



## Surah Fatihah

The Quran is the word of Allah (SWT). Its literal meaning is “that which is often recited”. Apart from other recitations, Muslims recite it five times a day in their prayers.

Besides its proper name, the Quran is also known as Mushaf (collection of sheet), Al-Kitab (The Book), Al-Furqan (The Discrimination), Al-Dhikr (The Exposition), Al-Bayan (The Explanation), Al-Burhan (The Argument), Al-Haqq (The Truth), Al-Tanzil (The Revelation), Al-Hikmat (The Wisdom), Al-Huda (The Guide).

The text of the Holy Quran has remained unchanged over the past 1400 years. The millions of copies of the Quran circulating in the world today are all identical down to a single letter. And this is not strange since God says in the Holy Quran that He Himself will guard this book.

### Division of Quran in Surah’s and Verses

The Holy Quran is divided into 30 parts, each one is called “Siparah.”. It has 114 sections or chapters which are called “Surahs”. Each Chapter of unequal length consists of individual “Ayat” or verses. These verses are not decided by human beings, but dictated by God. It is commonly believed that the number of verses in the Quran is 6,666. In fact, the total number of verses<sup>1</sup> in all chapters is 6,236, although this varies depending on how (or if) the Bismillah appearing at the start of each chapter is counted, Rakus are 558 and 14 Sajda<sup>3</sup> (prostrations) in the Holy Quran. Surah Al-Baqarah (Ch.2) is the longest Chapter, comprising 287 verses while Surah Al-Kauthar (Ch. 108) is the shortest with only four verses, including the tasmia.

### Compilation of Quran

The compilation of Quran was done under the rightly guided Caliphs Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA) and Hazrat Usman (RA).

- **During Life of Holy Prophet Mohammad (PUBH)**

As the Quran was being revealed, the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) made special arrangements to ensure that it was written down. Although the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) himself could neither read nor write, he dictated the verses orally and instructed scribes to mark down the revelation on whatever materials were available: tree branches, stones, leather, and bones. The scribes would then read their writing back to the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH), who would check it for mistakes. With each new verse that was revealed, the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) also dictated its placement within the growing body of text.

When the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) passed away, the Quran has been fully written down. It was not in book form, however. It was recorded on different parchments and materials, held in the possession of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH).

#### ▪ **During Life of Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA)**

After the death of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH), the entire Quran continued to be remembered in the hearts of the early Muslims. Hundreds of the early Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH) had memorized the entire revelation, and Muslims daily recited large portions of the text from memory. Many of the early Muslims also had personal written copies of the Quran recorded on various materials.

Ten years after the Hijrah (632 C.E.), many of these scribes and early Muslim devotees were killed in the Battle of Yamama. While the community mourned the loss of their comrades, they also began to worry about the long-term preservation of the Holy Quran. Recognizing that the words of Allah (SWT) needed to be collected in one place and preserved, the Caliph Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA) ordered all people who had written pages of the Quran to compile them in one place. The project was organized and supervised by one of the Prophet Mohammad's (PUBH) key scribes, Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit (RA).

The process of compiling the Quran from these various written pages was done in four steps:

- Hazrat Zayd bin Thabit (RA) verified each verse with his own memory.
- Hazrat Umar ibn Al-Khattab (RA) verified each verse. Both men had memorized the entire Quran.
- Two reliable witnesses had to testify that the verses were written in the presence of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH).
- The verified written verses were collated with those from the collections of other Companions.

This method of cross-checking and verifying from more than one source was undertaken with the utmost care. The purpose was to prepare an organized document which the entire community could verify, endorse, and use as a resource when needed.

This complete text of the Quran was kept in the possession of Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA), and then passed on to the next Caliph, Hazrat Umar ibn Al-Khattab (RA). After his death, they were given to his daughter Hazrat Hafsa (RA) (who was also a widow of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH)).

#### ▪ **During Life of Caliph Hazrat Usman (RA)**

During the third caliphate of Hazrat Usman (RA). The Muslim empire expanded greatly. Hazrat Usman (RA) learnt that some people were reading the Quran in a different way. Hazrat Usman (RA) thought that the original meaning of the true Quran might change as it has happened to other books of Allah (SWT). He ordered Hazrat Zaid Bin Thabit (RA) to make a true collection.

Hazrat Zaid Bin Thabit (RA) did this work with the help of other senior Muslims. They collected all the true copies of Quran and they ensured these contain only the words of the Prophet Mohammad (PUBH). They checked that they were written in the dialect of Quraish, because it was the Holy Prophets Mohammad (PUBH) speech. After much hard work, the collection was made.

Hazrat Usman (RA) ordered a number of copies of this authoritative collection to be made and had them sent to the major cities of the empire. He also ordered that all other versions of Quran should be destroyed to prevent this problem to arise again in the future.

All Qurans available in the world today are exactly identical to the Usmani version, which was completed less than twenty years after the death of Prophet Mohammad (PUBH).

Later, some minor improvements were made in the Arabic script (adding dots and diacritical marks), to make it easier for non-Arabs to read. However, the text of the Quran has remained the same.

## **Makki and Madani Surah**

Out of the 114 Surahs, 86 Surahs were revealed in Makkah while 28 Surahs were revealed in Madinah. Most of the Makki Surahs' are shorter in length and deal with concepts regarding Tauheed, the oneness of Allah (SWT); good morals and conduct and life in the Hereafter – heaven and hell. The Makki Surahs' also contain passages regarding the Prophets sent by Allah (SWT) in the past. Usually, the Makki Surahs' contain the phrase (ya ayyuhannasu).

Madani Surahs are often longer than Makki Surahs. They deal with the practical aspects of life. Most of the laws of Shariah were revealed in Madinah, including laws relating to marriage, divorce, money matters and criminal sanctions. Usually, the Madani Surahs contain the phrase (ya ayyo hal lazeena aamanoo").

It is very useful to know about Makki-Madani chapters. It helps those who want to understand the occasions and circumstances of revelation. It also helps to know the "nasikh" (abrogating) and "mansukh" (abrogated) verses in the Quran. Naturally, the abrogated passage is the one called 'mansukh' while the abrogating one is called 'nasikh'.

## **Distribution of Quran in perspective of its contents**

The contents of the Quran can be categorized into the following categories.

- The Creator
- Day of judgement
- History of Mankind
- Guidance
- Dawah

## **Surah Al-Fatihah (The Opening)**

It is named Al-Fatihah, the Opening - because it opens the Book and with it, the recitation in prayer commences. It is also named Umm al-Quran- the Mother of the Quran, and Umm al-Kitab, the Mother of the Book because the meaning of the entire Quran is summarized therein. It is also named Sab'ul-Mathani, (the Seven Often Repeated Verses), Al-Hamd, (the Praise), Al-Shifa (The Cure) and Ar-Ruqya, the Spiritual Cure. Its recitation is a condition for the effectiveness of the prayer.

It is the Makkah Surah of the Holy Quran, which means that it was discovered on the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) while He (PBUH) was in Makkah, i.e. before migration to Madinah. It was initially the 5th chapter to be disclosed, but after Furqan-e-Hameed was assembled together, it was put at the beginning. Al-Fatihah itself means "The Opening" as this chapter comes right at the start of the Holy Book and serves as a Gateway to read the Quran-e- Majeed further. Moreover, it also serves as the starting of Salah.

It also has the honor of being the very first Surah that is made known completely. Although it consists of 7 Ayats only, it still explains the Veneration of the Almighty in a very comprehensive fashion and is a great mean of the supplication of asking Allah (SWT) for keeping one on the right path.

## **Virtues of Surah Al-Fatihah**

There are many virtues associated with this Surah. Hazrat Abu Saeed al-Khudri (RA) narrates:

"While on a journey we halted at a place. A girl came to us and said: "The chief of this tribe has been stung by a scorpion and our men are not present, is there anybody amongst you who can recite something upon him to treat him?" Then, one of our men went along with her, although we did not think that he knew any such treatment. However, our friend went to the chief and recited something upon him and the chief was cured. Thereupon, the chief gave him thirty sheep and gave us all milk to drink. When he returned, we asked our friend: "Did you know anything to recite upon him to cure him?" He said: "No, I only recited Umm al-Kitab (i.e. Surah Al-Fatihah) upon him." We said that do not do anything until we reach Madinah and ask the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) regarding this (practice and reward-whether the sheep were lawful or not for us).

## **Theme of Surah Al-Fatihah**

Allah (SWT) has taught in this Surah to mankind to offer prayer to Him, who is the Lord of this universe before seeking guidance and Who alone can grant it. The reader should have a firm belief that the Creator of the universe is the source of all knowledge and the study of Quran can provide him guidance.

Islam requires a man to commence everything with the name of Allah (SWT). By doing this he will keep himself away from evil and wrong deeds. Then, there is the prayer of Allah (SWT)

Who is the Master, Owner, Sustainer, Provider, Guardian, Sovereign, Ruler, Administrator, and Organizer. Then it is added that He is the Master of the Day of Judgment, thus, everyone is accountable for his deeds. Mankind is the only worshiper of the Lord and for this reason, mankind is requesting for guidance in every walk of life. The guidance which makes mankind favorable is required. The one who will be astray will suffer the wrath of Allah (SWT).

## **Brief Tafseer of Surah Al-Fatihah**

- **In the Name of Allah (SWT)**

*The first ayah of the Surah Al-Fatihah is:*

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful. [Surah Al-Fatihah 1:1]  
This phrase is known as the Bismillah. It is recommended to recite it before doing any action.

- **The Meaning of the letter Baa**

The Baa in the Arabic language can have three different meanings:

- 1) With - With / In the name of Allah (SWT)
- 2) Seeking help - Seeking help from the name of Allah (SWT)
- 3) Seeking blessing - Seeking blessing in the name of Allah (SWT)

- **The Meaning of al-Rahman and al-Raheem**

Both these names are derived from the same root letters: raa, haa, meem; which means to have mercy. They are thus similar in meaning and both are connected to Allah's (SWT) Mercy. The fact that Allah (SWT) mentions two of His Names which have to do with Mercy, rather than Might and Power or so on, shows just how important this Attribute is.

The difference between al-Rahman and al-Raheem is that al-Rahman refers to Allah's (SWT) Mercy to all of creation. It is His Mercy, which is extended to both believers and disbelievers; animals, and everything that exists. He says in the Qur'an:

My Mercy encompasses all things. [Surah Al-A'raf:156]

Al-Rahman, therefore, indicates the extreme vastness of Allah's (SWT) Mercy. It is mentioned in a hadith that Allah (SWT) divided Mercy into 100 parts and sent down only one part to this Dunya. It is from this one part of His Mercy that animals show mercy to their offspring [Sahih Muslim]. Al-Raheem refers to Allah's (SWT) Mercy, which is specific for the believers. He says in the Qur'an:

And He is Full of Mercy to the Believers. [Surah Al-Ahzab:43]  
Al-Raheem, therefore, indicates the doing of an action.

- **All Praise is due to Allah (SWT)**

The Second ayah is:

All praise be to Allah (SWT), the Lord of all the worlds. [Surah Al-Fatihah 1:2]

- **The Meaning of Hamd and the Difference between Hamd and Shukr**

Hamd means praise and thankfulness. The scholars differed as to the relation between the words hamd and shukr. Some said that they both have the same meaning. So, the meaning of hamd, in their view, is the same as shukr (thankfulness, gratitude). Others said that shukr is more general than hamd. In that shukr is done with the tongue, the limbs, and the heart; whereas hamd is done with the tongue only.

It is also said that hamd is more general than shukr. In hamd, it contains the meaning of shukr (thankfulness) as well as made (praise). Therefore, it is more general because hamd can take the place of shukr but shukr cannot take the place of hamd. Hamd is something which must be done with love and reverence, but shukr does not need this. Shukr is done in response to a favor which is done to a person but hamd is done simply because the one being praised and thanked is worthy of that.

- **The Meaning of Rabb**

Rabb is usually translated as Lord, but it is much more encompassing than that. It also includes the meaning of Nurturer, Sustainer, Cherisher and so on. The Rabb is the creator, king, master and the one who controls everything. It comes from the root letters raa, baa, baa: which means to have mastery and control over something. Some scholars said that this is the Greatest Name of Allah (SWT) [Ism Allah al-A'zam], because of its abundant usage by those who make Dua.

- **The Meaning of 'Aalameen**

Some of the differing views about it are that it refers to:

- Everything which exists other than Allah (SWT)
- Mankind and the jinn
- Those things which have an intellect, and they are four: mankind, jinn, angels, and devils
- Those species which have souls

The best view is the first one, the proof being ayah 23 and 24 of Surah Shu'ara.

[Surah Shu'ara:23] Said Pharaoh, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?"

[Surah Shu'ara:24] [Moses] said, "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you should be convinced."

- **The Beneficent, The Most Merciful** [Surah Al-Fatihah 1:3]

The third ayah is:

Both these names are derived from the same root letters: raa, haa, meem; which means to have mercy. They are thus similar in meaning and both are connected to Allah's (SWT) Mercy. The fact that Allah (SWT) mentions two of His Names which have to do with Mercy, rather than Might and Power or so on, shows just how important this Attribute is.

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- **The Only Owner of the Day of Recompense.** [Surah Al-Fatihah 1:4]

The Fourth ayah is:

- **The Meaning of Maalik**

The first word of this ayah can be recited in two ways: either as "Maalik" (with a madd after the meem) or as "Malik" (without the madd). Maalik means master, and it refers to "milk" - the ownership of something. Malik means king, and it refers to "mulk" - the dominion of a person.

God is the Lord of the Day when all generations of mankind gathered together to render an account of their conduct, and when each person will be finally rewarded or punished for his deeds. The description of God as Lord of the Day of Judgement following the mention of his benevolence and compassion indicates that we ought to remember another aspect of God as well-namely, that He will judge us all, that He is so powerful, that on the Day of Judgement no one will have the power either to resist the enforcement of punishments to which He (SWT) decrees or to prevent anyone from receiving the rewards that He (SWT) decides to confer. Hence, we ought not only to love Him for nourishing and sustaining us and for His compassion and mercy

towards us, but should also hold Him in awe because of His justice, and should not forget that our ultimate happiness or misery rests completely with Him.

- **You (Alone) We Worship**

The fifth ayah is:

You (alone) we worship and You (alone) we ask for help. [Surah Al-Fatihah 1:5]

At this point, there is a shift in the Surah from informing us about Allah (SWT) and praising Him, to addressing Him. "We worship" means we obey. Worship is obedience and self-abasement. It means to humble yourself before Allah (SWT) and to submit to His Will. Outwardly it is self-abasement, but in reality, it is glory and beauty. This ayah affirms the Lordship of Allah (SWT) and affirms that worship is due to Him.

"**Iyyaaka nasta'een**" means we seek help, support, and success.

Usually, in most sentences the verb comes first and then the object; but in this ayah, the object of the verb is mentioned first and then the verb. So why is this? It is to attach importance to it, to Allah (SWT). It is also so that the mention of the slave and of worship would not come before the mention of Allah (SWT).

- **Guide us on the Straight Path**

The sixth ayah is:

Guide us on the Straight Path. [Surah Al-Fatihah 6:1]

This ayah is a dua which we make to Allah (SWT). We ask Him to show us the Straight Path and to guide us on it so that we will get His Guidance which draws us closer and nearer to Him. It could also mean that we ask Him to guide us to do all the Sunnah acts when doing our duty. And another possible meaning of it is, "Make our hearts lean towards the truth."

What is a path? It is a road, it's something which is traveled on, to take you from one point to another. So, it's not enough just to be on the path and then be stationary, we need to travel this path. We need to travel to Allah (SWT) by doing those good deeds which will draw us closer to Him, and by staying away from all evil deeds which will distance us from Him.

- **The Meaning of Sirat**

Sirat is a road or a path. But there are certain conditions which it has to fulfill in order to be a sirat otherwise it would be called something else, such as tareeq or Sabeel which also mean a road. The conditions are that it must be straight. It must reach the goal and it must be the shortest route to get there. It must also be wide and spacious enough for everyone who wants to travel it.



## ▪ The Meaning of Mustaqeem

**Mustaqeem** is derived from **istaqaama**, which means to be straight, upright, correct. We already said that for a road to be a sirat, it must be straight, so this adjective of mustaqeem again emphasize the straightness of this Path. Another meaning of mustaqeem is to remain firm or to stand firm without tilting. For example, a tree that is firmly grounded when the wind blows it is not affected by it. So, the Straight Path is a path on which people are firmly grounded.

## • The Path of Those...

The seventh and final ayah is:

The path of those you have blessed, not of those with anger on them, nor of those who are astray. [Al-Fatihah 7:1]

Who are the people who have been blessed by Allah (SWT) and whose Path we ask to guide to? This is explained by Allah (SWT) in another ayah where He says: "Whosoever obeys Allah (SWT), and the Messenger, they are with those whom Allah (SWT) has favored, the Prophets (AS), the sincere, the martyrs and the righteous, and these are the best company". [Surah Al-Nisa:69]

So, the favored and blessed people are the Prophets, the righteous, the martyrs and the pious. And who are the people with anger on them and those who are astray? This is explained by the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). 'Hazrat Adi Ibn Hatim (RA) asked him about those with anger on them and the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) replied that it refers to the Jews. He then asked him about those who are astray and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) replied that it refers to the Christians. This is reported by al-Tirmidhi and it is authentic.

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