deeds.
9. Disputing, and arguing unnecessarily.
10. Chasing desires (shahawaat) without restraint.

The treatment process

Having one, or more symptoms of a hardened heart means that the heart is corrupt, and its exterior is stained, and covered with layers of desires (shahawaat), and doubts (shubuhaat). Furthermore, corruption may have entered into the innermost intuition (Fitrah). Hence, we must move to the treatment process.

(1) Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمته الله, Al-Fawa'id (p. 250), Bayan trans.

Turn back to Allah ﷻ

Return to Allah ﷻ with certainty (Yaqeen), and sincerity (Ikhlas) in a heart that may be damaged, yet desires to be clean. Be like Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام (Abraham) when he came to his Lord with a pure heart:

وَإِن مِّن شَيْعَةٍ إِلَّا زَكَّيْنَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَ رَبُّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٤﴾

“And, verily, among those who followed his [Nuh (Noah)] way (Islamic Monotheism) was Ibrahim (Abraham). When he came to his Lord with a pure heart (attached to Allah Alone and none else, worshipping none but Allah Alone with true Islamic Monotheism, pure from the filth of polytheism).”⁽¹⁾

Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام (Abraham) turned to his Lord with sincerity (Ikhlas), and exclusively with a heart that was free of doubts (shubuhaat) and desires (shahawaat) that prevent one from understanding the truth (Haqq), and acting upon it.⁽²⁾ Then Allah ﷻ sent Guidance (Hidayah) to Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام (Abraham), which would have been unfavorable to any man—to sacrifice his own son—but he was obedient. Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام (Abraham) gave precedence to the love of Allah ﷻ over his own desires (shahawaat), and resolved to slaughter his son, so all attachment to competitors was removed from his heart.⁽³⁾ He was tested, and passed the test after he turned to Allah ﷻ with a heart free from doubts (shubuhaat), and desires (shahawaat). This is the heart motivated by love for our Lord without the competition of love for anything, or anyone in this world (Dunya). This is the heart that is ready for supplicating for Guidance (Hidayah).

Make supplication (Du’a)

Doubts (shubuhaat), and desires (shahawaat) are caused by the attachment of the *self* (Nafs) to this corporeal world (Dunya). This attachment is self-centered, and focused on its own experiences in the here and now, reacting to the test of this reality by turning to the material for resolution. Supplication (Du’a) is the antithesis to this, because, in it, one abandons attachment to the material, and abandons hope of independently overcoming challenges. Even if the goals supplicated for include the material, the forming of a supplication (Du’a) to our Lord Alone without partners is an act of worship (Ibadah). Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, **“The supplication (Du’a) is (the essence) of worship:**

(1) Quran (37:83-84), Khan trans.

(2) Tafsir As-Sa’di (37:83-84), (vol. 8, p. 211), al-Khattab trans.

(3) Tafsir As-Sa’di (37:83-84), (vol. 8, p. 216), al-Khattab trans.

﴿ وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ ﴾

‘Your Lord says: Call upon Me, I will answer you.’⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

As an affirmed act of worship (Ibadah), supplications (Ad’iyah) to Allah ﷻ may bring the material request, as well as rewards in the hereafter (Aakhirah). Supplication (Du’a) implicitly affirms multiple items of the belief that soften the heart, such as belief in a Lord Who cannot be seen in this life, belief in the resurrection, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and the eternal abode in Hell (Jahannam), or Paradise (Jannah). Those who approach Allah ﷻ with a sincere heart should make supplication (Du’a) that Allah ﷻ grants success in opening the sealed heart, and cleansing its stain, and ask in acknowledgment of the power of His Revelation to reform, and guide even the most deviant. The supplication (Du’a) is as follows:

“I ask You by every name belonging to You which You named Yourself with, or You taught to any of Your creation, or revealed in Your Book, or You have preserved in the knowledge of the unseen with You, that You make the Quran the life of my heart and the light of my breast, and a departure for my sorrow and a release for my anxiety.”⁽³⁾

Choose the best place

The best place for the vitalization of the heart to take place is in the houses of Allah ﷻ (mosques). The significance of the houses of Allah ﷻ (mosques) as places of great spiritual benefit is affirmed in a statement the Prophet ﷺ made, which Muslims read often, but contemplate little. He said, **“No people gather in one of the houses of Allah (mosques), reciting the Book of Allah and studying it together, but tranquility will descend upon them, mercy will overshadow them, the Angels will surround them, and Allah will mention them to those who are with Him.”⁽⁴⁾**

The houses of worship (Ibadah) are also emphasized as the places for gathering of the hearts (niches) filled with spiritual light in the verse (Ayah), which follows the Parable of Light:

﴿ فِي بُيُوتٍ أَذْنُ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيَذَكَرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ، يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ ﴾

(1) Quran (40:60), Shakir trans.

(2) Abu Dawud (1479), graded authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ؒ; Tirmizi (2969); Ibn Majah (3868); Ibn Hibban (2396); Al Hakim (490/1, 491/1).

(3) Ahmad (3704), authenticated by Al-Albani ؒ.

(4) Muslim (6853); Ibn Majah (225).

“[Such niches are] in houses [i.e., mosques] which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned [i.e., praised] therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings.”⁽¹⁾

This shows the virtue, and preference for sitting in the mosques, reciting, studying, and teaching the Quran as a means of cleansing the heart, and increasing in spiritual light.

Choose the best time

The best time to revitalize the light in the heart is the night prayer (Salat-ul-Tahajjud). The importance of this prayer (Salah) is reiterated in numerous places in the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), his companions (Sahabah), and their successors (Tabi'un). To pray while others sleep, and to choose worship (Ibadah) over rest is mentioned as a trait of the distinguished servants of Allah ﷻ, a means to get closer to Him, and to invite His Blessings in every aspect of our lives.

﴿إِنَّ نَاشِئَةَ اللَّيْلِ هِيَ أَشَدُّ وَطْأًا وَأَقْوَمُ قِيْلًا﴾

“Verily, the rising by night (for Tahajjud prayer) is very hard and most potent and good for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (understanding) the Word (of Allah).”⁽²⁾

Maintain physical purity

It is highly recommended to perform ablution (Wudu) before reciting the Quran. We should never forget that the Quran is the Speech of Allah ﷻ. It is very important to place oneself into a good physical, and spiritual state before connecting with the the Revelation. It readies the body, and the heart to receive spiritual Guidance (Hidayah).

Learn the Quran in Arabic

The Quran was revealed in Arabic to guide the Arabs, and non-Arabs alike. Therefore, a believer (Mu'min) must be in constant pursuit of a better understanding of the Quran. The Arabic language should not be a barrier to understanding the message Allah ﷻ revealed to guide Arabs, and non-Arabs alike. Yet, the reality remains that the intended meaning of the Speech of Allah ﷻ is only faithfully rendered in the language it was revealed, word for word, and letter by letter. There are a

(1) Quran (24:36), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (73:6), Khan trans.

total number of 77,797 words in the Quran. Most of these words are repeated, such as Paradise (Jannah), Hellfire (Jahannam), Messenger, disbeliever (kafir), believer (Mu'min), hypocrite (munafiq), and Guidance (Hidayah). A student may start by learning the oft-repeated words, and terms in the Quran, then move to the next lexical tier. The linguistic complexity of the Quran has not been mastered by any man since the Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, in this field of study, we are all students.

A student who struggles to recite the Quran in Arabic with difficulty can expect a greater reward. The Prophet ﷺ said, **“The one who is skilled in reciting Quran will be with the noble, honorable scribes and the one who recites Quran and falters therein, and finds it difficult, will have a double reward.”**⁽¹⁾ This amazing information affirms that the spiritual reward of reciting the Quran is in the sincerity (Ikhlas), and patience (Sabr) of the effort, rather than the proportion of production. This means the humblest of students has the potential to revitalize their hearts by recitation (Tilawah) of only a handful of verses (Ayat).

Focus on understanding the Quran

Besides trying to recite the Quran in Arabic, the non-Arabic speaker should read the translation, and exegesis (Tafsir), but with caution. Translation has been a means to neglect the meanings of the Quran, whether intentionally, or unintentionally, because the meanings in the target language are always inaccurate. The translation is never completely accurate because it is a symbolic representation with other than the source codex. Any time there is linguistic representation by humans, there will be introduced ideology, interpretation, and misrepresented context. This is because human language is arbitrary, and systematic by convention, while the Words of Allah ﷻ are explicit, and exacting, and none of it to Him is ambiguous, or arbitrary. Our understanding, even for the Arabic speaker, is deficient. Attending classes at a local mosque, or institute, or virtually to learn the purposes of the Quran from reliable scholars (Ulama) of exegesis (Tafsir) is a solution, because the well-grounded scholar (Alim) can explain a contextualized meaning based on the understanding of the Muslims who surrounded the Prophet ﷺ.

Therefore, it should be a goal of every Muslim to learn Arabic, and constantly increase in proficiency. However, one may read the available translated works of a scholar (Alim) to understand, absorb, and implement the message of the Quran in daily life.

Implement what is learned

Take time to ponder the Revelation, and self-evaluate the level of implementation from what is understood.

(1) Muslim (1862, 1863); Bukhari (4937); Abu Dawud (1454).

In the Quran, Allah ﷻ points out our areas of imperfection, and guides us to ways of rectifying these deficiencies in belief system (Aqeedah), character, acts of worship (Ibadah), or interpersonal transactions. The Quran must be the indicator that assesses our defects, and must be the ultimate guide in fixing them.

Actively, and attentively listening to the Quran is a healing, and comforting experience because it is a process that brings knowledge, rectification, and rehabilitation. Active listening is the first part of actuating the Guidance (Hidayah), according to the Command of Allah ﷻ as conveyed clearly to mankind:

﴿وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْءَانُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾

“Whenever the Quran is recited, listen carefully to it, and be silent so that you may benefit from it.”⁽¹⁾

Note that the command to listen intently to the Quran comes before remaining silent. This is because the action of listening closely, and attentively to the Quran when it is being recited causes a believer (Mu'min) to maintain silence for the purpose of contemplation with full focus, and concentration, hoping to receive the Mercy of Allah ﷻ. According to Imam Ahmad rahimahullah, the prohibition of inattentiveness, or speaking over a Quran recitation (Tilawah) as mentioned in verse (Ayah) 102 of chapter (Surah) Al-A'raf refers to those who disrupted the recitation (Tilawah) during prayer (Salah).⁽²⁾ The view that speaking over the Quran is prohibited at any time it is recited is held by some scholars (Ulama) of the Hanafiya school of thought. The command to be attentive and silent is clear, and the benefit of doing so is known. However, prohibition requires specific evidence of a punishment for violation, which in this edict is not apparent. This means that adherence to the edict is favored, but not disciplined if violated. It is favored because silent contemplation increases the faith (Iman) of the believer (Mu'min). From a higher aim-based (Maqasidic) perspective, the general purpose of the Quran is to be utilized as **“a guide and a healing to those who believe,”**⁽³⁾ as mentioned above. That means the Quran is meant to be implemented by those who believe, and **“for those who do not believe, there is a deafness in their ears.”**⁽⁴⁾ Those who disbelieve will not listen. Allah ﷻ also said:

(1) Quran (7:204), Hussain trans.

(2) Ibn Uthaymeen rahimahullah, Liqa'at al-Bab il-Maftuh (197/26).

(3) Quran (41:44), Khan trans.

(4) Quran (41:44), Khan trans.

﴿ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُونَ ﴾ (٢٦)

“And those who rejected said: ‘Do not listen to this Quran and make noise over it that you may succeed.’”⁽¹⁾

Ultimately, the fundamental reason for the verses (Ayat) to be revealed is to guide a person to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) of success. This means whichever portion is read, or heard has life-changing potential, if actualized.

In sum, Aishah رضي الله عنها was asked about the Prophet’s ﷺ character. She answered, “**The manners of the Messenger of Allah were the Quran.**”⁽²⁾ We should also strive to follow this example, and make our character that of the Quran.



(1) Quran (41:26), The Monotheist Group (2013) trans.

(2) Abu Dawud (1432); see also: Muslim (1739); Ahmad (23460).

PART II

Al-Fatihah

﴿لَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ﴾ ﴿٨٧﴾

“And indeed, We have bestowed upon you seven of Al-Mathani (the seven repeatedly recited verses, i.e., Surah Al-Fatihah) and the Grand Quran.”⁽¹⁾

Abu Hurairah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said the chapter commencing with, “Al-Hamdulillah is Umm Al-Quran and Umm Al-Kitab and the Seven Oft-Repeated (As-Sab’a Al-Mathani).”⁽²⁾

(1) Quran (15:87), Khan trans.

(2) Tirmizi (3124), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله عليه.

Pursuing the higher aim (Maqsid) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah

Al-Fatihah is the glorious chapter (Surah) that opens the Noble Quran. It is the preface of the Quran. It is a perfect combination of overwhelming beauty, truth (Haqq), and Wisdom (Hikmah). It is comprehensive, and flawless. The Prophet ﷺ described it as the Noble Quran's abstract, and the Mother of the Book (Umm Al-Kitab). In sum, chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah contains a compass, the verities, and the Wisdom (Hikmah) of the entire Quran.

The Prophet ﷺ stated [if the Prophetic Narration (Hadith) was authentic] that Allah ﷻ revealed 104 sacred Books.⁽¹⁾ Al-Hasan al-Basri ؒ is widely quoted to have said, **“Whoever understands the meaning of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, will know the meaning of all the Books revealed to the Prophets, and Messengers of Allah. It sums up the Quran, and the Quran sums up all the Books revealed to the Prophets, and Messengers before the Prophet Muhammad.”**⁽²⁾ This implies that all the meanings of the Quran are consolidated in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. What is sublime in the extension of this claim is that chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah can be encapsulated in the following verses (Ayat):

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

“It is You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help.”⁽³⁾

Many Muslims think they understand the meaning of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, since they recite it at least seventeen times daily, and in every unit (Rakah) of the obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat). However, any claim to knowledge (Ilm) must be assessed based on a standard of true comprehension, because to know something is to comprehend beyond mere recognition.

Comprehension of the message, and attainment of benefits are limited for many Muslims that recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah absent-mindedly. They are not present, or consciously aware of what they recite, or what this essential prayer means to a Muslim in daily life. Evidence for this is that we often question ourselves as to whether we recited chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah in prayer (Salah), or not due to the lack of attention given to the meanings it conveys. One's heart must be focused when performing any act of worship (Ibadah), and not be distracted.

(1) Ibn Hibban (2/76-77); three chains from Abu Dharr ؓ, all of which have problematic narrators in the chain. As for the content, Bayhaqi ؒ reported that Hasan Al-Basri ؒ affirmed the understanding that 104 books were revealed. We must believe in all of them, even if their number is unconfirmed.

(2) Bayhaqi ؒ mentions it. Similar was attributed to Imam Ali in Makhzan-ul-'Irfan (vol. 1, p. 28), and Masabih-ul-Anwar (vol. 1, p. 435).

(3) Quran (1:5)

Second is that when we pray Taraweeh prayer (Salat-ul-Taraweeh)⁽¹⁾ behind the prayer leader (Imam), chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah tends to be ignored. Instead, we are more focused on anticipating the chapter (Surah) the prayer leader (Imam) is planning to recite after it. This is a misdirected emphasis as it is important to remember that chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is unequalled in comparison to all the Quranic chapters,⁽²⁾ and that whatever the prayer leader (Imam) will recite following it will only explain one aspect of the chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.

There is great Wisdom (Hikmah) behind repeating chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah throughout the day. It is not just to understand the literal, and apparent meanings of the words, which most Muslims do understand. Instead, it is to connect with the profound meanings behind the words. Furthermore, it is meant to be a constant reminder of the **three fundamentals of faith (Iman)**:

1. Belief in Allah ﷻ
2. Belief in the hereafter (Akhirah)
3. Belief in the Divine Guidance (Hidayah).

For the above reasons, and many more, we derived the higher aim (Maqsid) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah as “**Islam in seven verses (Ayat).**”

Part I of this volume II of the *Maqasidic Tafsir* series outlined the dilemma of the disconnect between the Revelation, and the human spiritual heart. There are multiple reasons for the covering of the heart’s exterior surface, preventing the Divine Revelation from illuminating the heart. The Quran contains solutions on how to remove the barriers, and ease absorption of the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). The basis of this method is in the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin), which is fundamentally different from the understanding of modern Muslims.

Present-day Muslims are consumed by a busy lifestyle, engaging in some essential activities, but also partaking in many unnecessary tasks. They are entangled in a web of confusion, and shackled to the demands of the world (Dunya). This tedious, and overwhelming lifestyle, which has become the new norm, has distracted us from focusing on our priorities. Muslims no longer apportion time to learn about Islam. Furthermore, the sad reality is that many Muslims are struggling to identify religious obligations, and discern them from secondary issues. They make feeble ad-hoc attempts to squeeze in time to seek knowledge, rather than having a strong desire in their heart to strive for the truth (Haqq), and seek Guidance (Hidayah) from the Creator of the universe. Our Lord, and Creator

(1) Taraweeh prayer (Salat-ul-Taraweeh) is one of the specialties of Ramadan nights. For the entire month, Muslims line up at night to observe several optional units (Raka’at) of prayers, and listen to, and reflect on the recitation (Tilawah) of the Quran.

(2) Hadith Saeed Ibn Al-Mu’alla, Bukhari (4474); Abu Dawud (1458) authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ﷺ.

provides all the answers in the Quran for those who seek Him, and He summarizes knowledge (Ilm) in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah for those who approach with contemplation.

The present-day dilemma for the Muslim community (Ummah) is the challenge of absorption, and distraction in the modern lifestyle that diverts attention from focusing on the Quran’s foundational elements—the existence, and absolute Oneness of Allah (Tawheed), the institution of Prophethood (Nabuwwah), Divine Messages (Ar-Risalah), and the existence of the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah).

The Quranic higher aim (Maqsid), which addresses Muslim malaise, is derived from the most extraordinary Quranic chapter (Surah), which is Al-Fatihah. This chapter (Surah) comprises seven verses (Ayat) in which Allah ﷻ consolidated extracts from the entire Revelation. The Wisdom (Hikmah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is clear, as it shows Muslims how to redirect their attention to life’s priorities, and it is a constant reminder of the **three fundamentals of faith**: belief in Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Akhirah), and the Divine Guidance (Hidayah).

Analysis of the current phenomenon

We have identified a current debilitating dilemma is that many Muslims are totally absorbed by this busy modern lifestyle. As a result, they are distracted, and overwhelmed with many unnecessary distractions that divert from the Guidance (Hidayah) of Allah ﷻ, His Revelation, and the implementation of that Guidance (Hidayah). Analysis of this phenomenon involves exploration of some questions to help us better understand the cause, and depth of this malaise:

- How did the Revelation change the first generation?
- How did the first generation of Muslims have a profound global impact within a remarkably short period of time?
- What prevents the Muslim community (Ummah) today from achieving equal leadership accomplishments?

There is no doubt that Islam was the leading cause behind the empowerment of the first generation of Muslims. The evidence is seen in the following statement by Umar bin Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه. Tariq bin Shihab رضي الله عنه reported that when Umar bin Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه was traveling to receive the keys to the Masjid Al-Aqsa (Bayt Al-Maqdis) in Jerusalem, he said, **“Verily, we were a disgraceful people, and Allah honored us with Islam. Therefore, if we seek honor from anything besides that with which Allah honored us, Allah will disgrace us.”**⁽¹⁾

(1) Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak (1/130), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله. Trans. Unknown.

We need to reflect on these questions as our Muslim community (Ummah) becomes distant from knowledge (Ilm), and void of many essential foundational Islamic principles. We are experiencing the second era of “the strangeness of Islam,” which was similar to that experienced by the companions (Sahabah) and foretold in the following Prophetic Narration (Hadith). Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Islam began as something strange, and will revert to being something strange, so glad tidings to the strangers.”**⁽¹⁾ The apparent meaning is that in the early years of the Islamic movement, the Muslims were few in number, had little cultural capital, and were physically, and economically weak. Today, the believers (Mu’minun), who are upon what the companions (Sahabah) were upon, are a minority overwhelmed by the surrounding culture of materialism, and distraction.

The environment of our pious predecessors, during the time of our beloved Prophet ﷺ, was that they were captives of the cultural dominance of ignorance (jahiliyah) regarding Monotheism (Tahweed), which eerily resembles our present time, and the crippling environment surrounding today’s Muslims.

Cultural dominance of ignorance (jahiliyah)

Cultures are either non-religious, religious, or a combination of both. A non-religious culture has a man-made doctrine on which successive generations have built their identities, and values. A principle of a non-religious culture is based on a liberal mindset, and materialism. It is similar to epicureanism, designed to raise individuals in society, starting from their childhood when having the attitude of unlimited freedom, and consumed by material possessions, and worldly pleasures. The epicurean philosophy reflects the malaise of the modern age, as summarized in the poem of Philodemus of Gadara (present-day Jordan):

“Don’t fear god,
Don’t worry about death;
What is good is easy to get, and
What is terrible is easy to endure.”⁽²⁾

Tragically, this Hellenistic philosophy later influenced the Muslims, and introduced dangerous, and deviant beliefs based on material perception, and postulated probabilities.

Moreover, modern technology, and sophisticated tools have increased the capacity of the human mind to perceive, but also distracted it from the simplicity of contemplation. The mind that is distracted by material function dwells on the pursuit of the world (Dunya), which forms only a

⁽¹⁾ Muslim (372); Hadith Abdullah bin Masud, Tirmizi (2629); see also Muslim (373); Ibn Majah (3986-3988); Ahmad (184/1, 122/2, 177/2).

⁽²⁾ Philodemus, Herculaneum Papyrus, 1005, 4.9–14.

portion of the potential benefit of this life, and distracts from the lasting rewards that may be accumulated through deeper contemplation of our purpose.

﴿يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُونَ﴾

“They know only the outside appearance of the life of the world (i.e., the matters of their livelihood, like irrigating or sowing or reaping, etc.), and they are heedless of the hereafter (Akhirah).”⁽¹⁾

Due to humanity’s unbalanced emphasis on accumulating material trappings, and technology in the modern age, they are attuned to seek solutions for pressing problems in apparent technology, rather than in what is Islamically known as the unseen (Ghayb), the Revelation, and calling to our Lord for Guidance (Hidayah). The cause of problems in the lives of modern Muslims is not the abundance of technology, which is only a tool, but the lack of faith (Iman) in the unseen (Ghayb).

The scope of our knowledge (Ilm) is limited, and endlessly belittled by the vast realm of what we cannot know except through the Revelation. The focus of religious knowledge (Ilm-e-Deen) is the Divine domain that lies beyond the gate of human perception—the world of unseen (Ghayb) related to the past, the present, and the future. The perceptible nature, and comfort of advanced technology fail to answer many questions of the following types: Who are we? Why were we created? Where did we come from? Where are we going?

The Revelation, and Divine Guidance (Hidayah) hold the answers to these fundamental questions about the nature, and destiny of man, and the world he lives in. Thus, the intermediaries between man, and the unseen (Ghayb), authorized to speak about the unseen (Ghayb), the Prophets, their disciples, and their followers, remain an essential part of human success.

There is no doubt that Prophets, and their followers played a primary, and instrumental role in their societies, and cultures since they could connect humans with the world of the unseen (Ghayb). The comprehensive Islamic model forms a deliberate distinction between the world of Guidance (Hidayah) that we perceive. However, the material world is not a polarity of the spiritual. Rather, it is a potential source of distraction, or reward, depending on the level of adherence to the Revelation.

To believe in the unseen (Ghayb), we must fulfill the first, and most essential pre-requisite—the acceptance of the **three fundamentals**: the existence, and absolute Oneness of Allah ﷻ (Tawheed), the institution of Prophethood (Nabuwwah), the Divine Messages (Ar-Risalah), and the existence of the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah).

⁽¹⁾ Quran (30:7).

Having faith (Iman) in the unseen (Ghayb), according to the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) is not the mere recognition of the unseen (Ghayb). Instead, it is to have certainty (Yaqaen) in the **three fundamentals** mentioned above, based on authentic Divine sources. The first fundamental alone, which is the belief in Allah ﷻ, makes us conclude that He is the Knower of the unseen (Ghayb) and the visible alike, and this being one of Allah's ﷻ unique Attributes, which no created being shares with Allah ﷻ.

Mankind expects a short existence within the perceptible realm, but should remain continually alive in contemplation of Allah ﷻ, and those essential elements of the unseen (Ghayb) that touch man's moral, and spiritual life.

Humans can comprehend the visible world. Hence, the Revelation encourages them to employ their intellect (Aql) to understand through this the perceivable world. However, when it comes to acquiring the definite knowledge (Ilm) of essentials of the world of the unseen (Ghayb), which answer the ethereal questions of faith (Iman), our only recourse is the Divine Revelation. Pursuing the unseen knowledge (Ilm Al-Ghayb) through any other means would be no more than conjecture, and unfounded speculations. Allah ﷻ, and His Messenger ﷺ declared intermediation between man, and the unseen (Ghayb) by way of speculation, philosophy, and fortunetelling to be illegitimate, and invalid.

Therefore, according to the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), Allah ﷻ placed in the human the innate drive, or intuition (Fitrah), to believe in Him. Furthermore, the perceivable world, that surrounds the humans, is filled with signs which reinforce contemplation. Such signs are the invitations to humanity to affirm the existence, and Oneness of Allah ﷻ, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and the Divine Guidance (Hidayah), based on the Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith), and confirmed by the instinctive knowledge (Ilm), or intuition (Fitrah).

Allah ﷻ placed inside us eyes to see, ears to hear, and tongues to speak. Some destroy this ability by making the perceivable world a block between them, and the greater realities of the unseen (Ghayb) through obsessive attention to material distractions. Allah ﷻ described them in the Quran as blind, deaf, and dumb, and more reprehensible than the beasts of the earth.

﴿وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ ۗ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا

يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَأَن لَّنَعْمَ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

“And surely, We have created many of the Jinn and mankind for Hell (Jahannam). They have hearts wherewith they understand not, they have eyes wherewith they see not, and they have ears wherewith they hear not (the truth). They are like cattle, nay even more astray; those! They are the heedless ones.”⁽¹⁾

They are dead, and in darkness, while believers (Mu'minun) alone are the living in the Light of Guidance (Nur Al-Hidayah).

﴿أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾^(١٢٢)

“And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers (kafirun) that which they were doing.”⁽²⁾

Denial of the three fundamentals of faith (Iman)

The crippling of a society with a doctrine of heedlessness, and hedonism can come only after the collapse of basic principles of the purely religious culture, and the vacating of the minds, and hearts from the light of the **three fundamentals of faith (Iman)** specifically emphasized in the Quran:

- The existence of Allah ﷻ
- The reality of the hereafter (Akhirah)
- The sending of Prophets, and Divine Messages, or scriptures.

To understand the magnitude of the denial of these basic principles, Allah ﷻ associated them with His rights, which a worshiper must fulfill (Tawheed ul-Uluhiyah), in three places in the Quran, and condemned the rejectors with a powerful refrain:

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَتَّى قَدَرُوهُ﴾^(٦٧)

“They have not made just estimate of Allah, like that which is due to Him.”⁽³⁾

(1) Quran (7:179).

(2) Quran (6:122), Sahih International trans.

(3) Quran (39:67), Ahamed trans. The Quranic text is identical in (6:9, 22:74, 39:67), yet emphasizes the three separate principles.

Those who deny, or question the above three key principles of belief, have failed in displaying the proper, and adequate respect, and esteem due to the Lord of the heavens, and earth, while He is consequently not in need of this esteem. A failure to give to Allah ﷻ what is due is a failure to worship appropriately. Allah ﷻ revealed the Guidance (Hidayah) by which we will be judged on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Thus, denying, or questioning one, or more of the three principles related to Allah ﷻ as the Creator is tantamount to suggesting that Allah ﷻ established the creations without a purpose. Allah ﷻ is above any imperfection, and would not initiate creation, and sustain it without a goal.

﴿أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾ فَتَعَلَىٰ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكِ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ﴿١١٦﴾﴾

“Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned? So exalted is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth; there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Noble Throne (Al-Arsh)!”⁽¹⁾

The ‘return’ is a reference to the event on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), but is a metonymy for the Day of Accountability, and the Day of Resurrection, since they all are implicitly linked. Worship (Ibadah) is the purpose for which we will be held accountable by Allah ﷻ, the Most Just. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾﴾

“Does man think that he will be left Suda [neglected without being punished or rewarded for the obligatory duties enjoined by his Lord (Allah) on him]?”⁽²⁾

Acceptance of this accountability implies acceptance of the resurrection. Allah ﷻ refutes denial of the resurrection, referencing His Ability to recreate what He already started. Allah ﷻ has said that He can resurrect creation after corporeal death, and He refers to the evidence of the complexity, and intricate balance of His creation. This argument of the reality of resurrection affirms the truth (Haqq), and implicit justice (Adl) in our accountability. Allah ﷻ said:

(1) Quran (23:115-116).

(2) Quran (75:36), Khan trans.

﴿أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتَّخَذَ عِظَامُهُ﴾ ﴿٢﴾ ﴿بَلَىٰ قَدَرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِنَانِهِ﴾ ﴿٤﴾ ﴿بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ﴾ ﴿٥﴾
 ﴿يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ﴾ ﴿٦﴾

“Does man (a disbeliever) think that We shall not assemble his bones? Yes, We are Able to put together in perfect order the tips of his fingers. Nay! (Man denies Resurrection and Reckoning. So) he desires to continue committing sins. He asks: ‘When will be this Day of Resurrection?’”⁽¹⁾

The Prophet ﷺ mentioned in a Qudsi Narration (Hadith Qudsi) that Allah ﷻ Almighty said, “The son of Adam tells a lie against Me, though he has no right to do so; and he abuses Me, though he has no right to do so. As for his telling a lie against Me, it is that he claims that I cannot recreate him as I created him before; and as for his abusing Me, it is his statement that I have a son (children or offspring etc.). No! Glorified be Me! I am far from taking a wife or a son (or offspring).”⁽²⁾

Denying Allah’s ﷻ Existence

The first of the three fundamental principles that the purely religious culture is centered around is the belief in Allah ﷻ. In contrast, non-religious cultures exert efforts to vacate contemplation of the Creator from their minds, and deny creation at every opportunity. They challenge Allah’s ﷻ existence by denying His Attributes as the Creator. Transversely, this means contemplating the creation is an act of worship (Ibadah), which affirms Monotheism (Tawheed).

﴿يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٍ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ﴾ ﴿١٦٤﴾ ﴿الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ﴾
 ﴿وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ﴾ ﴿٧٣﴾ ﴿مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ﴾
 ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾ ﴿٧٤﴾

“O mankind! A similitude has been coined, so listen to it (carefully): Verily! Those on whom you call besides Allah, cannot create (even) a fly, even though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatched away a thing from them, they would have no power to

(1) Quran (75:3-6), Khan trans.

(2) Bukhari (4482).

release it from the fly. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought. They have not estimated Allah His Rightful Estimate; Verily, Allah is All-Strong, All-Mighty.”⁽¹⁾

There is significant inconsistency in the culture of ignorance (jahiliyah) in a non-religious society. When they cannot eliminate the first of the three principles, which is the existence of Allah ﷻ, they instead resort to providing a distorted view, unbecoming of the Attributes of Allah ﷻ. This is one of the flaws in the method adopted by many Muslims who admire the heritage of rhetoric, and philosophy of the culture of ignorance (jahiliyah) to the point that they have adapted errant interpretations of Allah ﷻ, and His Attributes.

Denying the hereafter (Aakhirah)

The second of the three fundamental principles that non-religious societies deny is accountability. Hence, they work hard to ignore any speech about resurrection, and reckoning. This is based on fear of the reciprocation for the evil of what their own hands have caused. Their denial is a lie, betrayed by their frequent insistence on acknowledging evil omens as a natural effect. They fear reciprocation, but deny the accountability in the hereafter (Aakhirah), or Judgment of our Creator.

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ
وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“They made not a just estimate of Allah such as is due to Him. And on the Day of Resurrection, the whole of the earth will be grasped by His Hand, and the heavens will be rolled up in His Right Hand. Glorified is He, and High is He above all that they associate as partners with Him!”⁽²⁾

Inconsistencies in the logic of the dominant cultures in ignorance (jahiliyah) cannot eliminate the second of the three principles, which is the anticipation of the hereafter (Aakhirah). Hence, they resort to distorting the nature of the afterlife in their cultural expressions, claiming that it is the resurrection of the soul without the physical body.

Denying the Revelation

The third of the three fundamental principles that non-religious societies challenge is the Revelation of the Islamic Law (Shariah), which is a set of Divine prohibitions, and prescriptions. They

(1) Quran (22:73-74), Khan trans.

(2) Quran (39:67), Khan trans.

conspire to implement their man-made laws, and rules, and exalt them in arrogance, and even attribute a Judeo-Christian origin to their human inventions.

﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَىٰ نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ ۖ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَرَاطِيسَ يُبَدُّونَهَا وَيُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا وَعَلَّمْتُم مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا ءَابَاؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾﴾

“They (the Jews, Quraish pagans, idolaters, etc.) did not estimate Allah with an estimation due to Him when they said: “Nothing did Allah send down to any human being (by inspiration).” Say (O Muhammad): “Who then sent down the Book which Musa (Moses) brought, a light and a Guidance (Hidayah) to mankind which you (the Jews) have made into (separate) paper sheets, disclosing (some of it) and concealing (much). And you (believers in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad), were taught (through the Quran) that which neither you nor your fathers knew.” Say: “Allah (sent it down).” Then leave them to play in their vain discussions.”⁽¹⁾

The inconsistencies, and ignorance (jahiliyah) within the position of the culturally dominant adherents to democracy, and the rule of man-made law cannot defeat the third of the three principles—the revelation of the Islamic Law (Shariah). Again, they contrive complex distortions, and obfuscations as were inflicted on the first two principles. The dominant culture of ignorance (jahiliyah) cannot eliminate belief in Divine Messages, so they edit scriptures, eliminate verses (Ayat) as “not suitable” for the modern era, and change the text’s language. They cannot abolish historical accounts of the Prophets, so they distort their standing as Divinely chosen to the degree of accusing some Prophets of committing immoralities to deprecate them as role models, or to justify certain unlawful practices by establishing the historical revisionism in figurehead arguments.

The companions (Sahabah) were also victims

The first generation of Muslims were surrounded by the dominant culture of ignorance (jahiliyah) in an era of self-indulgent materialism, and hedonistic pursuits of lust. It was a time in which the Arab culture permitted exploitation of the needy with usury, and self-defeat through heavy drinking, and indulgence in ‘red-light’ districts, where women were enslaved in prostitution. They practiced infanticide of female babies, and excused it as an early form of ‘planned parenthood,’ and meant through it to protect wealth, and ‘honor.’ Allah ﷻ referred to this as an appalling, and dishonorable crime that will be brought for judgment in the hereafter (Aakhirah). Allah ﷻ said:

(1) Quran (6:91), Khan trans.

﴿وَإِذَا الْمَوْءِدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴿٨﴾﴾ ﴿بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴿٩﴾﴾

“And when the infant girl buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) will be questioned for what sin she was killed.”⁽¹⁾

The pagan Arabs also indulged in all sorts of Divinely forbidden acts which were socially accepted among a polity of disbelievers (kafirun), agnostics, secularists, and the believers of Judaism, and Christianity at the time. The Arabs had no significant presence on the world map, and were scattered into many tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. They lacked a healthy community structure, or a unifying national identity to be considered a force to be reckoned with, or having anything to offer in a global sphere.

When the Revelation descended to the Arabs, it emphasized, and refined the three fundamental principles of faith (Iman). It restored the belief in Allah ﷻ, the Divine Guidance (Hidayah), and the hereafter (Akhirah). For thirteen years in Makkah, the essence of the Quran focused on this triad of faith (Iman). Yusuf bin Mahak ر.ه reported that Aishah ر.ه said, “**The first thing that was revealed thereof was a chapter (Surah) from the shorter chapters (Suwar) at the end of the Quran, and in it was mentioned Paradise (Jannah) and the Fire (Jahannam). When the people embraced Islam, the verses (Ayat) regarding legal and illegal things were revealed.**”⁽²⁾

Therefore, the believer (Mu'min) who is surrounded, and overwhelmed by a culture of materialism, and ignorance should seek refuge in the words of the Quran, which emphasize the triad of faith (Iman). This emphasis strengthened the resolve of the early Muslims. No chapter (Surah) offers such Guidance (Hidayah) as Al-Fatihah, which every devout Muslim must recite seventeen times every day in the five daily obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat). Al-Fatihah serves as a constant reminder of the triad of faith (Iman), and maintenance in the belief of the three primary dimensions: the belief in Allah ﷻ, the Divine Guidance (Hidayah), and the hereafter (Akhirah).

The belief in Allah ﷻ

Recitation (Tilawah) of the second, and the third verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah maintain our belief in Allah ﷻ, and reaffirms our worship (Ibadah) of Allah ﷻ as the One Unique Divinity:

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾﴾ ﴿الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾﴾

(1) Quran (81:8-9), Abdul Hye trans.

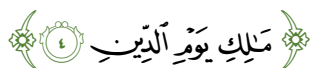
(2) Bukhari (4993).

“All praise and thanks are for Allah, the Lord of all creations. The Most Merciful, the Bestower of all Mercy (Rahmah).”⁽¹⁾

Through reflection on these words, acceptance of the meaning in the heart, and action (Aml) on the limbs in worship (Ibadah), we instantly restore the first dimension of the triad, which is the belief in the Lord who created, owns, nourishes, and is identifiable by the most beautiful Names, and lofty Attributes.

The belief in the hereafter (Akhirah)

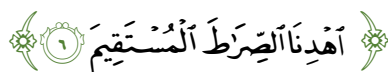
Upon reciting the fourth verse (Ayah), we are reminded of the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), the Day of Recompense, and the Day of Accountability.



“The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e., the Day of Resurrection).”⁽²⁾

The belief in the Divine Guidance (Hidayah)

After reciting the fourth verse (Ayah), we are reminded of the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Those who are moved by this remembrance are advised to be prepared by adhering to the Revelation. The Revelation of the Islamic Law (Shariah) is the third dimension of the triad, which comes in the heartfelt supplication (Du'a) asking Allah ﷻ to guide us to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem), which is the religion (Deen) of Islam.



“Guide us to the straight way (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).”⁽³⁾

(1) Quran (1:2-3), Tarbiyyah trans.

(2) Quran (1:4), Khan trans.

(3) Quran (1:6), Khan trans.

Introduction to chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah

Al-Fatihah literally means ‘The Opener,’ and is the first chapter (Surah) of the Noble Quran. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah summarizes key aspects of the Islamic belief system (Aqeedah) within its concentric structure. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is one of the most critical chapters (Suwar) in the Quran. According to some traditions, it is the most superior chapter (Surah) revealed out of all the Divinely revealed scriptures.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet ﷺ labeled Al-Fatihah as the Mother of the Book (Umm Al-Kitab), and the Mother of the Quran (Umm Al-Quran), because, like a mother, it precedes what is derived from it, and the meaning of the entire Quran is summarized within.⁽²⁾ Ibn Jarir at-Tabari رحمه الله commented on the Prophet’s ﷺ Narration (Hadith) regarding naming Al-Fatihah as *Umm Al-Kitab*, and *Umm Al-Quran*.⁽³⁾ Ibn Jarir رحمه الله said, **“The Arabs call *umm* anything which gathers something together, anything which stands out in front, when it has subordinates behind it for which it is a leader.”**⁽⁴⁾ Consequently, this chapter (Surah) of the Quran serves as a constant reminder to Muslims, leading the minds, and hearts to return to Monotheism (Tawheed).

One can quickly determine the enormous significance of Al-Fatihah since it is a requirement of every prayer (Salah). No prayer (Salah) is accepted without the recitation (Tilawah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, regardless of whether the prayer (Salah) is obligatory (Fard), or voluntary (Nafl). Allah’s Messenger ﷺ said, **“There is no prayer (Salah) for the one who does not recite the Opening of the Book (Al-Fatihah).”**⁽⁵⁾ So, every devoted Muslim may end up reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah up to thirty times every day:

- Seventeen times in the obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat): two Fajr, four Duhr, four Asr, three Maghrib, and four Isha.
- Twelve times in the voluntary prayers (Nafl Salawat): two before Fajr, four before Duhr, two after Duhr, two after Maghrib, and two after Isha.⁽⁶⁾

The obligatory recitations are known, and the voluntary is accepted because of the statement of Umm Habibah رضي الله عنها, the wife of the Prophet ﷺ, who reported that he said, **“There is no Muslim servant who prays twelve units (Raka’at) to Allah each day, voluntarily, apart from the**

(1) Nasa’i, Al-Kubra (8001), Abu Rumaysah trans.; Ibn Hibban (774), authentic (Sahih) by Shaykh Al-Khorasan رحمه الله; Al-Hakim (2056).

(2) Tafsir Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Cooper trans. (1/46).

(3) Tirmizi (3124).

(4) Tafsir Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Cooper trans. (1/46).

(5) Muslim (874); Bukhari (756).

(6) Tirmizi (415).

obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat), but Allah will build for him a house in Paradise (Jannah), or a house will be built for him in Paradise (Jannah).”⁽¹⁾

- And finally, at least one recitation (Tilawah) during Witr prayer (Salat Al-Witr).⁽²⁾

The Prophet ﷺ said that the Witr prayer (Salat Al-Witr) is **“Two by two, then when you fear that dawn may come, then pray one unit (Rakah), and make the last of your Witr prayer (Salat Al-Witr).”⁽³⁾**

Recitation (Tilawah) of this short chapter (Surah) throughout the day, and night has the potential to constantly involve a Muslim in reflection on faith (Iman) in every aspect of our life. This practice addresses multiple concerns, including our preoccupation, and with livelihood. Reflection alone is not sufficient without comprehension of the deep meanings behind the most superior chapter (Surah) revealed to the final Messenger, Prophet Mohammed ﷺ.

Place of the Revelation

Scholars (Ulama) differed on identifying the place of the Revelation of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. The majority confirmed that it was revealed in Makkah before the Prophet’s ﷺ Migration (Hijrah), following the opinions of Ibn Abbas رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, and Qatadah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, while a minority suggested it was Madinah, following Abu Hurairah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, and Mujahid رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. A few proposed that it was revealed first in Makkah, and again in Madinah. Evidence suggests it was revealed in Makkah since prayer (Salah) was enjoined in Makkah, and Al-Fatihah is a mandatory aspect of the prayer (Salah). In addition, the following compelling verse (Ayah) refers to Al-Fatihah being revealed in Makkah. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ﴾

“And We have certainly given you, [O Muhammad], seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Quran.”⁽⁴⁾

However, the place of the Revelation does not significantly affect the understanding of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, due to the universality of its sublime message.

(1) Muslim (1696).

(2) Witr is the prayer (Salah) that is performed at night after Isha (night-time prayer) or before Fajr (dawn prayer). Witr has an odd number of units (Raka'at) prayed in pairs, with the final unit (Rakah) prayed separately.

(3) Muslim (1751); Bukhari (472).

(4) Quran (15:87), Sahih International trans.

Names of Al-Fatihah

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah has many names, some of which were mentioned briefly above. Each name of Al-Fatihah designates a different feature of its meaning. In the rich semantic profile of the Arabic language, an object with multiple names was replete with cultural importance. Imam As-Suyuti رحمته الله said that Al-Fatihah has twenty-five names, while Imam Qurtubi رحمته الله mentioned twelve names. However, many of these names are not referenced in the Tradition (Sunnah) of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Below are ten authentically established names of Al-Fatihah as derived from the Revelation.

- **Al-Fatihah (The Opening):** It is named Al-Fatihah, or the Opening, since it opens, and prefaces the Book, and through it, the recitation (Tilawah) of the Quran commences.
- **Ar-Ruqyah (The Incantation):** The word ‘Ruqyah’ refers to a spiritual cure for anxiety, and despair. Al-Fatihah is certainly an amendment to the heart of a believer (Mu’min). However, there is also evidence of its use on physical ailments. Abu Sa’id رضي الله عنه narrated, **“One of the Prophet’s companions (Sahabah) started reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and gathering his saliva, and spitting it (at the snakebite). The patient was cured, and his people presented the sheep to them, but they said, ‘We will not take it unless we ask the Prophet (whether it is lawful).’ When they asked him (the Prophet), he smiled, and said, ‘How do you know that chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a Ruqyah (Incantation)? Take it (flock of sheep) and assign a share for me.’”**⁽¹⁾
- **Al-Hamd (The Praise):** Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is known by this name because it starts with a verse (Ayah) in praise, and thanks of Allah ﷻ. *Al-Hamdulillah* means that all praise is Allah’s ﷻ exclusively, so Al-Hamd is definitive, and complete praise.
- **Umm Al-Quran (Mother of the Quran):** Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Al-Hamdulillah [the chapter (Surah) commencing with ‘All praise and thanks are for Allah, the Lord of all creations.’] ⁽²⁾ is Umm Al-Quran and Umm Al-Kitab and the Seven Oft-Repeated (Sab’ul-Mathani).”**⁽³⁾ Imam Al-Bukhari رحمته الله said in the beginning of the *Kitab Al-Tafsir* in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, **“It is named Umm Al-Quran because it is the first chapter (Surah) written in the Quranic texts, and the recitation (Tilawah) in prayer (Salah) commences with it.”**⁽⁴⁾

(1) Bukhari (2276,5736-5737); Muslim (5733).

(2) Quran (1:2), Tarbiyah trans.

(3) Tirmizi (3124). From the Sharh of this Hadith: “*Umm* means root, and foundation, as the stone of date fruit is called “the mother of date palm tree,” and the whole tree grows from it.”

(4) Sahih Al-Bukhari.

- **Umm Al-Kitab (Mother of the Book):** The above Prophetic Narration (Hadith) validates this name of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. Furthermore, Imam Al-Bukhari رحمه الله said in the beginning of *Kitab Al-Tafsir* in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, “It is also called Umm Al-Kitab (i.e., the Mother of the Book), because it is the first chapter (Surah) that has been written in the copies of the Quran, and it is also the first chapter (Surah) to be recited in prayer (Salah).”⁽¹⁾ It includes seven verses (Ayat), summarizing more than 6,000 verses (Ayat) of the entire Book, and therefore has a position of prestige in its content.
- **Sab’ul-Mathani (The Seven Often Repeated Verses):** It is named Sab’ul-Mathani, the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses, because they are frequently recited in every unit (Rakah) of obligatory (Fard), or voluntary (Nafil) prayer (Salah). This name is associated with Al-Fatihah, and is found in many of the major collections of Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith).⁽²⁾ Furthermore, Allah ﷻ said to the Prophet ﷺ in the Quran:

﴿لَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ﴾

“And We have certainly given you, [O Muhammad], seven of the often repeated [verses] and the great Quran.”⁽³⁾

- **As-Salah (The Prayer):** Al-Fatihah is named As-Salah because its recitation (Tilawah) is a condition for the validity of the prayer (Salah). Furthermore, it is a Supplication (Du’a), as noted in a lengthy Prophetic Narration (Hadith) in which the Prophet ﷺ reported that Allah ﷻ said, “I have divided The Prayer (As-Salah) in half between Myself and My servant, and My servant will have that which he asks for. When the servant says: ‘Al-Hamdu Lillahi Rabbil Alamin [All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Alamin (mankind, Jinn and all that exists)],’ Allah says: ‘My servant has praised Me.’”⁽⁴⁾
- **Ash-Shifa (The Cure):** Al-Fatihah is named Ash-Shifa, as evident from the words of the Prophet ﷺ reported in a Mursal⁽⁵⁾ Narration (Hadith) by Abdul Malik ibn Umayr رحمه الله, that the

(1) Bukhari (6/21).

(2) Bukhari (4702, 4704, 4474); Abu Dawud (2457-1459); Tirmizi (2875, 3124, 3125); Al-Muwatta (3/39), ‘A’isha ‘Abdarahman, and Ya’qub Johnson trans.; Ahmad (357/2); Nasa’i (914-917) Hakim (560/1); Mishkat Al-Masabih (2142). Also see Ibn Khuzaymah, and Ibn Hibban.

(3) Quran (15:87), Sahih International trans.

(4) Sahih Muslim (878-880); Abu Dawud (821); Ibn Majah (3784); Nasa’i (910); Tirmizi (2953); Al-Muwatta (3/41).

(5) Usually refers to a Prophetic Narration (Hadith) with a chain complete to a student (Ta’bi) which skips notation of the companion (Sahabi) who reported from the Prophet ﷺ.

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**The Opening of the Book is a cure to every poison.**”⁽¹⁾ Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, “**I used to treat myself with Al-Fatihah, and I would see that it had shocking effects. As a result, I began to prescribe this to anyone complaining of an ailment and many of them would recover quickly.**”⁽²⁾ Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله also said, “**I used to often hear [Shaykh al-Islam] Ibn Taymiyah say that [reciting] ‘You Alone we worship’⁽³⁾ contains a cure for Riya⁽⁴⁾ and ‘You Alone we seek assistance from,’⁽⁵⁾ contains a treatment of arrogance.**”⁽⁶⁾

- **Al-Asas (The Core of the Quran):** Ash-Sha’bi رحمه الله referred an ill friend to the healing nature of Al-Fatihah with reference to the statement of Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه, who said, “**Everything has a core. The core of this world is Makkah The core of the Quran is Al-Fatihah, and the core of Al-Fatihah is ‘In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, Most Merciful.’**”⁽⁷⁾
- **Al-Kafiyah (The Sufficient):** It was known as Al-Kafiyah after a Mursal Prophetic Narration (Hadith) that states, “**The Mother of the Book is sufficient for other than it but nothing else suffices [for] it.**”⁽⁸⁾ This means it is an essential element of the prayer (Salah), the absence of which nullifies the prayer (Salah). The Prophet ﷺ also mentioned that if a person recited chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah in his prayer (Salah), and did not recite any other portion of the Quran, it would be enough recitation to validate the prayer (Salah). However, if someone did not recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and recited the rest of the entire Quran, his prayer (Salah) would be invalid. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “**If you recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah only, it is sufficient, but if you recite something else in addition, that would be better.**”⁽⁹⁾

(1) Ad-Darimi (2/445); Chains from Abu Sa’eed رضي الله عنه and Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه in graded Mawdu’ by Al-Albani in Al-Albani referred it in Da’if al-Jami as-Saghir. The content is known, and widely supported by scholars (Ulama) of the praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin).

(2) Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله, Al-Jawab Al-Kafi.

(3) Quran (1:5), trans. unknown.

(4) ‘Riya’ means to show off, or lack sincerity (Ikhlas).

(5) Quran (1:5), trans. unknown.

(6) Ibn Al-Qayyim رحمه الله, Bada’i At-Tafsir Al-Jami Lima Fasarahu (1/41), trans. unknown.

(7) Tafsir Qurtubi (1/98-99), Aisha Bewley trans.

(8) Daraqutni (1/322).

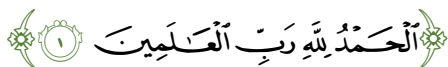
(9) Bukhari (772); Muslim (884).

Virtues of Al-Fatihah

Al-Fatihah is a unique, and priceless chapter (Surah) of the Quran, with innumerable virtues. Of the commonly reported virtues, numerous features distinguish Al-Fatihah from other chapters (Suwar).

1. The greatest chapter (Surah) in the Quran

Abu Sa'id Al-Mu'alla رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“I will teach you a chapter (Surah) which is the greatest chapter (Surah) in the Quran.”** Al-Mu'alla then said, **“He [recited] ‘Al-hamdu-lillahi Rabbil Alamin (all the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the alamin).’”**⁽¹⁾ The Prophet ﷺ also shared this information with Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه, who reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Shall I not inform you of the most noble and excellent part of the Quran?”**⁽²⁾ He then referenced chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah with recitation (Tilawah) of:



“All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.”⁽³⁾

The unique nature of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah surpassed anything revealed upon earlier the Prophets. Ubay ibn Kaab رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, **“What do you recite in your prayer (Salah)?”** Ubay said, **“I recite Umm Al-Quran.”** Then the Messenger of Allah said, **“By the One in Whose Hand is my soul! The like of it has neither been revealed in the Tawrah (Torah), nor the Injil (Gospel) nor the Zabur (Book of David), nor in the Furqan (i.e., Quran). It is the Seven Oft-Repeated (Sab'ul-Mathani), and the Magnificent Quran which I was given.”**⁽⁴⁾

2. Virtues in descent

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah was one of the few chapters (Suwar) to be revealed all at once. Ibn Abbas رضي الله عنه reported, **“While Jibreel (Gabriel) was sitting with the Prophet, he heard a creaking sound from above him. Jibreel (Gabriel) raised his head and said: ‘This is a door in heaven that has been opened today, and it has never been opened before today.’ An Angel**

(1) Ahmad (15730); Bukhari (4474, 4647, 4703, 5006); Abu Dawud (1458), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله.

(2) Nasa'i, Al-Kubra (8001), Abu Rumaysah trans.; Ibn Hibban (774), authentic (Sahih) by Shaykh Al-Khorasan رحمته الله; Al-Hakim (2056).

(3) Quran (1:1), Tarbiyah trans.

(4) Tirmizi (2875), authentic (Sahih) by Abu Eisa رحمته الله; Ahmad (357, 8682, 9345, 9788, 21094-21095); Ibn Khuzaymah (500-501); Ibn Hibban (775, 1713, 1714), authentic (Sahih) by Shaykh Al-Khorasan رحمته الله.

came down from it, and Jibreel (Gabriel) said: ‘This is an Angel who has come down to earth, and he has never come down before today.’ Jibreel (Gabriel) greeted him and said: ‘Glad tidings of two lights that have not been given to any Prophet but you: The Opening of the Book and the closing verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Baqarah. You will never recite one letter of them, but you will be given (reward).’⁽¹⁾

3. The rewards of Al-Fatihah

The Prophet ﷺ reported in the following Qudsi⁽²⁾ Narration (Hadith) that the recitation (Tilawah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah invokes a response from Allah ﷻ. In fact, Allah ﷻ described the supplication (Du’a) involving Al-Fatihah as though it was a discourse. Allah ﷻ said, **“I have divided prayer (Salah) between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.”**⁽³⁾ Shaykh Abdur Razaq Al-Badr ؒ said that this means the first three-and-a-half verses (Ayat) are worship (Ibadah) for Allah ﷻ, and the last three-and-a-half verses (Ayat) are the supplications (Ad’iyah) of the servant.⁽⁴⁾

Abu Hurairah ؓ reported the entire Narration (Hadith) from the Prophet ﷺ that Allah ﷻ said, **“I have divided prayer (Salah) between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for. When the servant says, ‘All praise is due to Allah the Lord of the worlds,’ Allah says: My servant has praised Me. When he says, ‘The Gracious, the Merciful,’ Allah says: My servant has exalted Me. When he says, ‘The Master of the Day of Judgment,’ Allah says: My servant has glorified Me and my servant has submitted to Me. When he says, ‘You Alone we worship, You Alone we ask for help,’ Allah says: This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for. When he says, ‘Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom you have favored, not those who went astray,’ Allah says: This is for My servant, and My servant will have what he has asked for.”**⁽⁵⁾

This discourse models the structure of a supplication (Du’a). The Prophet ﷺ said, **“When one of you supplicates, let him begin by praising Allah and glorifying Him, then let him send salutations upon the Prophet, then let him supplicate with whatever he wishes.”**⁽⁶⁾ The discourse in Al-Fatihah is a cause of certainty for supplicants who have knowledge (Ilm), and sincerity (Ikhlās). This is because Allah ﷻ said:

(1) Muslim (1877).

(2) A Qudsi Hadith is a Prophetic Narration relaying the Words of Allah ﷻ.

(3) Muslim (878).

(4) Sharh Ad-Durus Al-Muhimah Ibn Baz (p. 16-17).

(5) Muslim (878).

(6) Abu Dawud (1481); Tirmizi (3476-3477); Ibn Khuzaymah (709-710); Ibn Hibban (510); Al-Hakim (230/1).

أَجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلَيْسَتْ جِيبُوا لِي وَلِيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

“I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided.”⁽¹⁾

Thereafter, the supplicant raises their voice, saying ‘Ameen,’ which is one of the unique virtues of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. Ibn Hajar رحمته الله said, **“Saying ‘Ameen’ is like summing up what has been asked for in detail. So the one who offered supplication (Du’a) explained what he sought in detail by [completing Al-Fatihah], and [the supplicant] who says ‘Ameen’ says a single word that includes everything.... it is as if he offered supplication (Du’a) twice, in detail and then in summary.”⁽²⁾**

Furthermore, the supplicant who raised their voice saying ‘Ameen’ with certainty after completing Al-Fatihah has availed of a tremendous bounty. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“When the Imam says ‘Ameen,’ then you should all say ‘Ameen,’ for the Angels say ‘Ameen’ at that time, and he whose ‘Ameen’ coincides with the ‘Ameen’ of the Angels, all his past sins will be forgiven.”⁽³⁾**

4. A spiritual cure

The name Ar-Ruqyah was mentioned above, referring to the use of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah for physical, and spiritual healing. Another Prophetic Narration (Hadith) shows that chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a treatment for mental illness as well, and it goes as, **“The uncle of Kharijah bin As-Salt accepted Islam, and then passed by some people who came to him, and said, ‘You have brought something good from this man (the Prophet); recite Ruqyah for us over this man.’ Then they brought him an insane man who was in chains, and he recited Ar-Ruqyah for him, reciting the Essence of the Quran (Surah Al-Fatihah) for three days, morning and evening, and every time he finished it, he collected his saliva, and blew on him. And it was as if he was set free from bonds. They gave him something, and he came to the Prophet and told him about it, and the Messenger of Allah said, “Accept it, by [the Lord who controls] my life, for if there are some who would accept (payment) for a false Ruqyah, you are accepting it for a true Ruqyah.”⁽⁴⁾**

(1) Quran (2:186), Sahih International trans.

(2) Fath Al-Bari (2/307).

(3) Bukhari (Intro. to 780, 780-782, 6402); Muslim (915-920); Tirmizi (250); Ibn Majah (852-852); Abu Dawud (935-936); Al Muwatta (3/47-3/50); Nasa’i (926-931); Ahmad (449/2, 87/1); See also Tirmizi (248); Ibn Majah (854-856).

(4) Abu Dawud (3420, 3896, 3897), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani; see also Ibn As-Sunni, Bab Ma Yuqra' Ala Man Ya'rid Lahu Fi 'Aqlihi (p. 127, no. 624).

5. Security from evil

There is some evidence of the use of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah at a specific time, in conjunction with two other special chapters (Suwar), in the hope of security from evil by the Permission of Allah ﷻ. However, specific cultural practices, such as reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah when finalizing a marriage, or commercial contract, and paying condolences to the bereaved, are not known through the Prophet's ﷺ teachings, or his companions (Sahabah). This practice constitutes something innovated in time. A common unfounded reference claims that Al-Ghazali رحمه stated that one should recite chapters (Suwar) Al-Fatihah, Al-Ikhlās, and Al-Mu'awwidhatayn (Al-Falaq, and An-Nas) seven times immediately after Friday congregation prayer (Salat Al-Jumu'ah) to seek protection from evil for one week. There is no explicit primary textual evidence to support this claim, and it constitutes an innovation (Bid'ah) in frequency. However, Asma bint Abu Bakr رضي الله عنها reported, if authentic (Sahih), **“Whoever reads Al-Fatihah, Al-Ikhlās, Al-Falaq, and An-Nas after performing Friday prayer (Salat Al-Jumu'ah), will be protected [from evils] until the next Friday.”**⁽¹⁾

Another occurrence of the inclusion of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah in seeking protection from harm, if authentic (Sahih), comes from Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه, who reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“When you lay down on your bed and recite chapters (Suwar) Al-Fatihah and Al-Ikhlās, you will certainly be protected from everything except death.”**⁽²⁾ One should approach such Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith) with caution as they are not known from the reliable six books. Nevertheless, they relate in a general sense the great significance of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah to the establishing of good, and vigilance of evil. What is a certainty of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is its nature as a paragon of Monotheism (Tawheed).

6. A model of Monotheism (Tawheed)

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a comprehensive model of **three aspects of Monotheism (Tawheed)**:

1. **Tawheed Ar-Rububiyah**, meaning unity of Allah's ﷻ Lordship, contained in His Saying, **“Lord of the Universe.”**⁽³⁾

(1) Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah; Bayhaqi, Shu'ab Al-Iman.

(2) Abu Bakr Al-Bazzar, Majma'uz Zawaid, (10/121); Tafsir Mazhari (1:31).

(3) Quran (1:2), Tarbiyyah trans.

2. **Tawheed Al-Uluhiyah**, meaning unity of Allah’s ﷻ worship in that all worship (Ibadah) is to be done sincerely for His sake Alone, contained in His Saying, **“You Alone we worship, and from You Alone we seek help.”**⁽¹⁾
3. **Tawheed Al-Asma wa Sifat**, meaning the unity of Allah’s ﷻ Names, and Attributes in that they are perfect, and unique to Him, which is contained in His Saying, **“All praise and thanks are for Allah.”**⁽²⁾

Themes, and topics

The topical footprint of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah includes the glorification of Allah ﷻ, light on Monotheism (Tawheed), the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), Prophethood (Nabuwwah), sincerity (Ikhlas), and an urgent appeal for Guidance (Hidayah).

The main themes of this chapter (Surah) are the exposition of the basic tenets of Islam, belief in Allah ﷻ, following the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, purification of the soul, and shaping of the character upon the aforementioned. Most of the exegetes (Mufasssirun) agree that the subjects of the Noble Quran have been covered in a concise manner within this chapter (Surah). A third of the Quran speaks about Allah ﷻ, a third about the Prophets, and past nations, and a third about the acts of worship (Ibadah), lawful (Halal), and unlawful (Haram). Since chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is the thematic outline of all of the Quran, structural analysis shows its content to be similar.

Expounding, analyzing, and outlining the concepts of the higher aims (Maqasid)

As mentioned above, present-day Muslims are products of non-religious cultures which are opposed to, or ignorant of a culture of awareness, and submission to the Lord. The term ‘jahiliyah’ is an Islamic concept that refers to “the state of ignorance of Divine Guidance (Hidayah),” and by extension, it means the state of anyone not following Islam, the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). Thus, it represents societies where the three foundational beliefs are intentionally absent.

The product of these cultures is innovation (Bid’ah), adaptation of materialism, and progressive liberal reform based on immoral, and unethical approaches to organizing community, and polity. The cultural constructs focus on promoting whims, and desires (shahawaat), facilitating novel ways to fulfill this goal. Their agenda is to prove that humans can be happy, and contented by fulfilling whims, and desires (shahawaat) without codified religion, or revelation-based spiritualism. An

(1) Quran (1:5), Tarbiyyah trans.

(2) Quran (1:2), Tarbiyyah trans.

example of the non-religious culture is modeled in the worldview of secularism, atheism, liberalism, agnosticism, or naturalism.

The resemblance of the current era of Muslims to the first-generation Muslims before the Prophet's Migration (Hijrah) is that they were captives of the cultural dominance of self-indulgence, and sybarite. So likewise, Muslims around the globe today find themselves prisoners to the reign of the cultural pressure imposed on them, albeit the instruments of such cultural domination are materially different in substance, magnitude, and global scale. The origins of corruption of the dominant culture are the same, arising from a deficit of the same qualities.

The non-religious culture typically encourages people to embrace secular, worldly-minded, and liberal approaches. In such a materialist setting, belief in Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Akhirah), and Divine Guidance (Hidayah) are intentionally abandoned, slandered, and misrepresented.

Understanding this cultural deficit is the foundation for addressing the current phenomenon of spiritual crisis within the Muslim community (Ummah), and will give a straightforward answer to the questions Muslims have, such as:

- Why are Muslims dragged, and shackled into a fast-paced lifestyle?
- Why is the misappropriation of technology, the 'iPhone,' or 'iWatch' the major attraction for many Muslims?
- Why don't Muslims have time to learn, and practice Islam?
- Why are Muslims pursuing income from unlawful means, although the evidence is crystal clear that it is illegal?
- Why are Muslims focused on performing well in every sphere of life, but invest almost no time in learning the Islamic belief system (Aqeedah), praying the five daily obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat), and reciting, and reflecting upon the Quran?
- Why are many Muslims consumed with the less important worldly matters, and not focused on the essentials of their religion (Deen)?
- Why are many Muslims supposedly "open-minded," and believe that they are free to do anything they want without consideration of Divine checks, and balances?

The straightforward answer to all the above questions, and much more like them, is that it is because Muslims are products of a culture based on non-religious practices, and norms, which

makes absent the concentric of a religious-based culture, the foundational beliefs in the existence of Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Akhirah), and the Divine Guidance (Hidayah).

Unfortunately, this spiritual deadening is the phenomenon we have at hand. The lifestyle of today is hectic. The most alarming element of this phenomenon is that Muslims have lost track of their priorities, and are unable to identify what is necessary, what is unnecessary, what they must do, and what they should not do. Hence, they could be completely consuming their energy in activities they believe are vital, but they are supercilious, or even distracting, and morally damaging. Considering this phenomenon, the Words of Allah ﷻ may apply to many of today's Muslims. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا﴾ ﴿١٠٣﴾ ﴿الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا﴾ ﴿١٠٤﴾

“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.’”⁽¹⁾

‘Busyness’ is a state of unrest, and it is to be burdened with too many tasks to manage with wisdom, and moderation concurrently. It is the state of mind, and body void of rest, focus, and prioritizing. Meanwhile, worries, and anxieties overwhelm the busy Muslims until they have missed a few obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat) for some worldly reason.

Unfortunately, facile assiduity has become the identity of many Muslims. This material distraction costs the source of true tranquility in this world (Dunya), and success in the hereafter (Akhirah). The source of tranquility in this life, and the next is through Allah’s ﷻ nearness. The state of busyness overwhelms many Muslims until they forget about the hereafter (Akhirah), and replace beneficial remembrance (Dhikr), and worship (Ibadah) with a state of heedlessness.

Muslims compete with non-Muslims in spending an incredible amount of time, and energy chasing the dream job, business, or trade. They thrive on having better cars, a bigger house, and a higher worldly social status. Islam allows Muslims to acquire the aims mentioned above, but Quranic, and the Prophet’s ﷺ teachings warn against material acquisitions at the expense of pursuing the hereafter (Akhirah). Luxurious homes, and deluxe holidays are temporary worldly pleasures, whereas dedicating time, and effort to something that is eternal is not on the radar of many Muslims.

﴿أَلْهَنَكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ﴾ ﴿١﴾ ﴿حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ﴾ ﴿٢﴾

(1) Quran (18:103-104), Sahih International trans.

“Rivalry in worldly increase distracts you (from the remembrance of Allah) till you come to the graves.”⁽¹⁾

Busyness has, of course, varied qualities which are dependent on the character of the engagement, and may not always be material in nature. The first Muslim community (Ummah) established by the Prophet ﷺ was far busier than many of us today. The deliberate community in Madinah was a new community with complete, and cohesive overlapping social, economic, and faith systems, all rebuilt from the remnants of Yathrib (the old name of Madinah). However, the multiple tasks, and complexities of community building never caused the Prophet ﷺ, and his companions (Sahabah) to fall short in their duties to learn, and implement Islam. The key difference between them, and us is that they were busy pursuing worldly life (Dunya) to acquire good rewards in the hereafter (Akhirah). Meanwhile, we are busy seeking the world (Dunya), even if it will come at the expense of the hereafter (Akhirah).

Therefore, the approach of the nascent Muslim community (Ummah) moderated their priorities. On the contrary, our contemporary approach causes us to forget our goals, and distorts our priorities. Zaid bin Thabit رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Whoever is focused only on this world (Dunya), Allah will confound his affairs and make him fear poverty constantly, and he will not get anything of this world (Dunya) except that which has been decreed for him. Whoever is focused on the hereafter (Akhirah), Allah will settle his affairs for him and make him feel content with his lot, and his provision and worldly gains will undoubtedly come to him.”⁽²⁾**

Notice in the above statement of the Prophet ﷺ where he places importance in ensuring the correct prioritization of our worldly affairs: the one who makes this world (Dunya) his goal, Allah ﷻ will disorder his affairs, while the one who is focused on the hereafter (Akhirah) will gain benefit in this world (Dunya) as well. In fairness, we should mention that many contemporary Muslims do not have the necessary knowledge about the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), Paradise (Jannah), and Hellfire (Jahannam) to properly prioritize. Hence, they are not inspired to prepare for the hereafter (Akhirah). They are more invested in this world (Dunya) due to their extensive knowledge (Ilm) of it.

Only the knowledgeable are diligent in placing the worldly life (Dunya), and the hereafter (Akhirah) on a scale of discernment to deem the hereafter (Akhirah) weightier than this world (Dunya), and everything in it. Ibrahim An-Nakha'i رضي الله عنه was one of the greatest students (Tabi'un) of the Prophet's ﷺ companions (Sahabah), who said, **“Whosoever seeks any aspect of [Islamic]**

(1) Quran (102:1-2), Aneesuddin trans.

(2) Ibn Majah (4105), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله; see also Ahmad (183/5), Tirmizi (2465), Ibn Hibban (72).

knowledge, desiring (the face of) Allah by it, Allah will give him what is sufficient for him.”⁽¹⁾

So why have we ignored, or dropped our primary duties? Allah ﷻ said:

﴿أَرْضَيْتُمْ بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مِنَ الْآخِرَةِ فَمَا مَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ﴾ (38)

“Are you satisfied with the life of this world (Dunya) rather than the hereafter (Aakhirah)? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life (Hayat Ad-Dunya) compared to the hereafter (Aakhirah) except a [very] little.”⁽²⁾

Once we find ourselves constantly prioritizing the life of this world (Dunya) over the hereafter (Aakhirah), it is time to strike an informed balance. There is a severe warning against occupying ourselves with children, and wealth, if they will distract us from the source of peace in this world (Dunya), and success in the hereafter (Aakhirah), unless such occupations serve the cause of pleasing our Lord.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ﴾ (9)

“O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah. And whoever does that—then those are the losers.”⁽³⁾

The cause of pleasing our Lord has a metric based in this world (Dunya), but not enslaved to it if we reprioritize the hereafter (Aakhirah) above the world (Dunya), so that imparting knowledge (Ilm) to our children, and purifying our wealth in charity benefit us in the hereafter (Aakhirah) as much as Allah ﷻ accepts. Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “When carried to his grave, a dead person is followed by three, two of which return (after his burial) and one remains with him; his relatives, his property, and his deeds follow him; relatives and his property return back while his deeds remain with him.”⁽⁴⁾ Therefore the distraction of children, and wealth remain in the world (Dunya), while the diligent, or negligent management of our life follow us to the grave.

The subject is serious, and severe because the price we are paying is relatively high—the loss of tranquility, and peace in this world (Dunya), and success in the hereafter (Aakhirah). However, if we are still breathing, then Alhamdulillah, it’s not too late! This reformation can begin now, and chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah offers practical solutions to this present-day phenomenon through

(1) The Book of Knowledge, Abu Khaithama An-Nasa’i (111), Alarcon trans.

(2) Quran (9:38), Sahih International trans.

(3) Quran (63:9), Sahih International trans.

(4) Bukhari (6514), Muslim (7424).

mindfulness of worship (Ibadah), and constant return to remembering (Dhikr) our Lord. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Indeed Allah, Most High, said: ‘O son of Adam! Devote yourself to My worship, I will fill your chest with riches and alleviate your poverty. And if you do not do so, then I will fill your hands with problems and not alleviate your poverty.’”**⁽¹⁾ Ibn Al-Jawzi رحمته الله said, **“If you sold one moment of solitary worship of Allah for the entire lifespan of Nuh with the wealth of Qarun, you would have lost in the bargain.”**⁽²⁾

Focus on the basics of worship (Ibadah)

The phenomenon of losing track of the essentials, and being dragged, and consumed into the irrelevant is alarming. In the age of ever-mounting, and skyrocketing technology, many Muslims are busier than ever. We work more, are more stressed, and are exhausted more than ever before. However, we achieve less virtue, and reward for our actions, and suffer mental health issues, and disconsolation. The leading cause is that we are overloaded with useless information, and tasks, and try to accomplish everything instead of prioritizing the most essential things.

The straightforward explanation to the spiritual loss of contemporary Muslims is that we conduct our lives following non-religious schemas. The Islamic concentric is centered on knowing, and believing in Allah ﷻ, which is structured in preparing for His meeting through strict adherence to His Guidance (Hidayah)—the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).

Muslims should conduct their lives in conformity with the most significant triad of principles: belief in Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Aakhirah), and the revealed Guidance (Hidayah). Amazingly, every time we recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, we are reminded of these three pillars. However, this action, as with everything in a faith-based schema, begins with acquiring beneficial knowledge (Ilm).

The priority in the life of a believing Muslim is to seek knowledge (Ilm), as it is an obligation upon every Muslim. The Prophet ﷺ said, if authentic (Sahih), **“Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.”**⁽³⁾

Most Muslims memorize and know the above Prophetic Narration (Hadith) by heart. However, the majority is unaware, or they misunderstand the kind of knowledge (Ilm), the quality, and quantity

(1) Tirmizi (2466), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله.

(2) Seeds of Admonishment and Reform (p. 93), Dar as-Sunnah trans.

(3) Ibn Majah (224), Ibn Baz رحمته الله said the authenticity of this Narration (Hadith) has varied rulings. Al-Mazi رحمته الله, Aa-Zarkashi رحمته الله, As-Suyuti رحمته الله, As-Sakhawi رحمته الله, Adh-Dhahabi رحمته الله, Al-Manawi رحمته الله, Az-Zarqani رحمته الله viewed it as authentic (Sahih). Al-Albani رحمته الله authenticated it in Sahih At-Targheeb (87). Many earlier scholars (Ulama) disputed the chain, but the meaning is known, and accepted. Also see the views of Ibn ‘Adiy رحمته الله, Al-Bayhaqi رحمته الله, and At-Tabarani رحمته الله.

of knowledge (Ilm) to which the Prophetic Narration (Hadith) refers. A requisite minimum of knowledge (Ilm) is obligated upon all individuals to fulfill the most basic personal duties, and accomplish the obligations incumbent upon a Muslim. Scholars (Ulama) divided acquisition of knowledge (Ilm) into two classes based on the revealed evidence.

Mandatory individual knowledge (Fardu Ayn)

This category includes the knowledge that helps the believing Muslim formulate, and maintain unshakable belief in the six articles of faith (Arkan Al-Iman), establish obligatory acts (Fard Aamaal) of worship (Ibadah), first, and foremost the five daily obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat), then obligatory charity (Zakah), and fasting (Saum), and obligatory annual pilgrimage (Hajj), if he is eligible, and accountable. It also informs social, and business transactions under the authority of revealed Guidance (Hidayah).

Voluntary individual knowledge (Fardu Kifayah)

This category includes all other branches of knowledge (Ilm), which are not required of every individual, but is a responsibility upon some of the community. If some individuals acquire, and disseminate this kind of knowledge (Ilm), all others will be exempted from this duty.

Believing Muslims who acquire the essential knowledge (Ilm) must commit themselves to practice it, to spread it, to be patient with the challenges in furthering the individual study, or disseminating knowledge (Ilm) at that level attained. However, one should realize that not all people possess the aptitude, and diligence to enter the depths of Islamic knowledge (Ilm-e-Deen), for this is a favor that Allah ﷻ gives to whomever He pleases. Nevertheless, one should keep in mind the virtues, and merits of disseminating the knowledge of Islam (Ilm-e-Deen). The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Indeed the Angels lower their wings in approval to the one seeking knowledge (Ilm), Indeed forgiveness (Maghfirah) is sought for the knowledgeable one by whomever is in the heavens and whomever is in the earth, even the fish in the waters.”**⁽¹⁾ The prayers (Salawat) of whoever is in the heavens, and earth includes the Angels, and other creatures who ask Allah ﷻ to forgive these servants, and show mercy upon the people of knowledge (Ilm).

The precedential field of knowledge (Ilm) inclusive of either mandatory, or voluntary knowledge (Ilm) it that of Allah ﷻ the Lord, the Creator, the Sovereign, the Provider, the Giver of life, and of death. Ibn Al-Qayyim ؒ said, **“The one who knows Allah knows other than Him.”**⁽²⁾ This knowledge (Ilm) is the most critical element in our lives, and supersedes all other knowledge (Ilm)

(1) Tirmizi (2685), good (Hasan) by Abu Eisa ؒ; Tirmizi (2682); Abu Dawud (3641); Ibn Majah (223). The content is graded authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ؒ due to supporting evidence. See also Al-Bazzar (169).

(2) Madarij al-Salikeen, (vol. 3, p. 351), trans. unknown.

in appropriate precedential balance. The first knowledge (Ilm) gained from chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is, **“All praise and thanks are for Allah, the Lord of all creations.”**⁽¹⁾ Following this, we learn about two Attributes that refer to His Mercy (Rahmah), then His Sovereignty in the hereafter (Akhirah), **“The Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace, Lord of the Day of Judgment.”**⁽²⁾

Remove the remnants of ignorance (jahiliyah)

The path of seeking knowledge (Ilm), and establishing worship (Ibadah) according to revealed Guidance (Hidayah) exposes the distractions of the dominant culture of ignorance (jahiliyah). This is initiated by focusing on the three fundamentals of faith (Iman), including the belief in Allah ﷻ, His Lordship, Names, and Attributes, and formulating certainty (Yaqeen) in His meeting on the Day of Accountability. Gaining knowledge of these things is inclusive of establishing the acts of worship (Ibadah), and conduct (Ma'mat), and adherence to them to the best of our abilities. Consequently, all the distractions from this path will manifest before us so that we can disregard them. Allah ﷻ made this crystal clear in the following verse (Ayah):

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نَفَصَّلُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِتَسْتَبِينَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ﴾

“Thus We set out in detail the signposts of Our way and the relevant Revelations (included in the Quran), and (We do so) so that the path of the disbelieving criminals might become distinct (from that of the righteous believers).”⁽³⁾

The first generation of Muslims occasionally exhibited some remnants of the non-religious culture of ignorance (jahiliyah) due to erroneous, or emotional reactions. However, when reminded, they immediately reformed their character, and behavior without hesitation. An excuse for forgetfulness is mercy for negligence. The Prophet ﷺ said, **“Allah has forgiven for me my nation their mistakes and forgetfulness, and what they are forced to do.”**⁽⁴⁾

The point is that some part of ignorance (jahiliyah) is natural because we are humans, and we make mistakes. The noble of character are those who are persistent in self-reform, who do not continue in deliberate sin, or return absently again, and again to habitual evils with no sincere repentance (Tawbah); such are those who have hope for mercy, even if forgetfulness returns them to error. What is also known is that some part of ignorance (jahiliyah) will always remain in the Muslim community (Ummah), but a part of ignorance (jahiliyah) does not constitute submitting to a

(1) Quran (1:2), Tarbiya trans.

(2) Quran (1:3-4), Asad trans.

(3) Quran (6:55), Ünal trans.

(4) Ibn Majah (2043); Bayhaqi. Graded good (Hasan) by Al-Albani ؒ.

dominant culture of ignorance (jahiliyah), and the evidence is in the words of the Prophet ﷺ, who said, **“There are four matters of the ignorance (jahiliyah) among my community (Ummah) that they will not abandon: Pride in one’s nobility, slandering people’s lineage, seeking rain by the stars, and wailing.”**⁽¹⁾ The Prophet’s ﷺ statement was that there are some matters of ignorance (jahiliyah) among the Muslim community (Ummah), and this does not contradict his statement made during the farewell pilgrimage (Hajjatul Wida), **“All matters of the ignorance (jahiliyah) are abolished beneath my feet. The blood feuds of the ignorance (jahiliyah) are abolished.”**⁽²⁾ Ibn Taymiyah رحمه الله explained that this meant parts of ignorance (jahiliyah), such as competing between tribes in customs, and worship that was deficient remnants of the ignorance (jahiliyah) of polytheism (shirk).⁽³⁾

Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه, and Bilal رضي الله عنه

Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه was a renowned companion (Sahabi) of the Prophet ﷺ whose virtues were extolled in several major books of Islamic history, and collections of Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith). After accepting Islam, he fell into some error concerning class status, and prejudice. The Prophet ﷺ advised him to reform his character, and share his food, and clothing equally with his servant, as the brotherhood of Islam abolished the ignorance (jahiliyah) of elitism. Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه explained, **“There was a quarrel between me and another man whose mother was a non-Arab and I called her bad names. The man mentioned (complained about) me to the Prophet. The Prophet said, ‘Did you abuse so-and so?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘Did you call his mother bad names?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He said, ‘You still have the traits of (the Pre-Islamic Period of) [Jahiliya].’ I said, ‘(Do I still have ignorance) even now in my old age?’ He said, ‘Yes.’”**⁽⁴⁾

Notice the reaction of Abu Dharr رضي الله عنه to the Prophet’s ﷺ instruction. He never returned to the ignorant behavior, and complied with the Prophet’s ﷺ advice to treat his brothers with equity despite social status, racial, and economic differences. This is an example of reform from ignorance (jahiliyah) which began with gaining knowledge (Ilm), followed by taking action in observance of the revealed Guidance (Hidayah). What is incumbent on us in our environment surrounded by the dominant culture of non-religious ignorance (jahiliyah) is to return to Allah ﷻ in reflection, and obedience (Atha’at), such as through the reminder of the Mother of the Quran (Umm Al-Quran). Another example for us to model our reform is in the rectification of political, and tribal divisions of the companions (Sahabah) of the Prophet ﷺ.

(1) Muslim (2160).

(2) Muslim (2950).

(3) Iqtida' as-Sirat al-Mustaqim (1/305)

(4) Bukhari (6050); Muslim (4313-4315); Bayhaqi, Shu'ab al-Iman (4772).

Ignorance (jahiliyah) of tribalism

Al-Baydawi رحمه الله, the author of *Anwar at-Tanzil*, and Al-Qurtubi رحمه الله, the author of *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Quran*, explained a trace quality of the time of ignorance (jahiliyah), which remained amongst the companions (Sahabah) of the Prophet ﷺ.⁽¹⁾ The ignorance (jahiliyah) was a remnant of a historical conflict that had divided the people of Yathrib by tribalist, and regional divisions. This remnant of ignorance (jahiliyah) is also referred to in Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith), collected by the two Shuyukh (*sing.* Shaykh). In the company of the Prophet ﷺ, members of the two tribes Al-Aws, and Khazraj returned to posturing, and provoking one another until there was a general call to arms in preparation for inter-tribal fighting.

“A man from the immigrants (Muhajirun) kicked an Ansari man (on the buttocks with his foot). The Ansari man [called to arms], ‘O the Ansar! (Help!)’ and the immigrant said, ‘O the immigrants! (Help!).’ Allah’s Messenger heard that and said, ‘What is this call for, which is the characteristic of the Period of Ignorance (jahiliyah)?’ They said, ‘O Allah’s Messenger! A man from the immigrants kicked one of the Ansar (on the buttocks with his foot).’ Allah’s Messenger said, ‘Leave it (that call) for it is a detestable thing.’”⁽²⁾

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ intervened with a profound example of wisdom, character, and manners, and his companions (Sahabah) realized this dispute was caused by whisperings (waswas) of Shaytan (Satan). The rectification for such tribal conflicts, which exist everywhere in the Muslim nations, and in the form of political, and cultural sectarianism in the West, is in returning to the belief in the triad of fundamentals of faith (Iman). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ
بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُمْ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ﴾⁽³⁾

“And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you—when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses (Ayat) that you may be guided.”⁽³⁾

(1) Al-Baydawi, *Anwar At-Tanzil*, (1:156) and al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Quran*, (2:158-164).

(2) Bukhari (4905, 4907, 3518). Muslim (6583).

(3) Quran (3:103), Sahih International trans.

What is incumbent on us is to return to Allah ﷻ in reflection, and obedience (Atha'at), such as through the reminder of the Mother of the Quran (Umm Al-Quran).

Make urgent appeals

Only Allah ﷻ can straighten our affairs. A noble example of our dependence on Allah ﷻ for Guidance (Hidayah) is our call upon Him for aid, as exemplified in the two sets of supplications (Ad'iyah) at the end of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.

In the first supplication (Du'a), we reemphasize our firm belief in Allah ﷻ, and His meeting by taking the practical step to worship Him Alone without any partners, and we know that we cannot achieve this sincere worship (Ibadah) without His Help. Hence, we combine both appeals in the same supplication (Du'a):

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

“You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).”⁽¹⁾

The second urgent appeal:

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

“Guide us to the straight way (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).”⁽²⁾

With this supplication (Du'a), we ask Allah ﷻ to guide us to the Divine Guidance (Hidayah), like Prophet Ibrahim عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Abraham) when he, and Prophet Ismail عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Ishmael) asked Allah ﷻ to show them the rituals of the obligatory annual pilgrimage (Hajj).

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾

“Our Lord! Make us submissive to You and our offspring a nation submissive to You. Show us our rites of worship, and accept our repentance (Tawbah). Surely, You are the Acceptor of repentance (Tawhbah), the Merciful.”⁽¹⁾

(1) Quran (1:5), Khan trans.

(2) Quran (1:6), Khan trans.

Likewise, in our constant refrain to the supplication (Du'a) in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, we beg Allah ﷻ to show us the direction, and guide us to become members of the true community of sincere believers (Mu'minin). The significance of community uniting in solidarity is emphasized through the use of the plural form of 'guide us.' There is no place for isolation of individuals, clans, or tribes independent of the community of believers (Mu'minin).

We ask Allah ﷻ to guide us to the Divine Guidance (Hidayah), and the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) of those upon whom He bestowed spiritual bounties, the wealth of Islam, the bounty of striving to strict compliance, and adherence of Allah ﷻ, and His Messenger ﷺ so that we can qualify to earn the companionship of the Prophets ﷺ, the truthful (Sidiqun), the martyrs (Shuhudah), and the righteous (Salihin).

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

“The Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.”⁽²⁾

The means to accomplish the higher aim (Maqsid)

In establishing the *means*, a responsible exegete (Mufassir) examines the corpus of revealed Guidance (Hidayah) to gather verses (Ayat) that share the same theme, and support a single higher aim (Maqsid). The exegete (Mufassir) must avoid innovation (Bid'ah), and speculative thought by maintaining consistency between sub-categories of objectives in different groups of verses (Ayat). All evidence must be valid according to orthodox Islamic sciences, and must contribute to achieving the primary higher aim (Maqsid) of the vital chapter (Surah).

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is the Mother of the Quran (Umm Al-Quran), and according to exegetes (Mufassirun), the Quran is broadly divided into **three main sections**:

- **The first third** of the Quran speaks about Allah's ﷻ Divine Essence, Actions of Lordship, Names, Attributes, and His meeting on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah).

(1) Quran (2:128), Abdul Hye trans.

(2) Quran (1:7), Khattab trans.

- **The second third** is about worshipping Allah ﷻ, which infers obligations to respect the rulings of what is lawful (Halal), and unlawful (Haram), and the performance of rituals according to the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah).
- **The final third** refers to the three types of human characters with respect to accommodating the first two tenants. The **first character type** learns the truth (Haqq), believes, and acts upon it based on the revealed knowledge (Ilm). The **second type** knows the truth (Haqq), and rejects it out of arrogance. The **third, and the last type** are misguided, since they neglect knowledge (Ilm), and act based on their desires (shahawaat). Allah ﷻ mentioned their stories throughout the past, present, and future in His Book, and described their final abode in the hereafter (Aakhirah).

Therefore, we divided the entire chapter (Surah) of Al-Fatihah into an **introduction**, which comprises of Basmallah, followed by **three sections**. They are as follows:

- Introduction: Beginning with Basmallah
- Section One: Know your Lord (verses 2-4).
- Section Two: Worship your Lord (verse 5).
- Section Three: Three types of people (verses 6-7).

As mentioned above, chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is the prayer (Salah), since the prayer (Salah) is invalid without reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah in every unit (Rakah) of it. It is the first chapter (Surah) which reverted that Muslims must work on memorizing as soon as they take their Shahadah, and children begin memorizing the Quran with it. It is also called The Supplication (Ad-Du'a), since the entire chapter (Surah) is an invocation. It is the Mother of the Quran (Umm Al-Quran), the Mother of the Book (Umm Al-Kitab), and the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses (As-Sab'a Al-Mathani).⁽¹⁾ Allah ﷻ distinguished this chapter (Surah) in His Statement:

﴿لَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ﴾

“And We have given you seven of the oft-repeated [verses], and this glorious Quran.”⁽²⁾

Al-Fatihah is the most significant chapter (Surah) of the 114 chapters (Suwar) of the Noble Quran. Each one of the 114 chapters (Suwar) of the Quran has a single main theme, and subject. Every topic within that chapter (Surah) will then relate to that single theme. The main theme of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is the summarization of Quran, and thus Islam, in seven verses (Ayat). The

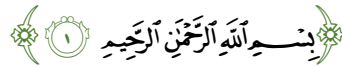
⁽¹⁾ See Tirmizi (3124), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ﷺ.

⁽²⁾ Quran (15:87), Kaskas trans.

whole Quran originates from chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and conveys the basic tenets of Islam. Prior to the exegesis (exegesis) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, based on the three parts, it is incumbent upon a diligent analysis to consider the opening of the recitation (Tilawah).

Surah Al-Fatihah — Introduction: Beginning with ‘Basmallah’

‘Al-Basmallah’ is to say:



“In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”⁽¹⁾

Since chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a summary of the whole of the Quran, the position of the Basmallah at its head is significant. There are several opinions on the status of the Basmallah to chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. However, what is agreed upon is the significance of the Basmallah to facilitate the means to reform ourselves.

As for the position of the Basmallah in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, the first opinion is that it is the first verse (Ayah) of the seven of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. The second opinion emphasizes that it is a verse (Ayah) of the Quran, and it was mentioned in chapter (Surah) An-Naml:



“Surely it is from Sulaiman (Solomon), and surely it is in the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”⁽²⁾

This opinion extends that the Basmallah is not an actual verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. Instead, it is a verse (Ayah) that we should say when we start reciting a chapter (Surah) of the Quran, except for chapter (Surah) At-Tawbah. This latter opinion is the correct one, and is proven by other texts, and the context of the chapter (Surah) itself.

Anas bin Malik رضي الله عنه said, **“I prayed behind the Prophet, Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. They used to start their recitation with: ‘Al-hamdu Lillahi Rabbil-'Alamin [All the praises and**

⁽¹⁾ Quran (1:1).

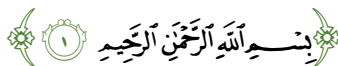
⁽²⁾ Quran (27:30), Shakir trans.

thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, Jinn and all that exists)],' and they did not say, 'Bismillahir-Rahmanir-Rahim' at the beginning of their recitation, nor at the end.”⁽¹⁾

What is meant by this Narration (Hadith) is that each of them did not mention the Basmallah aloud as part of the recitation (Tilawah). The fact that there is a distinction between it not being recited aloud with the rest of Al-Fatihah indicates that it is not a part of the chapter (Surah). In addition, other narrations which discuss the virtues of the chapter (Surah), mention the chapter (Surah) in the customary form by notating the first verse (Ayah), saying, **“Surah Al-Hamdulillah.”**

However, in this book, we cite the Basmallah as Quran 1:1, as we favor the opinion that the Basmallah is a verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.

Significance of the Basmallah



“In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Every important word or matter that does not begin with the remembrance (Dhikr) of Allah is reduced.”⁽²⁾**

It is highly recommended to begin everything in the Name of Allah ﷻ, and although the Prophetic Narration (Hadith) is not confirmed through a reliable chain of narrators (Muhaditheen), the meaning is known, and agreed upon, and abundant with virtues. Ibn Baz رحمه الله said that the Prophetic Narration (Hadith) can be viewed as acceptable (Hasan li Ghayriha) due to supporting evidence.⁽³⁾ The meaning of the Prophetic Narration (Hadith) is acceptable, and applicable. Moreover, it has tremendous benefits for Muslims, especially for those in the West surrounded by the trials, and temptations of a dominant non-religious culture.

Allah ﷻ opened His Book with Basmallah. Prophet Sulaiman عليه السلام (Solomon) opened his letter to the Queen of Sheba with the Basmallah.⁽⁴⁾ The Prophet ﷺ opened his diplomatic correspondences to Heraclius with the Basmallah.⁽⁵⁾ The majority of jurists are of the view that it is prescribed, and recommended (Mandub, or Mustahab) to say the Basmallah when starting all things of importance,

(1) Muslim (892).

(2) Ahmad (14/329), trans. Unknown.

(3) Ibn Baz, Majmu' al-Fatawa (25/135).

(4) Quran (27:30).

(5) Bukhari (7, 6260).

both acts of worship (Ibadah), and other things.⁽¹⁾ Since the recitation (Tilawah) of the Quran is an essential matter, we start it with the Basmallah as with every chapter (Surah), except chapter (Surah) At-Tawbah, due to the meaning of its first verse (Ayah). Therefore, the Basmallah starts chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, regardless of the status of the Basmallah as a verse (Ayah). However, to reconcile with the opinion of the group of scholars (Ulama), who regard the Basmallah as a verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, it is preferable to recite, if silently, before it.

Linguistic significance

The Arabic letter “ba” before the Name of Allah ﷻ has the meaning that we want Allah ﷻ to accompany us as we seek to understand the implications of the opening of the Quran, and the rest of the text. It means ‘with,’ and by it, we mean “with evoking the Creator’s Name, we seek His Aid, and Help in reading, understanding, and acting upon the Revelation.” By this evocation, we recognize Allah’s ﷻ favor upon us, since He is the One Who has bestowed upon us everything, including our ability to read for knowledge (Ilm), and eat for sustenance. For example, by evoking the Name of Allah ﷻ before eating, and drinking, we admit that Allah ﷻ is the One who provided for us. Hence, we should elevate His mention before the start of any action.

When we initiate our sayings, and actions in the Name of Allah ﷻ, it is a guarantee that we will engage in a conversation, or an action that is not displeasing to Him, because we have relegated what follows to thoughtful intention (Niyah). When we initiate what we want to do in the Name of Allah ﷻ, we purify our intentions (Niyah), and ensure that the action we are about to initiate is for the sake of Allah ﷻ in sincerity. For example, we never heard of a thief who begins his activity in the Name of Allah ﷻ.

Furthermore, the ‘ba’ in the Basmallah implies the seeking, and appealing for help, called **Isti’anah**. Thus, by beginning actions in the Name of Allah ﷻ, we are making an urgent appeal to receive Allah’s ﷻ Help, the One Who creates what we do, and what we say. Hence, everything that happens is with His Power, and Assistance, regardless of whether we acknowledge it, or not; only through Allah’s Aid, and Help, can we do, and complete tasks.

When we begin doing beneficial things, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping in the Name of Allah ﷻ, we follow the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). Furthermore, we benefit from it in this world (Dunya) through the deliberation of our efforts, and we get the reward for mentioning Allah’s ﷻ Name in the hereafter (Akhirah) because of our sincerity (Ikhlas).

(1) Al-Mawsu‘ah al-Fiqhiyah (8/92).

The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman), The Merciful (Ar-Raheem)

We begin with the Basmallah to seek Allah’s ﷻ Aid, and Help, and follow this **Isti’anah** with an appeal to receive Allah’s ﷻ Assistance through two of His distinct Names: The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman), and The Merciful (Ar-Raheem). These specific Names refer to the seeking of assistance through identifying Allah’s ﷻ unique Divine Essence, while His other Names are descriptive of Him without the same exegetical depth. Allah’s ﷻ Divine Essence, and those Attributes that describe His Essence, are inseparable, nominal, and adjectival. However, these two unique Names are characteristic of an overwhelming quality of mercy which is unqualifiable in human terms. We cannot comprehend Allah’s ﷻ Divine Essence, and we are prohibited from employing our intellect (Aql) to dictate His Nature and Reality. Hence, Allah ﷻ chose these two Names, so that we may better understand using our limited human capacities through contemplating the depth of His characteristic of Mercy (Rahmah).

Abdullah bin Amr رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“The merciful are shown mercy by The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman). Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from Who is above the heavens. The womb is named after The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman, so whoever connects it, Allah connects him, and whoever severs it, Allah severs him.”**⁽¹⁾ It means in part that when seeking the Help from The Merciful (Ar-Raheem), and The Beneficent (Ar-Rahman), we should be confident that He will deliver the needed assistance, so seek His Help Alone.

Surah Al-Fatihah — Section One: Know your Lord

The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah focus on knowing our Lord, and comprise Allah’s ﷻ rights upon us, based on the following Prophetic Narration (Hadith). The Prophet ﷺ reported that Allah ﷻ says, **“I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.”**⁽²⁾ These verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah are:

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ ﴿ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴾ ﴿ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴾ ﴿

“All praise is to Allah, the Lord of the Creation. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Owner of the Day of Recompense.”⁽³⁾

(1) Tirmizi (1924), graded authentic (Sahih) by Abu Eisa رضي الله عنه.

(2) Muslim (878).

(3) Quran (1:2-4), Haque trans.

These three verses (Ayat) indicate to remember Allah ﷻ in praise, and glorification. These verses (Ayat) outline one of the three principles that the secular, non-religious societies are keen on making absent, or distorting to keep the enslavement of the populace to their heretical ideologies. Allah ﷻ devotes these three verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah to affirm the reality of the existence of a Creator, and Sustainer of all that we see, and do not see in the universe. The onset of these three verses (Ayat) begins with establishing that Allah ﷻ is worthy of all praise.

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

“All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all that exists.”⁽¹⁾

The phrase “All praise belongs to Allah ﷻ (Al-Hamdulillah),” known as the **Tahmeed**, is iconic, and ubiquitous in the lives of Muslims. Those who praise Allah ﷻ love Him, and Allah ﷻ loves when we praise Him, while He is not in need of praise. Hence, Allah ﷻ stated the praise, which is His right, as a universal truth pertaining to Himself, and as an example, and command for His servants for their own benefit. Abdullah ibn Masud رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**There is no one to whom praise is more dear than Allah, Glorified and Exalted is He, and because of that He praised Himself.**”⁽²⁾ Allah ﷻ said:

﴿يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ﴾

“O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.”⁽³⁾

The **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) was the first utterance that came from the mouth of the first man in creation—Prophet Adam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “**When Allah created Adam, He breathed the soul into him, then [Adam] sneezed and said: ‘All praise is due to Allah.’ So [Adam] praised Allah by His Permission. Then his Lord said to him: ‘May Allah have mercy upon you, O Adam.’**”⁽⁴⁾ The **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) will also be qualitative completion of our statements in a manner which we cannot presently know. Allah ﷻ said of the believers (Mu’minun) in Paradise (Jannah):

(1) Quran (1:2), Tarbiyah trans.

(2) Muslim (6991); Bukhari (4634, 4637).

(3) Quran (35:15), Sahih International trans.

(4) Tirmizi (3367).

﴿١٠﴾ وَعَاخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

“The last of their call will be, ‘Praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds!’”⁽¹⁾

Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) is also the first wording in the Quran, the first verse (Ayah) of the most significant chapter (Surah), and the opening of the Quran. It is a praise that is descriptive, and inclusive of praise from everything in creation recognizing Allah ﷻ as their Lord. This is as Allah ﷻ said:

﴿٤٤﴾ تَسْبِيحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِن لَّا نَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا

﴿٤٤﴾ غَفُورًا

“The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving.”⁽²⁾

The **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) will adorn a banner on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Abu Sa’eed Al-Khudri رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “I am the leader of the sons of Adam, and it so no boast. I will be the first one for whom the earth will be split open on the Day of Resurrection, and it is no boast. I will be the first to intercede and the first whose intercession will be accepted, and it is no boast. The banner of praise will be in my hand on the Day of Resurrection, and it is no boast.”⁽³⁾

On the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), the **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) will fill the scale of those who say it in this world (Dunya), and reflect upon its meanings. Al-Harith Al-Ashari رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Purification is half of faith, ‘Al-Hamdulillah’ fills the Balance.”⁽⁴⁾

Saying **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah), which means “All praise belongs to Allah ﷻ,” is incredibly beneficial to those who utter it with mindful hearts, in the attribution of what they have been given. More than this, the **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) is a means to receive more. Allah ﷻ said:

-
- (1) Quran (10:10), Sahih International trans.
 (2) Quran (17:44), Sahih International trans.
 (3) Ibn Majah (4308), Sahih by Al-Albani; Tirmizi (3148).
 (4) Muslim (534).

﴿ وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴾ ﴿٧﴾

“Remember also the time when your Lord declared, If you are grateful, I will surely bestow more favors on you; but if you are ungrateful, then know that My punishment is severe indeed.”⁽¹⁾

Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) is an acknowledgment that Allah ﷻ causes everything to happen. Hence, praising Allah ﷻ liberates us from self-admiration, pride, and falsely attributing our accomplishments to our efforts. All praise belongs to Allah ﷻ, for our successes are only because of Allah’s ﷻ favor upon us.

Praising, and glorifying Allah ﷻ opens the door to understanding one’s condition of weakness, insufficiency, humility, and need. Thus, one will attain the status of true submission to Allah ﷻ.

The quality of praise in the **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) is modified by the definitive article ‘al’ that joins the noun ‘hamd,’ which means ‘praise.’ In this usage, ‘al’ is a generalization, which signals all types of ‘hamd,’ and it also signals exclusivity because all praise belongs to Allah ﷻ, and no one else, since Allah ﷻ is the originator of everything. If an individual praises a good action performed by someone else, he praises the Creator, whether he recognizes it, or not, since Allah ﷻ created the act, and governs the ability to achieve all means.

Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) attributes possession of all praise to Allah ﷻ. ‘Allah’ is the proper, and identifying Name of the Divine Essence, which is the reference of all of the Divine Names. ‘Allah’ means the One who is to be worshiped, and obeyed. Therefore, all the Names that describe Allah ﷻ, the Lord (Ar-Rabb), the Beneficent (Ar-Rahman), the Merciful (Ar-Raheem), and the rest of the Names, are descriptive of Allah ﷻ, and a means to characterize worship (Ibadah) of Allah ﷻ. ‘Allah’ is the most inclusive Name of our Lord, since all His Majestic, and Divine Attributes (Sifat Al-Jalal wa Al-Jamal) describe His Divine Essence, which is above all imperfection, and exists in a manner that our intellect (Aql) cannot grasp. Allah ﷻ is the One the hearts long for out of love, fear, and hope to the level of worshipful attribution.

(1) Quran (14:7).

The concept of the Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah)

The concept of the **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah) involves **four relevant connotations**, which overlap, and combine in semantic relation:

1. Al-Madh

Al-Madh is to admire, and express admiration by praising an act, or condition of quality existent intentionally, or unintentionally. This type of praise can be attributed to a conditional state, or action which has animate, or inanimate characteristics. Praise of an inanimate quality is like praising a precious stone, or saying that a pair of gold earrings are beautiful—the gemstone, and earrings did not choose to be beautiful, and took no action. Rather, we recognize that the source of all beauty is through the creative Act of Allah ﷻ. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, **“Praise is the head of thanks (Shukr), so whomever has not praised Allah [has also] not thanked Him.”**⁽¹⁾

2. Ash-Shukr

Ash-Shukr is to give thanks, and to show gratefulness to someone who did you a favor, and deserves to be thanked. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“He that is not grateful to the people, is not grateful to Allah.”**⁽²⁾ Yet, thankfulness to people is for material, or abstract gains, while thankfulness to Allah ﷻ is comprehensive in a manner associated with glorification because the gifts, and blessings from Allah ﷻ for which we are thankful are perfect bestowments.

3. At-Than’

To magnify, glorify, exalt, and hold Allah ﷻ in the highest regard due to His Perfection, beautiful Names, and Attributes. Hence, we think, and speak very highly of Allah ﷻ, and glorify, and extol Him.

4. Al-Hamd

Al-Hamd is all the above three combined. Al-Hamd is to admire, give thanks, magnify, and express the gestalt of these overlapping qualities in the **Tahmeed** (Al-Hamdulillah).

(1) Abdur-Razzaq, Al-Musannaf (10/424), trans unknown.

(2) Abu Dawud (4811), graded authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رحمته الله.

Exclusivity of the Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah)

Tahmeed (Al-Hamdulillah) is Allah's ﷻ first right upon us, and the rest of the creations, since He is the Lord who created, provides for, and nurtures the creation while having no need to benefit from these actions. We must recognize the One Who provides us with all these bounties. Recognition of the bounties begins with contemplation. Allah ﷻ commanded us in many places in the Quran to look, and ponder upon the creation.

﴿أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ﴾ ﴿١٧﴾ ﴿وَالِى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ﴾ ﴿١٨﴾ ﴿وَالِى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ﴾ ﴿١٩﴾
﴿وَالِى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ﴾ ﴿٢٠﴾

“Do they not look at the camels, how they are created? And at the heaven, how it is raised? And at the mountains, how they are rooted and fixed firm? And at the earth, how it is spread out?”⁽¹⁾

﴿أَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوجٍ﴾ ﴿٦﴾ ﴿وَالْأَرْضِ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوْسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ﴾ ﴿٧﴾ ﴿تَبَصَّرَةٌ وَذِكْرَىٰ لِكُلِّ عَبْدٍ مُّنِيبٍ﴾ ﴿٨﴾

“Have they not looked at the heaven above them, how We have made it and adorned it, and there are no rifts in it? And the earth! We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and have produced therein every kind of lovely growth (plants). An insight and a Reminder for every slave turning to Allah (i.e., the one who believes in Allah and performs deeds of His obedience, and always begs His pardon).”⁽²⁾

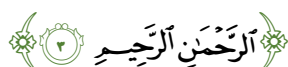
The conclusion of contemplation by any person with a healthy intellect (Aql) consists of **two primary principles**. **First**, there must be a creator, and **second**, the creator cannot be equal to the created. Hence all praise belongs to Him, and no one else in association with Him.

Allah ﷻ has revealed the grounds for which all the praise must be exclusive to Him. Therefore, we praise Him for being the Lord, the Merciful (Ar-Raheem). These qualities also extend from Him on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and the hereafter (Akhirah), since we are hoping that He will conceal our sins, and He will forgive us.

(1) Quran (88:17-20).

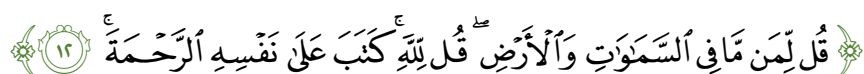
(2) Quran (50:6-8).

We praise Him for granting us the Guidance (Hidayah) to worship Him, and His support in keeping us steadfast, and for making us amongst those who receive His grace, and bounty, which is Islam, and the obedience (Atha'at) of Allah ﷻ, and His Messenger ﷺ. Furthermore, we praise Allah ﷻ for protecting us from falling into the hazards of misguidance of those who refuse the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) of worship (Ibadah), and obedience (Atha'at) to Him. We seek protection in His Guidance (Hidayah) from those who innovate ways of worship, which are not from revealed knowledge (Ilm). Also, we praise Him for protecting us from the arrogant who recognize the truth about Allah ﷻ, but willfully, and knowingly choose rejection. We seek refuge in Him, and ask for His Mercy (Rahmah).



“The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”⁽¹⁾

After the initial verse (Ayah) acknowledging that Allah ﷻ is the One true God, the Lord who is worthy of praise, He assures us of His Mercy (Rahmah). Therefore, the mention of the two Names Ar-Rahman, and Ar-Raheem, implies one attribute of mercy integral, and specific to his Lordship. This association of Sovereignty with Mercy (Rahmah) is remarkable, and unique to His Lordship. Allah ﷻ said:



“Say (O Muhammad): ‘To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?’ Say: ‘To Allah.’ He has prescribed the Mercy for Himself.”⁽²⁾

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“When Allah completed the creation, He wrote in His Book which is with Him on His Throne (Al-Arsh), ‘My Mercy (Rahmah) has overcome My Anger.’”⁽³⁾**

Allah ﷻ has an unfathomable capacity for forgiveness (Maghfirah), and reminds us never to despair of His Mercy (Rahmah). Recognizing His Mercy (Rahmah) is part of the Islamic belief system (Aqeedah). Allah ﷻ said:

(1) Quran (1:3), Haque trans.

(2) Quran (6:12), Abdul Hye trans.

(3) Bukhari (3194, 7404, 7422), see also Bukhari (7453, 7553-7554); Muslim (2751).

﴿ إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِسُّ مِنْ رَوْحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴾ (٨٧)

“In fact, none despairs of Allah’s Mercy except the unbelieving people.”⁽¹⁾

Knowledge (Ilm) of His Mercy (Rahmah) is an important aspect of faith (Iman), despite the reality that His Mercy (Rahmah) is greater than what we can comprehend.

Umar bin Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه reported, **“Some prisoners were brought to the Messenger of Allah, and there was a woman among the prisoners who was searching for someone. When she found a small boy among the prisoners, she clasped him to her and started to breastfeed him. The Messenger of Allah said to us: ‘Do you think that this woman would throw her child into the fire?’ We said: ‘No, by Allah, she would never do that if she is able not to.’ The Messenger of Allah said: ‘Allah is more merciful towards His servants than this woman is towards her child.’”⁽²⁾**

Ar-Rahman, and Ar-Raheem are two of Allah’s سَمَاءُ Names established by evidence in both the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). Both Names are derivatives of the root word ‘Rahmah,’ which means ‘mercy.’ Scholars (Ulama) found distinctions between the two Names since they are often paired together in the same verse (Ayah), such as:

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ (٣)

“The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”⁽³⁾

Shaykh Ahmad an-Najmi رحمته الله wrote, **“Allah’s all-encompassing Mercy (indicated by the Name Ar-Rahman) includes everyone: Muslim, non-Muslim, hypocrite (munafiq), idol-worshiper. They all receive the all-encompassing Mercy (Rahmah) of Allah. They are all given water to drink, air to breathe as a Mercy (Rahmah) from Allah, despite their polytheism (shirk) and sins. But the Name Ar-Raheem indicates Allah’s specific Mercy (Rahmah) with which He singles out His believing servants.”⁽⁴⁾**

Ar-Rahman, as a referent to a general, and encompassing Attribute, includes the entire creation, and all material, vegetation, animals, humans, and so on. As Allah سَمَاءُ said:

(1) Quran (12:87), Malik trans.

(2) Muslim (6978); see also Bukhari (5999).

(3) Quran (1:3), Haque trans.

(4) Shaykh Ahmad An-Najmi’s رحمته الله introduction to his Sharh of Usul As-Sunnah, Abdul-Waheed trans.

﴿١٥٦﴾ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“My Mercy (Rahmah) encompasses all things.”⁽¹⁾

Ar-Raheem, on the other hand, is a specific Attribute, which denotes the Mercy (Rahmah) of Allah ﷻ for the sincere believers (Mu'minun), as Allah ﷻ said:

﴿٤٣﴾ وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا

“...He is Most Merciful to the believers (Mu'minun).”⁽²⁾

Note that this specific Mercy (Rahmah) of Allah ﷻ is upon those who have recognized through the lens of faith (Iman) the general Mercy (Rahmah) they receive. The specific Mercy (Rahmah) referenced by the Attribute in the Name Ar-Raheem is reserved for those who take an extra step towards perfection, and goodness. Seeking this Mercy (Rahmah) incentivizes a believer (Mu'min) to beautify their character by modeling what we understand of Allah's ﷻ Attribute of Mercy (Rahmah). We need to extend mercy, and kindness to the whole creation, regardless of race, religion, or color.

Our mercy must also extend to include the rights of the animals, trees, and the environment in general. In conclusion, in the same way that Allah ﷻ extends His immeasurable Mercy (Rahmah) upon believers (Mu'minun), and non-believers (kafirun), we likewise need to do the same, and be merciful to the whole of creation. All of the creation has rights, and one's kindness, justice, and compassion should encompass those rights. This is the level of excellence in contemplating Allah's ﷻ Mercy (Rahmah) when a Muslim stands in prayer (Salah), and recites the Names, “Ar-Rahman (The Gracious), Ar-Raheem (The Merciful)” in Al-Fatihah. Then Allah ﷻ says, “My servant has exalted Me.”⁽³⁾

Allah ﷻ is deserving of exaltation. He is the King, and the Absolute Ruler on the day when we will stand before Him, and that is the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah):

(1) Quran (7:156), Sahih International trans.

(2) Quran (33:43), Khan trans.

(3) Muslim (878).



“King [or Master] of the Day of Judgment.”⁽¹⁾

This verse (Ayah) implies a right to serve justice, and it begs the question, ‘Upon what will judgment be based?’ Fair judgment must be according to a criterion, or standard before accountability can be exacted. There must be some Guidance (Hidayah) upon which human beings will be expected to hold to before being held accountable. This Guidance (Hidayah) comprises holding to what Allah ﷻ made permissible, and abstaining from what He made forbidden.

Notice that Allah ﷻ described the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) with the descriptive word **الدِّينِ**, which is rendered as “Deen” in common English transliteration from which is derived a contract of faith (Iman). It is as if Allah ﷻ is hinting at a comprehensive Guidance (Hidayah) regarding which secular societies are in denial. It is according to this comprehensive religion (Deen) that we will be held accountable.

Allah ﷻ will be the Absolute Owner, King, and Judge on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) when all creation will be held accountable for what they said, and did in this world (Dunya). As the Supreme Legislator, Allah ﷻ revealed Guidance (Hidayah) to mankind through His Messengers to enable them to live by the guidelines that Allah ﷻ chose, and He will judge everyone according to how well they tried to live by those guidelines.

The 2nd, 3rd, and 4th verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah represent Monotheism (Tawheed) of knowledge (Ilm), and the affirmation of Allah ﷻ (Tawheed Al-Ma’rifah wa’l-Ithbat). This includes believing, and affirming Allah’s ﷻ Existence, His Lordship, and His Names, and Attributes.

These three verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah also inspire the hearts of believers (Mu’minun) to continually return to Allah ﷻ with love, which emanates from recognizing the bounties from our Lord, hope from realizing His great Mercy (Rahmah), and apprehension of meeting Him on the day when His Judgment cannot be evaded.

These three verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah also inspire devout Muslims to learn about our Lord, and Sovereign, which leads to formulating absolute belief (Aqeedah), and firm conviction (Yaqaen) of faith (Iman). Knowing Allah ﷻ through His Actions of Lordship, Names, and

⁽¹⁾ Quran (1:4), Al-Haneef trans.

Attributes is the pathway to establish our functional knowledge (Ilm) of Allah ﷻ with sincerity (Ikhlas), love, and truthfulness.

Formulating belief in Allah ﷻ must embody praising Him, and a firm belief in the six articles of faith (Arkan Al-Iman), particularly the belief of the hereafter (Akhirah) with certainty (Yaqeen), and acceptance. The completion of obedience (Atha'at), which begins with knowledge (Ilm), is reliant on absolute compliance to the Revelation with sincerity (Ikhlas), love, and truthfulness. Therefore, improving our understanding of Allah ﷻ increases our submission (Istislam), and obedience (Atha'at) to His Commands.

Amazingly, praising Allah ﷻ based on knowledge (Ilm) qualifies us to discourse with Allah ﷻ while in prayer (Salah). Knowing Allah ﷻ will lead to loving Allah ﷻ, and increasing focus, and pleasure during prayer (Salah). Furthermore, Allah ﷻ will love us because of our love for the pieces of His Revelation, which directly teach us about Him. This is known from the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). The Prophet ﷺ once appointed a man to lead some companions (Sahabah) in the prayers (Salawat), and he would finish every recitation (Tilawah) with chapter (Surah) Al-Ikhlās:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ﴾ ﴿١﴾ ﴿اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ﴾ ﴿٢﴾ ﴿لَمْ يَكِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ﴾ ﴿٣﴾ ﴿وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ﴾
﴿كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ﴾ ﴿٤﴾

“Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him.”⁽¹⁾

The companions (Sahabah) mentioned this to the Prophet ﷺ with concern that this habit was a blameworthy innovation (Bid'ah). The Prophet ﷺ said to them, **“Ask him why he does so.”** They asked him, and he said, **“I do so because chapter (Surah) Al-Ikhlās mentions the qualities of the Beneficent, and I love to recite it (in my prayer).”** The Prophet ﷺ said to them, **“Tell him that Allah loves him.”⁽²⁾**

The next three verses (Ayat) of the Quran exemplify Allah's ﷻ Actions of Lordship, Names, and Attributes, and describe Allah ﷻ in a way that suits His Majesty. Reflecting on these verses inclines the heart towards vast amounts of meaning. The evidence of these virtues was established with the example of chapter (Surah) Al-Ikhlās, as mentioned above. Chapter (Surah) Al-Ikhlās is

(1) Quran (112:1-4), Shakir trans.

(2) Bukhari (7374).

equal to a third of the Quran because it describes Allah ﷻ in a way that suits His Majesty. Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said to his Companions (Sahabah), **“Is it difficult for any of you to recite one-third of the Quran in one night?”** This suggestion was difficult for them, so they said, **“Who among us has the power to do so, O Allah’s Messenger?”** Allah’s Messenger ﷺ replied, **“Allah (the) One, the Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need.’ [chapter (Surah) Al-Ikhas] is equal to one-third of the Quran.”⁽¹⁾**

The verse (Ayah) known as the most significant one in the Quran is the Ayat-ul-Kursi, which presents Allah’s ﷻ Names, and Attributes. Ubay ibn Kaab رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to him, **“O Abu Al-Mundhir, do you know which verse (Ayah) from the Book of Allah that you have learned is greatest?”** He said, **“Allahu! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshiped but He), Al-Hayyul-Qayyum (the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists).”⁽²⁾** The Prophet ﷺ then struck him on the chest, and said, **“I congratulate you on your knowledge, O Abu Al-Mundhir.”⁽³⁾** This Prophetic Narration (Hadith) informs of the high merit of verses (Ayat) which contain knowledge (Ilm) of Allah’s ﷻ Names, and Attributes. This quality is exemplified in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.

The pinnacle, and height of knowledge (Ilm) are to understand Monotheism (Tawheed), and the only worthy occupation in truth is to reflect on the unique Qualities of Allah ﷻ, and to seek His nearness by knowing, understanding, and living by the virtues mentioned in His Names, and Attributes. The task of gaining this knowledge (Ilm) has the highest accolades. Allah ﷻ praises the scholars of these virtues in the Quran:

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ ﴾ (٢٨)

“Of all of Allah’s servants, only the knowledgeable (of His Might) are (truly) in awe of Him.”⁽⁴⁾

From a believer’s (Mu’min) knowledge (Ilm) of Allah ﷻ, His Names, Attributes, Power, and Abilities, originate their piety, righteousness, and fear.

One of the pillars of faith (Arkan Al-Iman) that emanates from belief in Allah ﷻ is the belief in the hereafter (Aakhirah). This is an essential belief, as the acceptance that we will be held accountable in the hereafter (Aakhirah) for everything we say, and do affects how we conduct ourselves in this

(1) Bukhari (5015); see also Bukhari (5013-5014, 6643).

(2) Quran (2:255).

(3) Muslim (1885).

(4) Quran (35:28), Khattab trans.

world (Dunya). Furthermore, acknowledging the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) necessitates accepting that only Allah ﷻ, the Most Just, will be the King, and the Judge on that Day. Because of His Perfect Justice, there will be no appeals against His verdict, no place for maneuvers, false testimonies, rhetoric, or Ilm Al-Kalam. When we are constantly mindful of Allah’s ﷻ eventual decisive Judgment, we can instill piety in our lives, and this mindfulness is amended with our constant refrain to chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah. Mindfulness with the correct understanding is essential to please Allah ﷻ. Therefore, developing, and exercising God-consciousness (Taqwah) in all our affairs is critical. Consequently, we must also seek to avoid His Wrath by avoiding sinful acts, and shunning evil desires. Therefore, to earn Allah’s ﷻ pleasure, we need to perform good deeds sincerely. Mindfulness, and correct action in sincerity (Ikhlas) are only a part of placing material distractions into a healthy balance in our lives. What follows mindfulness is the remembrance that whatever we have in this world (Dunya), will part from us sooner, or later, whether because of our death, or because Allah ﷻ will take it away from us. Balanced remembrance also includes knowing that whatever we will have in the hereafter (Akhirah) will always stay, and we will not die there. Therefore, our efforts should be focused on the prize of permanent gain, rather than the distractions of this world (Dunya). This reality is affirmed when we recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah in prayer (Salah). The Prophet ﷺ reported that Allah ﷻ said, **“When a Muslim recites in prayer (Salah): ‘Maliki Yawmid-Din [The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e., the Day of Resurrection)],’ Allah says, [in one report] ‘My servant has entrusted his affairs to Me.’”**⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ will respond to our words with affirmation because we entrust our worries, anxieties, and concerns about the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah) to Him as an act of worship (Ibadah). This result is a certainty that follows from a correct understanding, speech, and actions, thus hoping for a reward that is everlasting. Hope (Raja’) is one part of the equation of faith (Iman), while another part is fear (Khawf).

The concept of fear (Khawf)

Fearing Allah ﷻ is a positive human quality that can inspire a Muslim to comply with Divine injunctions, once the correct understanding of the injunction has settled into the believer’s (Mu’min) heart. What is meant by fear (Khawf) is the type which motivates toward action, and not despair. For example, if someone has a reasonable suspicion that their house is vulnerable to thieves at night, the fear of consequences may inspire a homeowner to buy deadbolts, and consider surveillance, or a security camera. Likewise, a healthy fear (Khawf) of Allah ﷻ is rational, and precautionary, and not a descent into despair. Wisdom (Hikmah) favors the preparation of the servant before meeting Judgment on a Day which we will certainly all witness. The Prophet ﷺ

(1) Muslim (878).

reported that Allah ﷻ said, **“By My Might, I will not let My servant suffer from fear in two realms or feel safe in two realms. If he feels safe from Me in this world, I will make him feel fear on the Day of Resurrection, but if he fears Me in this world, I will make him feel safe on the Day of Resurrection.”**⁽¹⁾

The more informed a Muslim becomes about Allah ﷻ, and His Perfect Attributes, and All-Wise Acts, the more veneration, and awe we have for Him. The more we admit in humility, the reality of our feeble, and sinful souls, the stronger becomes our fear (Khawf) of Him. The Prophet ﷺ perfectly embodied a genuine rational fear (Khawf) of Allah ﷻ, which reflects the Wisdom (Hikmah) of abeyance of material desires (shahawaat), and vigilance to submit to the Revelation in this life. He said, **“I fear Allah more, and know Allah better, than all of you do.”**⁽²⁾

Surah Al-Fatihah — Section Two: Worship your Lord

Recitation (Tilawah), and contemplation of the first four verses (Ayat) of the chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah (including Basmallah) declares our firm belief in Allah ﷻ, the Lord of all that exists, in a praising context. It also affirms our belief in the hereafter (Aakhirah). Furthermore, we recognize the religion according to which we will be judged on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Hence, we concluded section one of the Mother of Quran (Umm Al-Quran), which comprised uttering Allah’s ﷻ praise, based on knowing Him.

Section two reveals our identity, that we are Allah’s ﷻ servants who want to worship Him Alone, and we recognize our inability to do that without His Help, and Assistance. Therefore, we recite:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

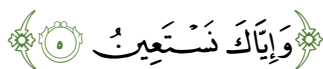
“It is You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help.”⁽³⁾

The statement, “You Alone we worship,” is a form of an urgent appeal that we make to Allah ﷻ to make us amongst those who worship Him Alone, since our worship (Ibadah) is only facilitated by His Permission. We are also showing humility by admitting our inability to perform worship (Ibadah) through our independent power. Hence, we ask Allah ﷻ to support, and aid us in worship (Ibadah).

(1) Ibn al-Mubarak, Az-Zuhd (157), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani ؒ.

(2) Muslim (20).

(3) Quran (1:5).



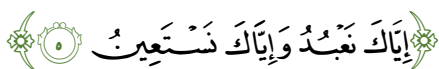
“And You Alone we ask for help.”⁽¹⁾

This statement is replete with heartfelt feeling when we recite it in prayer (Salah), as though we see Allah ﷻ, knowing that He sees us in a manner that suits His Majesty.

The Prophet ﷺ reported that Allah ﷻ said, **“When [my servant] says: ‘Iyakka na’budu wa Iyakka nasta’in (You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help for each and everything),’ Allah says: ‘This is between Me and My servant, and he will have what he asked for.’”⁽²⁾**

It is a great favor from Allah ﷻ when His servant is allowed to speak to Him, and He responds in a way that suits His Majestic Greatness. Therefore, it is an honor, and a Divine gift to talk to Him about our needs, to affirm servitude, and request His Divine Aid to help us worship Him.

The fifth verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah emphasizes that worship (Ibadah) is Allah’s ﷻ exclusive right, and that seeking help as in worship should not be from anyone else except Allah ﷻ. Hence the verse (Ayah) stated:



“It is You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help.”⁽³⁾

The recitation (Tilawah) of this verse (Ayah) thoughtfully is an urgent appeal. This is marked by a change in tone compared to the previous four verses (Ayat). Fifth verse (Ayah) refers to Allah ﷻ using the second person style after having praised Him due to His Perfect Names, Attributes, and Actions of Lordship in a third person address. Since our knowledge (Ilm) of Allah ﷻ increased after notating, and reflecting on His Names, and Attributes in the initial three verses (Ayat) of this chapter (Surah), we thus enriched our praise of Allah ﷻ, and attained the quality of excellence (Ihsan) in our observation of the prayer (Salah). The tone of the fifth verse (Ayah) indicates that the servants have matured to a level that they address their Lord directly, and feel the presence of Him in their hearts. Therefore, the fifth verse (Ayah) isolates Allah ﷻ in a direct address:

(1) Quran (1:5).

(2) Muslim (878).

(3) Quran (1:5).

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ﴾

“You Alone we worship.”⁽¹⁾

Ibn Uthaymeen rahimahullah said that this address is a unique grammatical construct because the object of worship (Ibadah) comes before the verb. In Arabic grammar, when the direct object precedes the verb, the meaning of the verb is restricted, and exclusive to the noun. In the construct of this verse (Ayah), the syntactical order beginning with the pronoun ‘Iyyaka,’ implies absolute restriction of worship (Ibadah) for Allah ﷻ. In English, this is interpreted with the adjunctive pronoun phrase, ‘You Alone.’ The absolute restriction of the verb to the preceding pronoun ‘Iyakka,’ rules that another object at the end of the sentence is impossibility. It means worship (Ibadah) must be directed exclusively to Allah ﷻ with no partners. The two-word phrase eloquently, and technically explicates the ruling that it is impermissible to deify any other entity, for Allah ﷻ has explicitly informed us that He has no partners. Believers (Mu’minun) must, therefore, pray to Allah ﷻ Alone, and love, fear, and obey Him with utter devotion. This is stressed because the purpose of our creation is to worship Allah ﷻ, and to actualize, secure, and protect pure monotheistic worship (Tawheed Al-Ibadah). Allah ﷻ said:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

“I only created Jinn and human beings to worship me.”⁽²⁾

The word ‘worship’ includes doing everything Allah ﷻ commands, and avoiding everything He forbids. Whoever is not acting in accordance with what Allah ﷻ commanded to do, and avoiding what He has forbidden to do, then this person is not a true worshiper (Aabid), and servant of Allah ﷻ. A worshiper (Aabid) is someone who obeys, and worships Allah ﷻ in whatever He has legislated for them. Worship (Ibadah) requires that mankind carries out everything they are commanded to do, and avoid everything they are forbidden from doing. However, it is not possible to fulfill all these duties without the Help, and Assistance of Allah ﷻ.

﴿وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

(1) Quran (1:5), Ünal trans.

(2) Quran (51:56), Kaskas trans.

“and You Alone we ask for help.”⁽¹⁾

This second part of the verse (Ayah) is another example of restriction, and exclusivity of attribution because the pronoun comes before the verb. Hence, we cannot add any other noun, or object at the end of the sentence. The explanation of this restricted attribute is that Muslims do not seek help from anything in creation to the degree of worship (Ibadah), except imploring from Allah ﷻ. Asking assistance from creation is acceptable if it is aid within the creation’s capability, while remaining aware that all assistance originates from Allah ﷻ. Everything that happens is according to His Divine Will, by His Permission, and through His Empowerment.

The act of seeking help, and assistance is of **two types**. The **first type** is to request assistance, while entrusting all affairs to the one you ask from. This is asking to the degree of worship (Ibadah). For example, a woman, or man will rely entirely on Allah ﷻ, and realize that any result sought will not come from individual power, or capability. This type of seeking help is specific for imploring Allah ﷻ, and He Alone deserves this type of worship (Ibadah).

The **second type** of asking for help is to request help, or cooperation in a material, or abstract task within the means normally accomplishable by humans. This asking is permissible if the sought person is living, present, and capable of doing what is asked, and the seeking of aid is in an affair that is permissible in the specific time, and situation of asking. These qualities classify the seeking of aid as lesser than a form of worship (Ibadah).

However, this second type of asking would be impermissible if it would be for help from someone dead in his grave, and this is prohibited because it is asking of creation in a manner that attributes worship (Ibadah) of creation in association with Allah ﷻ, or in other words, polytheism (shirk). Similarly, suppose someone seeks the help of another person who is not present, such as believing that someone physically distant could help with a material, or abstract action which requires proximity. In that case, this is major polytheism (shirk al-akbar) because the person whose help is sought is not capable of helping the seeker, and the seeker is attributing to the creation something that can only be achieved by Allah ﷻ.

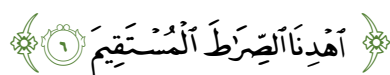
The precautionary position of one who seeks assistance is not to ask anyone for any help, unless necessary, and it is known that the person would be capable of providing help in something permissible. The most meritorious position is to seek help in everything from Allah ﷻ, even in issues that can be fulfilled permissibly by asking for help from a person.

(1) Quran (1:5).

The distinction between an act which reaches the degree of worship (Ibadah), and a common act in the material realm of creation is significant. An act that reaches the level of worship (Ibadah) must be presented only to Allah ﷻ. The signs of this act are its offering of complete humility. An example of this is in the prayer (Salah), when the believers (Mu'minin) place the most honored part of their bodies (their faces) at the level of their feet in humility to Allah ﷻ. They prostrate on the ground, possibly covering their foreheads with dirt in humbleness before Allah ﷻ. 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 (Mu'minin) accepting this because this type of humility is a form of worship (Ibadah) specifically for Allah ﷻ Alone. Humility is also a sign of asking for help from Allah ﷻ as an act of worship (Ibadah). Allah ﷻ combines the act of worship (Ibadah), and the act of seeking aid, or reliance in many places of the Noble Quran. The symbiosis of the two is that we cannot establish prayer (Salah) entirely, except with the Help of Allah ﷻ by first entrusting all affairs to Him, and relying on Him.

Surah Al-Fatihah — Section Three: Three types of people

Guidance (Hidayah) must be the higher aim (Maqsid), and the aspiration of the believing Muslims since it is the leading cause to success in this world (Dunya), and the means to inherit the everlasting abode in Paradise (Jannah). Hence, Muslims make this supplication (Du'a) in the sixth verse (Ayah) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah repeatedly:



“Guide us to the straight way (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).”⁽¹⁾

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah transitions from the introduction of praising Allah ﷻ in the first four verses (Ayat), and then in the fifth verse (Ayah), we identify ourselves as Allah’s ﷻ servants, who seek His Help in praising Him. This is the etiquette that must precede a request a servant may make, and Allah ﷻ revealed that the paragon of request is the request for Divine Guidance (Hidayah). This is the station of the believing Muslims who submit to Allah’s ﷻ Divine Decree in all affairs, and acknowledge that He creates all that we do. The Guidance (Hidayah) in reference is the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), which is based on the understanding of the first three generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin). Therefore, we must strive to understand, and implement this Guidance (Hidayah) the way the first three generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin) exemplified, and beg Allah ﷻ for steadfastness (Istiqaamah) in striving to our utmost to follow its pristine teachings. In

(1) Quran (1:6), Khan trans.

addition, we must always pray to Allah ﷻ for specific Guidance (Hidayah) in all situations of our lives, and pray that He keeps us steadfast upon the truth (Haqq).

Furthermore, we urgently appeal to Allah ﷻ to guide us to the Guidance (Hidayah) the Messenger ﷺ brought, which is the correct, and straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem). This path has no crookedness, or deviation, but is assailed with insinuations, and provocations by Shaytan (Satan), and his agents.

When we ask for the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem), we ask for **two types of Guidance (Hidayah)**. The **first type** is the Guidance (Hidayah) of direction, the proper Guidance (Hidayah), and beneficial knowledge (Ilm) of the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), based on the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin). The **second type** is the Guidance (Hidayah) of success in following this knowledge (Ilm). Jabir bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ drew a line (in the sand), and then he drew two lines to the right, and two to its left. Then he put his hand on the middle line, and said, **“This is the path of Allah.”** Then he recited the verse (Ayah):

﴿وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ﴾ (103)

“And verily, this (i.e. Allah’s Commandments) is My straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem), so follow it, and do not follow (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His path...”⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

The straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) is the path of the Messenger ﷺ who conveyed Allah’s ﷻ Message. This path requires knowing, and learning about the Messenger ﷺ, the message he brought, his method, and the straight path of his Tradition (Sunnah).

When we recite this verse (Ayah) with a heartfelt feeling in prayer (Salah), Allah ﷻ answers our supplication (Du’a) by saying, **“This is for My servant, and he will have what he asked for.”⁽³⁾** It means that the one who intends to follow the path of the Messenger ﷺ, and prays to stay on it, will be given ease upon the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah).

(1) Ibn Majah (11), graded weak (Dhaef); Tabrizi, Mishkat Al-Masabih (1/160); the report by ibn Masud رضي الله عنه in Ahmad (4423), is graded authentic (Sahih) by Ahmad Shakir رحمه الله.

(2) Quran (6:153).

(3) Muslim (878).

This vital request, which Allah ﷻ chose for us to make at least seventeen times every day in the obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat), emphasizes the great significance of Guidance (Hidayah) to our success. Guidance (Hidayah) is the life of the soul, illumination of the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem), and clarification. Without Guidance (Hidayah), the way we need to follow in life is ambiguous, and can lead to needless difficulties, and even destruction. Guidance (Hidayah) brings ease to fulfilling what Allah ﷻ commands, and He did not abandon us to guesswork, and philosophy to discerning Guidance (Hidayah). Rather, He gave us the gift of the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) to clarify the Legislative Commands.

Allah’s ﷻ Legislative Commands are one of the **two types of Commands from Allah ﷻ**. The **first type** of Legislative Commands is those which the human, and Jinn electively obey, or disobey, such as accepting Islam, praying five times a day, fasting in Ramadan, refraining from committing adultery (Zinah), etc. Our appeal to Allah ﷻ for Guidance (Hidayah) during prayer (Salah) intends clarification, adherence, and steadfastness (Istiqamah) upon His Legislative Commands.

Allah’s ﷻ Creational Commands refer to the **second type** of command regarding which the human, the Jinn, and the rest of creation has no choice, but to follow because these Commands are ordained, and written, so they shall be followed. Regarding this type of Command, we can only be patient, and through acquiescence, and acceptance, hope for reward from the Command, since anything that Allah ﷻ decrees has a perfect outcome because His Knowledge (Ilm) is Eternal, and His Wisdom (Hikmah) is Perfect.

Given this differentiation in the types of Allah’s ﷻ Commands, it becomes clear that the Guidance (Hidayah) the believer (Mu’min) requests, and when supplicating **“Guide us to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem),”** is Guidance (Hidayah) to accept His Legislative Commands, since we have been given the liberty to choose submission in this affair. The Guidance (Hidayah) of direction is in the beneficial knowledge (Ilm) of the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), based on the understanding of the first three praised generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin) of Muslims. The Guidance (Hidayah) of success is to receive Allah’s ﷻ Help, and Support in following this beneficial knowledge (Ilm).

Variant responses to Guidance (Hidayah)

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

“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).”⁽¹⁾

The above two verses (Ayat) illustrate that humanity is divided into **three categories** by the specific reaction to Allah’s ﷻ Legislative Will:

1. The guided (Al-Muhtadeen), who submit in Islam.
2. The misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen).
3. The ones who earn Allah’s ﷻ Anger (Al-Ghadab).

While this categorization is summarized in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, later sections in the text of the Quran elucidate each category of people in tales from the past, present, and future until the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah).

The guided (Al-Muhtadeen) are those who are led towards Islam, recognize it to be the truth (Haqq), and accept it as their religion (Deen). Furthermore, the guided (Al-Muhtadeen) strive to be steadfast on the path amongst the believing Muslim community (Ummah). Allah ﷻ promised to aid the guided (Al-Muhtadeen) in this world (Dunya) against their enemies, and promised them Paradise (Jannah), accompanying those upon whom Allah ﷻ bestowed His Grace—the Prophets, the martyrs (Shuhudah), the truthful (Sidiqun), and the righteous (Salihin).

﴿وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ

﴿أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger—those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the Prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth (Sidiqun), the martyrs (Shuhudah) and the righteous (Salihin). And excellent are those as companions.”⁽²⁾

(1) Quran (1:7), Khan trans.

(2) Quran (4:69), Sahih International trans.

The misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen) deviated from the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) out of ignorance (jahiliyah). They include people who do not know the truth (Haqq), and they do not strive to find it. The misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen) turned away from seeking to know Allah ﷻ, and how to worship Him, and they innovated new, and strange ways to worship Him. Hence, they are misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen). The main innovators among mankind are those who have abandoned, changed, or distorted the Revelation, such as the Christians, and Jews. The explanation of this in detail requires more attention. However, evidence of this deviation exists in the thousands of versions of ‘scripture’ that the Christians disseminate, replete with hundreds of thousands of contradictory claims, and distortions.⁽¹⁾ Allah ﷻ referred to distortions (Tahreef), and falsehoods (bathil) introduced into Monotheism (Tawheed) by this community before Muhammad ﷺ:

﴿يَتَاهَلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَعْلَمُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَتَأْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا﴾

“People of the Book, do not be excessive in your beliefs, and do not say anything about God except the Truth. The Messiah, Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), is the Messenger of God; His word conveyed to Maryam (Mary) and a spirit from Him. Believe in God and His Messengers and do not say ‘three.’ Stop this for your own good. God is only one God.”⁽²⁾

Adiy bin Hatim رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ in reference to those ‘those who have gone astray,’ said, **“The Christians have strayed.”⁽³⁾**

The Christians were ignorant, not knowing the truth, because of their abuse of the philosophic, and interpretive methods of approaching scripture, so misguidance was the description that befits them. The Guidance (Hidayah) without obfuscation was made available to them after the Prophethood (Nabuwwah) of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, but they rejected him, ignored the knowledge (Ilm) he brought, and continued with the invented traditions of their ancestors. Hence, they earned the appellation of the misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen). The same ruling applies to all ignorant people who refuse the truth (Haqq), which the Messengers brought from Allah ﷻ as Guidance (Hidayah) to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem). The electively ignorant prefer the misguidance of their

(1) Bible.com <https://www.bible.com/versions>

(2) Quran (4:171), Kaskas trans.

(3) At-Tirmizi (2953, 2954).

ancestors, and predecessors over Divine Guidance (Hidayah), which is something Allah ﷻ warned against. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿لَا تَقْلُوبُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ

سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٧٧﴾

“Do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray in times gone by, and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the Right Path.”⁽¹⁾

The last two verses (Ayat) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah elaborate on the path of grace contrasted to the path of misguidance. Therefore, the guided (Al-Muhtadeen) are those upon whom Allah ﷻ bestowed His favor, grace, and bounty, and clarified the path of grace. It is crucial to follow in the footsteps of those who sought to please Allah ﷻ, for we intend to share their worldview, and goals. We must make it our primary goal to follow the noble believers (Mu'minun) who preceded us—the guided group (Al-Muhtadeen). They are those who embraced the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) before us. Among them are the numerous Prophets sent by Allah ﷻ to preach the pure message of Monotheism (Tawheed), and their honorable followers, the martyrs (Shuhudah), the truthful (Siqidun), and the righteous (Salihin).

Those who earned Allah's ﷻ Wrath, and Anger (Al-Ghadab) followed another way, leading away from the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) out of arrogance, and disobedience, while knowing the truth (Haqq). They received the truth (Haqq) of the Revelation, and yet reject it after they have recognized it. Consequently, they earned anger upon themselves, and the head of this group are the followers of Judaism. One piece of evidence for this is the Statement of Allah ﷻ:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرِّ مِمَّنْ ذَلِكُمْ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ أُولَئِكَ

شَرُّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٦٠﴾

“Say (O Muhammad SAW to the people of the Scripture): ‘Shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding the recompense from Allah: those (Jews) who incurred the Curse of Allah and His Wrath, those of whom (some) He transformed into monkeys and swines, those who worshiped Taghoot (false deities); such are worse in rank (on the Day of

⁽¹⁾ Quran (5:77), Khan trans.

Resurrection in the Hellfire), and far more astray from the Right Path (in the life of this world).”⁽¹⁾

The finality of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a plea to Allah ﷻ to seek refuge with Him from embracing the ways of those who earn His Anger. ‘Al-Ghadab’ (Anger) is mentioned in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and it is one of Allah’s ﷻ Attributes. It is the opposite of pleasure (Ridhah), but we must confirm this Attribute upon our Lord in a manner that suits His Majesty. Adiy bin Hatim رضي الله عنه narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“The Jews are those who Allah is wrath with, and the Christians have strayed.”⁽²⁾** The Prophet ﷺ also said, **“Allah, Most High, is angered by the shameless obscene person.”⁽³⁾** There is nothing more shameless than rejecting the bounties which Allah ﷻ revealed. Allah’s ﷻ Anger (Al-Ghadab) is specified to the Jews in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah because the Jews knew the truth (Haqq), but rejected it in arrogance. Then they transgressed further by deliberately attributing falsehood (bathil) as Revelation, and took pride in their obstinacy. Abdullah bin Umar رضي الله عنه reported, **“Zaid bin Amr bin Nufail went to Sham enquiring about a True Religion to follow. He met a Jewish religious scholar and asked him about their religion. He said, ‘I intend to embrace your religion, so tell me something about it.’ The Jew said, ‘You will not embrace our religion unless you receive your share of Allah’s Anger.”⁽⁴⁾**

However, Allah’s Anger (Al-Ghadab) rightfully applies to everyone who recognizes the truth (Haqq) of the Revelation, but insolently rejects it. Therefore, the Anger (Al-Ghadab) of Allah ﷻ is indicated in chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah upon the Jews of that time, and as a descriptor befitting anyone who follows the obscene pattern of rejecting the Revelation. Allah ﷻ said:

بِسْمَا أَشْتَرُوا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَعِيًّا أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

“How bad is that for which they have sold their ownselves, that they should disbelieve in that which Allah has revealed (the Quran), grudging that Allah should reveal of His Grace unto whom He will of His servants. So they have drawn on themselves wrath upon wrath. And for the disbelievers, there is disgracing torment.”⁽⁵⁾

(1) Quran (5:60).

(2) Tirmizi (2953, 2954).

(3) Tirmizi (2002).

(4) Bukhari (3827).

(5) Quran (2:90), Khan trans.

And Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِنْ ذَلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتِ أُولَئِكَ شَرٌّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ﴾ (٦٠)

“Say: ‘Shall I inform you of worse than this as a punishment from God Those whom God cursed and became angry at them, and He made from them apes and pigs and servants of evil. Those have a worst place and are more astray from the right path.’”⁽¹⁾

Allah ﷻ also said:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيَنَاهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ﴾ (١٥٢)

“Indeed, those who took the calf [for worship] will obtain anger from their Lord and humiliation in the life of this world.”⁽²⁾

Since we all must strive to be amongst the righteous (Salihin) who receive bestowed Divine gifts, we should understand the answer to two questions: What is meant by the bestowed bounty (Naimah)? And who are those people who inherit this bounty? The most reliable method to explain the Quran is to look for the interpretation of a particular verse (Ayah) by employing other verses (Ayat) in another chapter (Surah). This is the method used above in interpreting the meaning of those who earn Allah’s Anger, and Wrath (Al-Ghadab), and this method is the reliable path to understanding the bestowed bounty (Naimah).

Bestowed bounty (Naimah)

The common opinion regarding bestowed bounty (Naimah) is what is apparent in visible bounties, and blessings such as physical health, comfort, wealth, status, children, and lifestyle. The reality of ‘Naimah’ is Guidance (Hidayah) to Islam as a religion (Deen), and the obedience (Atha’at) to Allah ﷻ, and His Messenger ﷺ. Allah ﷻ said:

﴿الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا﴾ (٣)

(1) Quran (5:60), The Monotheistic Group (2011) trans.

(2) Quran (7:152), Sahih International trans.

“Today, I have perfected your religious law for you, and have bestowed upon you the full measure of My blessings, and willed that self-surrender unto Me shall be their religion.”⁽¹⁾

It is a great blessing, and a bounty (Naimah) from Allah ﷻ to be guided to Him, and His Messenger ﷺ.

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ
أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger—those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the Prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth (Sidiquun), the martyrs (Shuhudah), and the righteous (Salihin). And excellent are those as companions.”⁽²⁾

The inheritors of bounty (Naimah)

Bounty (Naimah) from Allah ﷻ is identifiable, and Muslims who want success must strive to follow the example of those upon whom Allah ﷻ promised bounty (Naimah), so we can accompany them in etiquette in this world (Dunya), and reward in Paradise (Jannah), and those are the Prophets, and Messengers. These are the Divinely appointed Messengers of Allah ﷻ. According to some traditions, they were estimated to be 124,000.⁽³⁾ The inheritors of bounty (Naimah) also include the truthful people (Sidiquun). The truthful person (Siddiq) is someone who not only is truthful in his speech, but his actions also conform to his speech. It is a higher level of truthfulness that embodies speech as well as actions.

The inheritors of bounty (Naimah) also include martyrs (Shuhudah). Allah ﷻ has elevated their souls, and they have transcended beyond the material realm such that they witness everything. They witness the realities of existence, and the actions of human beings. The inheritors also include the pious, and the righteous (Salihin). The righteous (Salihin) are individuals who not only believe with their heart, but they translate this belief into action, and perform good deeds. Righteousness is comprehensive, inclusive of belief, and meritorious action. What is observable of the inheritors is

(1) Quran (5:3), Asad trans.

(2) Quran (4:69), Sahih International trans.

(3) Ibn Hibban (361), graded authentic (Sahih) by Abu Hatim ؒ, graded very weak (Dhaeef) by Adh-Dhahabi ؒ; Tafsir Ibn Hibban by another chain (963); while the number of Prophets is unconfirmed, we must confirm, and believe in all of them.

that they are normalized models of individuals who recognize that their Lord is One, they know Him by His beautiful Names, and they expect accountability for their actions, and beliefs. This formula is one of the keys of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.

Final reminder

The Quran often reminds the guided (Al-Muhtadeen) through parables of the two deviant groups amongst humanity. Allah ﷻ reminds us of the punishment they suffered in this world (Dunya), and the promise of fitting justice on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Allah ﷻ cites many examples in the Quran, such as those of Ad, Thamud, Madian, the people of Prophet Ibrahim عليه السلام (Abraham), and Lut. Allah ﷻ warns the guided group (Al-Muhtadeen) against falling into errors in judgment, or creed, such as rejecting the Messengers, and preferring the ways of personal desires (shahawaat) over the Divine Guidance (Hidayah). The people of the Quran also remember the delight which awaits the guided (Al-Muhtadeen) for striving to stay away from the path of those who earned Allah's ﷻ Anger (Al-Ghadab), and the deviant method of the misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen).

The guided group (Al-Muhtadeen) must never forget the delight they will receive due to their adherence to the commands, and avoidance of the prohibitions which Allah ﷻ revealed in the Quran. The objective of our submission is Allah's ﷻ favor, grace, blessings, and Guidance (Hidayah) in this world (Dunya), and the company of the Prophets, martyrs (Shuhudah), truthful (Sidiquun), and the righteous (Salihin) in Paradise (Jannah). Part of the method in achieving this objective is regular contemplation of the consequences of misguidance, which is the ultimate Anger, and Wrath (Al-Ghadab) of Allah ﷻ.

Saying 'Ameen' after reciting Al-Fatihah

Pronouncing 'Ameen' after reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is not the completion of a verse (Ayah) of the Quran. 'Ameen' is not even an Arabic word, and so it should be separated from the final words of Al-Fatihah by a short pause,⁽¹⁾ to avoid misrepresenting the chapter (Surah). However, it is a sincere invocation, which our scholars (Ulama) say means Allah ﷻ responds to our supplication (Du'a).

Abu Zuhair an-Numairi رضي الله عنه reported, **“We once went with the Messenger of Allah at night, and passed by a person who was sincerely requesting (Allah) in his supplication (Du'a). So the Prophet stood listening to him, and said: ‘His (request) will of a surety be answered, if he seals it.’ A person among us said: ‘With what should he seal it?’ He responded: ‘With Ameen,**

(1) Tafsir Al-Baghawi, Surah Al-Fatihah.

because if he seals it with Ameen, it will of a surety be answered.’ So the man went to the person (making the supplication) and said: ‘Seal it off, O so-and-so, with Ameen, and rejoice (that it has been accepted).’⁽¹⁾

The one who says ‘Ameen’ after hearing a supplication (Du’a), or the recitation (Tilawah) of Al-Fatihah, has equivalence with the one who supplicates, or recites. This is understood because of the Statement of Allah ﷻ:

﴿ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَن سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَيَّ أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَيَّ قُلُوبَهُمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴾ ﴿٨٨﴾ ﴿ قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبَت دَعْوَتُكُمَا فَاسْتَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَانَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ ﴿٨٩﴾

“Musa (Moses) prayed, ‘Our Lord! You have granted Fir’aun (Pharaoh) and his chiefs luxuries and riches in this worldly life, (which they abused) to lead people astray from Your Way! Our Lord, destroy their riches and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful punishment.’ Allah responded [to Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)], ‘Your prayer is answered! So be steadfast and do not follow the way of those who do not know.’⁽²⁾

Notice in the first verse (Ayah) above where Allah ﷻ stated that the supplicant was Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses). However, in the next verse (Ayah), Allah ﷻ said to both the Prophets that their supplications (Ad’iyah) were answered. Therefore, scholars (Ulama) justified the mention of both supplications (Ad’iyah), although the supplicant was only Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses), but concluded that his brother, Prophet Harun عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Aaron), had said ‘Ameen’ after his supplication (Du’a). Ibn Hajar رحمه explained, “Saying ‘Ameen’ is like summing up what has been asked for in detail. So the one who offered supplication (Du’a) explained what he sought in detail by saying “Ihdina as-Siraat Al-Mustaqeem (Guide us to the straight path)...” and the one who says ‘Ameen’ says a single word that includes everything.”⁽³⁾

The single word ‘Ameen’ may have immense virtues. Abu Hurairah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said, “When the Imam says ‘Ameen,’ then you should all say ‘Ameen,’ for the Angels say ‘Ameen’ at that time, and he whose ‘Ameen’ coincides with the ‘Ameen’ of the Angels, all his

(1) Abu Dawud (938), graded good (Hasan) by As-Suyuyti رحمه.

(2) Quran (10:88-89), Khattab trans.

(3) Fath al-Bari (2/307).

past sins will be forgiven.”⁽¹⁾ These virtues of the ‘Ameen’ were uncommon among the nations of believers in history. The ‘Ameen’ did not exist for the people of Monotheism (Tawheed) from the other nations, except possibly, the nation of Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses), if the following unique Prophetic Narration (Hadith) is authentic (Sahih). Anas bin Malik رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Allah has given my nation three things that were not given to any nation before them: The Salam, which is the greeting of the inhabitants of Paradise (Jannah), the rows of the Angels, and the Ameen, which was only previously given to Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron).”**⁽²⁾ The status of this Prophetic Narration (Hadith) may be questionable, despite the content being common knowledge. However, the resulting meaning is that the Jewish community, which remains after the time of Prophet Musa عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام (Moses), has jealousy of the Muslims for the use of ‘Ameen,’ either because the Jewish had the habit, and lost it, or were never given the privilege. Aishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“The Jews do not envy you for anything more than they envy you for the Salam and (saying) Ameen.”**⁽³⁾ The unique virtues of the ‘Ameen’ remind the Muslims of the special privilege we have in the body of Al-Fatihah, and should be a call to return to the contemplation of the meaning in the Mother of Quran (Umm Al-Quran), which is chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah.



(1) Bukhari (780, 6402), Muslim (915-920).

(2) Al-Hakim At-Tirmizi in Nawadir al-Usul.

(3) Ibn Majah (856). Al-Adab Al-Mufrad (88), authentic (Sahih) by Al-Albani رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. See also Ibn Majah (857).

Conclusion



Al-Fatihah is the first, and most important chapter (Surah) in the Quran. Many Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith) indicate the status of Al-Fatihah as the best chapter (Surah) of the Quran.⁽¹⁾ Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is also the flagship of the memorization (Hifdh) of every Muslim because it is an essential element of daily prayers (Salawat). Without chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, prayer (Salah) is unacceptable, and is a transgression against Allah ﷻ. It is a distinction between faith (Iman), and disbelief (kufr). Jabir bin Abdullah رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“Between a man and polytheism (shirk) and disbelief (kufr), there stands his giving up the prayer (Salah).”**⁽²⁾

The unique position of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah makes it the commencement of the day with its recitation (Tilawah) at the start of morning prayer (Salat Al-Fajr), and also places it as the vanguard of recitation (Tilawah) of any portion of the Quran, standing alone as a short Makki⁽³⁾ chapter (Surah) before several long Madani chapters (Suwar). The symbolic meaning of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah at the beginning of the Quran prefaces the Quran, as Guidance (Hidayah) that caters to people who seek the truth (Haqq). The final verse (Ayah) of this chapter (Surah) is very powerful in this regard, as the reciters ask Allah ﷻ to guide them to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) of the righteous believers (Mu'minun). There is no doubt that it is one of the most important chapters (Suwar) in the Quran, and we would be well-served to memorize it, and recite it often.

Executional steps

Understanding, and reflection upon chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah must translate into executional steps, as it is meant to actively guide a believer (Mu'min). This is the benefit of the higher aim-based exegesis (Maqasidic Tafsir). After beginning with knowledge of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, it is time to harvest understanding into executional action. Undoubtedly, chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah has a massive impact on the everyday life of a Muslim. It is an anchor of prayer (Salah), and effectively, one of the pillars of Islam (Arkan Al-Islam).

Reflection upon chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah will help us identify the concentric, semantic, and fundamental focus, which is necessary to carry out worship (Ibadah). Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah

(1) Nasa'i, Al-Kubra (8001), Abu Rumaysah trans.; Ibn Hibban (774), authentic (Sahih) by Shaykh Al-Khorasan رحمته الله; Al-Hakim (2056).

(2) Muslim (246, 247).

(3) The evidence is in Quran (15:87) which is a Makki verse (Ayah).

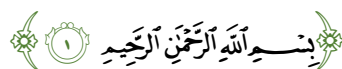
obliges us to be reminded of these essentials at least seventeen times a day during our obligatory prayers (Fard Salawat). And by identifying the most important, we will recognize the less important. Then, we can eliminate the less important, the redundant, and the material distractions, and establish a peaceful flow of daily activities.

Thus, the beauty of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatiḥah is in its comprehensive summary of the message of the entire Quran. Each time we recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatiḥah, whether during, or out of the prayer (Salah), it should be a reminder of the **three fundamentals of faith (Iman)**, for which the Quran was revealed, and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was sent to all of mankind: belief in Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Akhirah), and the Divine Guidance (Hidayah).

Effective thoughts

When we recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatiḥah, whether in prayer (Salah), or outside the prayer (Salah), we should plan to formulate the following **effective thoughts**:

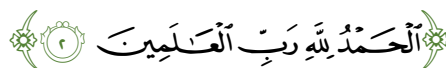
1. When we say:



“In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.”⁽¹⁾

- We should resolve in our hearts our poverty, and desperate need to submit to Allah ﷻ in manifest dependence.
- We ask Allah ﷻ to accompany us, and aid us throughout nascent undertakings.

2. When we say:



“All praise is to Allah, the Lord of the creation.”⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Quran (1:1).

⁽²⁾ Quran (1:2), Haque trans.

- We immediately affirm that Allah ﷻ exists. He is the Creator of everything, the Sovereign, and the Sustainer of everyone, human, or Jinn.
- We affirm that Allah ﷻ is the one who bestowed upon every individual everything of material, knowledge, wealth, children, and health. Therefore, His bounties inspire love, and praise of Him with the best praises, since He deserves all the praises, and thanks.
- We affirm that the best way to praise Allah ﷻ is to utter His Names, and Attributes.

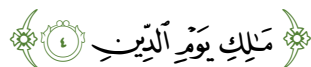
3. When we say:



“The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”⁽¹⁾

- We invoke two of Allah’s ﷻ beautiful Names that imply His Mercy (Rahmah), and we recall the immeasurable expanse of Allah’s ﷻ Mercy (Rahmah). This should fill our hearts with hope in Him to forgive our shortcomings, and sins.

4. When we say:



“The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e., the Day of Resurrection).”⁽²⁾

- Upon mentioning the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), we cultivate effective fear (Khawf), especially if we can visualize a scene of the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), as understood from the Quran, and Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). This fear (Khawf) should be productive, which means it resolves the heart to submit, and comply with Allah’s ﷻ Commands. Productive fear inspires toward the Guidance (Hidayah) of the Islamic Legislative Law (Shariah), the religion which the Messengers, and Prophets conveyed to us. Hence, in the next verse (Ayah), we declare our identity as Allah’s ﷻ servants.

(1) Quran (1:3).

(2) Quran (1:4), Khan trans.

5. When we say:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾

“You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).”⁽¹⁾

- We reflect upon, and galvanize our chosen identity as Allah’s ﷻ servants, and we recognize that we cannot submit in worship (Ibadah), and need by our independent power. We desperately need Allah’s ﷻ Aid, and Support.

6. When we say:

﴿اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ﴾

“Guide us to the straight way (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).”⁽²⁾

- We make an urgent appeal to Allah ﷻ to bestow upon us the only thing He instructed us to ask Him for when reciting chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, which is Guidance (Hidayah). Furthermore, we implore Him for **two types of Guidance** related to His Legislative Commands. **First**, to obtain the knowledge (Ilm) of the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah), based on the understanding of the first three generations (as-Salaf us-Salihin). **Second** is to obtain Guidance (Hidayah) in complying with this knowledge (Ilm).

7. When we say:

﴿صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ﴾

“The Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray.”⁽³⁾

- We visualize traversing a straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem), or a road behind the Prophets, Messengers, truthful (Sidiqu), righteous (Salihin), and martyrs (Shuhudah), who we hope to

(1) Quran (1:5), Khan trans.

(2) Quran (1:6), Khan trans.

(3) Quran (1:7), Khattab trans.

accompany in Paradise (Jannah). We steel ourselves against divergence from the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem) in the manner of the misguided (Al-Mukadhibeen), and those who earned Allah's ﷻ Wrath, and Anger (Al-Ghadab). We ask Allah ﷻ not to make us among these two latter groups.

Twelve practical lessons

The following lessons are centered on the concentric of Islam, and can be learned every time we recite chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah:

1. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah reminds us always to seek Allah's ﷻ Support when we are about to initiate any act of worship (Ibadah).
2. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us about Allah's ﷻ Actions of Lordship as the Creator, the Sovereign, the Giver of life, and death. Consequently, He is the One worthy of all praise, and thanks.
3. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah reminds us of Allah's ﷻ Names, and Attributes, in particular His Mercy (Rahmah), and Justice (Adl).
4. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is a constant reminder of the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and the recompense of our deeds.
5. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah encourages us to perform righteous actions, and discourages us from committing sins.
6. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah reminds us to identify ourselves as Allah's ﷻ servants with His Support.
7. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us to ask Allah ﷻ Alone, humble ourselves, and worship Him Alone, and to put our trust, and reliance on Him Alone.
8. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us to persevere in asking Allah ﷻ for Guidance (Hidayah) to the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).
9. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah directs us to learn about those who went astray, and those who earned Allah's ﷻ Anger (Al-Ghadab).

10. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us about the past nations—Jews, and Christian in particular. We take warning of falling into the same acts of transgression, and misguidance that they indulged.
11. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us to strive to gain the company of the Prophets, the truthful (Sidiquun), the martyrs (Shuhudah), and the righteous (Salihin) by following their footsteps on the straight path (Sirat Al-Mustaqeem).
12. Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah teaches us to seek refuge with Allah ﷻ, and not to fall into the traps of those who earned Allah’s ﷻ Anger (Al-Ghadab), and wallowed in misguidance.

Focus on sincerity (Ikhlas), and adherence

Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah identifies the most important duties, and essential actions in our lives: believing in Allah ﷻ, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and Guidance (Hidayah).

Allah ﷻ blessed us with the asset that is our transient life in this world (Dunya)—it is our capital. The successful are those who channel their resources to earn the everlasting abode of Paradise (Jannah) in the hereafter (Aakhirah). We must focus everything on setting right our religion (Deen), which will serve as a guardian of our belief in Allah ﷻ, and advance our certainty (Yaqeen) in the hereafter (Aakhirah).

The following supplication (Du’a) of the Prophet ﷺ focuses on the three essential dimensions of faith (Iman) that are concentric in Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and consequently, all of the Quran: believing in Allah ﷻ, the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), and Guidance (Hidayah).

Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“O Allah, set right for me my religious commitment, which is the safeguard of my affairs. Set right for me my worldly affairs in which is my living. Set right for me my hereafter (Aakhirah) in which will be my final abode. Make this life a means of increase in all that is good and make death a relief for me from all evil.”**⁽¹⁾

To ensure that everything you do in this world (Dunya) will benefit you on the Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah), you should focus on understanding with sincerity (Ikhlas), and adherence to the three fundamentals of faith (Iman) that we have mentioned.

(1) Muslim (6903).

Self-motivating with urgency

Intention (Niyah) must be constantly renewed to ensure sincerity (Ikhlas), and ease adherence to acts of worship (Ibadah). Our approach to chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is an act of worship (Ibadah). Every virtuous task we embark upon must be for the sake of Allah ﷻ, with the hope to save ourselves from the Hellfire (Jahannam), and to admit us into Paradise (Jannah). Adhering to this intention (Niyah) will help focus, and secure reward, In Sha Allah (Allah Willing).

We must maintain the presence of sincere intention (Niyah), and informed adherence in all deeds, and statements as the key to success, and a manifestation of our comprehensive submission (Istislam). This is outlined in Allah’s ﷻ Words:

﴿وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقِيَمَةِ﴾

“But they were not enjoined anything other than that they should worship God, sincere in faith in Him and practicing the religion (Deen) purely for His sake, as people of pure faith, and establish the Prayer in accordance with its conditions, and pay the Prescribed Purifying Alms; and that is the upright, ever-true religion (Deen).”⁽¹⁾

Umar bin Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه called to sincerity (Ikhlas) of intention (Niyah) with his report of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, who said, **“The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions (Niyah), and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever immigrates for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his immigration will be for what he immigrated for.”⁽²⁾** Sincerity (Ikhlas) is the equalizer of acts of worship (Ibadah), that brings nearness to Allah ﷻ to the poorest, and most desperate before access is given to the wealthy who may be bereft of pure intention (Niyah). Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“Allah does not look at your bodies or your (outward) forms, rather He looks at your hearts.”⁽³⁾**

(1) Quran (98:5), Ünal trans.

(2) Bukhari (1); Muslim (4927-4928).

(3) Sahih Muslim (6542, 6543).

Adherence to worship (Ibadah)

Innovations (Bid'ah) in religion (Deen) are unacceptable, and rejected. Hence if the act is ritualistic with a legislated formula such as prayer (Salah), fasting (Saum), and obligatory annual pilgrimage (Hajj), adherence to the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) is required for its acceptance. Sincerity (Ikhlās) alone is not enough. Aishah رضي الله عنها reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, **“If somebody innovates something which is not present in our religion (of Islamic Monotheism), then that thing will be rejected.”**⁽¹⁾ Adherence is an antithesis to innovation (Bid'ah), and the best example of adherence is the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). Jabir ibn Abdullah رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would praise Allah ﻻ ﺇﻟﻪ ﺇﻻ ﻩ in his sermon, as He deserves to be praised, and then he would say, **“Whomsoever Allah guides, none can lead him astray, and whomsoever Allah sends astray, none can guide. The truest of word is the Book of Allah, and best of Guidance (Hidayah) is the Guidance (Hidayah) of Muhammad. The worst of things are those that are newly invented; every newly-invented thing is an innovation (Bid'ah) and every innovation (Bid'ah) is going astray, and every going-astray is in the Fire.”**⁽²⁾

The contrast between Guidance (Hidayah), and misguidance is outlined in Al-Fatihah, and is elucidated in the Prophetic Narrations (Ahadith), who disparaged innovation (Bid'ah) as the corrupter of adherence. Ghudayf bin Al-Harith رضي الله عنه reported that the Prophet ﷺ said, **“People do not contrive an innovation (Bid'ah) in religion (Deen) but that it removes a Sunnah like it.”**⁽³⁾

Al-Irbad bin Sariyah رضي الله عنه reported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ led the prayer (Salah) one day, and then faced his companions (Sahabah), and delivered an eloquent sermon that brought them to tears, and shook their hearts. He said, **“I enjoin you to fear Allah, and to hear and obey, even if it (the leader appointed over you) be an Ethiopian slave. Whoever among you lives after I am gone will see great disputes; you must adhere to my Tradition (Sunnah) and the way of the Rightly Guided Khulafah. Hold on to it and cling fast to it. And beware of newly-invented matters, for every newly-invented matter is an innovation (Bid'ah), and every innovation (Bid'ah) is a deviation.”**⁽⁴⁾

Deliberate progress

Make a list of points of reform of action character, and attitude, which you will address every day, and center this action plan on the five daily prayers to develop a routine. Make this list as detailed

(1) Bukhari (2697); Muslim (4492-4493); see also the introduction to Bukhari (2142), Al-Hakim (1718); Ibn Majah (14).

(2) Nasa'i (1579).

(3) Ahmad (16522, 16970), graded good (Hasan) by Ibn Hajar رحمته الله, trans. Unknown; Darimi (98).

(4) Abu Dawud (4607), authentic (Sahih) by al-Arna'ut رحمته الله; Tirmizi (2676); Al-Hakim (90/1); Ahmad (126-127/4).

as possible, and consult the Quran, and the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah) when prioritizing. The purpose is not to become overwhelmed by deficiencies to the degree that one despairs of the Mercy (Rahmah) of Allah ﷻ, but the purpose is to help plan one's personal growth, which is guided to a balanced perspective of this busy material life. If there are tasks in a daily routine that do not contribute to growth in belief in Allah ﷻ, the hereafter (Akhirah), and the revealed Guidance (Hidayah), and they are lawful, but you do not have sufficient time to execute them beneficially, do not shy away to turn those tasks down. Our time in this transient life is small, and the potential reward is massive, but one must be deliberate in choosing to use their time for the best reward. Avoiding what is forbidden can distance a servant from our Lord's Anger, and Wrath (Al-Ghadab). Avoiding what is innovative, or distracting may protect a servant from going astray, with our Lord's Permission. However, the fullest reward is by also avoiding actions, which have less, or no reward, and investing time in a deliberate momentum towards our Lord's pleasure (Ridhah). Chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is the reminder for a Muslim to refocus throughout the day, to prioritize, to correct intention (Niyah), to adhere to appropriate worship (Ibadah), and be deliberate in growth, and to abscond from the distractions of excessive materialism.

Final thoughts

The dilemma broached by chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah is that as Muslims in the modern age in the West, we are consumed by a busy lifestyle, and shackled by the demands of the world (Dunya), which distract us from focusing on our priorities to learn about Islam, and fulfill our essential religious obligations.

The higher aim (Maqsid) of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah reminds us that we need to strive for the truth (Haqq), to seek Guidance (Hidayah) from the Creator of the universe, Who provides all the answers.

Al-Fatihah is the greatest chapter (Surah) in the Quran, which entails a beautiful conversation with Allah ﷻ. The first four verses (Ayat) exalt Allah ﷻ, recognizing the Oneness of Allah ﷻ, and in the last few verses (Ayat), the believer (Mu'min) appeals to Allah ﷻ for Guidance (Hidayah), and Mercy (Rahmah), and declaring dependence on Allah ﷻ in all circumstances.

The bridge between the two parts is the middle verse (Ayah), **“You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).”**⁽¹⁾ This verse (Ayah) encapsulates the essence of the chapter (Surah). Al-Fatihah is instituted by Allah's ﷻ Wisdom (Hikmah) to remind us seventeen times a day of the fundamental relationship between Lord, and servant, and reflective recitation (Tilawah) consolidates our understanding of our Lord, the revealed Guidance (Hidayah), and the oncoming Day of Judgment (Yawm Al-Qiyamah). Reflection on the Guidance (Hidayah),

(1) Quran (1:5), Khan trans.

and adherence to the correct method will address the identified dilemmas within the Muslim community (Ummah), In Sha Allah (Allah Willing). We call upon community leaders, elders, and parents to teach, and apply the 12 practical lessons outlined earlier from chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, to establish prayer (Salah), and be conscious of the meaning of chapter (Surah) Al-Fatihah, and its wider implications.

With Allah ﷻ is our success.



MORE BOOKS BY

KARIM ABU ZAID

