

TAFSĪR AL-QUR'ĀN

MINDSETS part 2

USTĀDH ABŪ 'UBAYD

PLEASE NOTE

This is an initial draft of notes, compiled by one of the students, summarising the current 'Tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Mindset' lessons. In progressive weeks, new class notes will be added In-shā-Allāh. It is hoped that in due time a complete version will be available. The class is taught by Ustādh Abū 'Ubayd.

“Verily, there has come to you baṣā’ir [insights]
from your Rabb, so whosoever grasps and
appreciates them, the benefit, then, is for none
other than his own self ...” (6:104)

Beginning with the Name of Allāh

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“With the Name of Allāh Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm.”

The phrase *bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm*, abbreviated as basmalah, is perhaps the most oft-recited phrase in the life of a Muslim. The basmalah beautifully offers both deep insight and brilliant inspiration. It is a compounded expression of the tawḥīd of a believer and the considerate, easily-accessible and all-able nature of Allāh –jalla wa ‘alā.

The status and requirement of the basmalah

The basmalah, according to a favoured opinion, is a verse of the Qur’ān but is not part of any sūrah. It occupies a key place in the muṣḥaf, at the head of every sūrah except one, primarily as a ‘marker’ between the different sūrahs, and a consistent reminder of how to attain the ‘Utmost Mercy’.

Its reading at the beginning of a sūrah, prayer, recitation and correspondence is recommended. The recital of the basmalah is not confined to these occasions.

The complete phrase *bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* is more accurately observed at the opening of a sūrah, prayer, recitation and a writing piece i.e. correspondence or book. Its short form, *bismillāh*, is observed in all other acts.

A brief explanation of the basmalah

﴿ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ ﴾ This part is commonly translated as ‘With the Name of Allāh.’ There are three words here:

1. bā’;
2. ism;
3. Allāh.

The bā’ is known as *bā’ al-isti‘ānah* (bā’ of seeking assistance) and is translated as ‘with’. It means that assistance is being sought with or through the adjoined noun, which in this case are the words *ism* and Allāh.

Ism is translated as ‘name’. The word *ism* in this phrase is a singular word in the possessed case—grammatically speaking—and according to an Arabic maxim, singular words in the possessed case can offer the meaning of plurality. Thus, it is possible to translate this phrase as “With the Name of Allāh...” or “With the Names of Allāh...” The latter is the favoured translation of this author.

﴿ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ Al-Raḥmān and Al-Raḥīm are two Names of Allāh; each of them denotes a meaning of mercy. The word Al-Raḥmān is closely associated with His Essence or Being; it means that He –jalla wa ‘alā– as ‘A Being’ is Merciful and possesses ALL Mercy. Al-Raḥīm, however, is more associated with His Actions; it means that He bestows mercy and all His actions are attributed with mercy.

In summation, the basmalah is in fact a heart felt supplication; it is said prior to an action primarily because of the *bā’ of seeking assistance*. This *bā’* invokes Allāh for His assistance, calling on Him by all His Names and their corresponding Attributes (and the power invested in them) to aid the doer in completing the action and benefitting from it in a perfect and beautiful manner.

Mindsets embodied in the basmalah

1. The **belief** that everything (the Kingdom) is in His Hands. The **mindset** to seek all things from Him¹.
2. The **belief** that all good is in His Hands. The **mindset** to seek from Him – jalla thanā’uhu– the most ambitious, realistic endeavours².
3. The **belief** that Allāh’s assistance is only sought in good deeds. The **mindset** to carry out that isti‘ānah (seeking assistance) with the heart in belief, and then with the limbs in taking the legislated, appropriate, utmost means³.

¹ “Blessed is He in whose Hands is the entire kingdom.” (67:1). Allāh does not simply own the kingdom... the entire kingdom lies in His Hands! Every milestone and objective is in His Hands. Every hope and dream is in His Hands. Every success and successful person and all their accomplishments is in His Hands. And all of that ought to be accessed through Him, His Names, His approved means.

² An important belief and mindset; we do not produce or bring forth khayr (good). Allāh –jalla wa ‘alā– is its creator; it originates from Him and is conferred by Him alone.

Say, "O Allāh, Owner of the Mulk (Kingdom and Sovereignty); You give the Mulk to whom You will and You take it away from whom You will. You honour (‘izzah) whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your Hand is all khayr. Indeed, You are over all things capable. (3:26)

The true believers aspire for distinction and superiority in all fields. This is especially true for mulk and ‘izzah, or in other words tamkīn, because it is the khayr that Allāh wants to confer upon the mu’minīn. A Muslim who does not have the mindset of tamkīn is not within the category of this verse.

The khayr in this verse is specifically in giving kingdom and ‘izzah. One is not enough; both must be achieved. When ‘izzah and self-sufficiency are coupled then mulk becomes possible. Self-sufficiency starts bottom-up; from individuals to families then communities etc.

³ Both belief and action are necessary. Belief alone does not suffice. That is the difference between tawakkul (truly relying upon Allāh whilst taking the utmost means) and tawākul (relying upon Allāh whilst wilfully neglecting the means/utmost means). The former is legislated and praised whilst the latter is condemned.

4. The **belief** that in every good there is an additional (portion of) khayr⁴. The **mindset**, then, is to access that khayr by seeking assistance with Allāh, His Names and Attributes, and taking the utmost means.
5. The **belief** that isti‘ānah in and of itself is an act of worship. The **mindset** to seek assistance with Allāh –jalla jalāluhu– even in character and etiquette⁵. This is because good conduct is within ‘Mercy’ which in turn is within ‘Perfection’.
6. The **belief** that the greatest isti‘ānah, for the Muslim, is best expressed with Allāh’s Names and Attributes. The **mindset**, therefore, when seeking assistance is to call on Him with His Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes, and to continue praising Him –jalla thanā’uhu– through them.
7. The **belief** that every khayr and all its benefits are connected with the Names and Attributes of Allāh –jalla wa ‘alā. The **mindset**: Connect with those particular (sets of) Names and act accordingly. To receive forgiveness, invoke the Names Al-Ghaffār and Al-Ghafūr, and forgive others.
8. The **belief** that every good and attaining its benefit in its entirety is connected with the Mercy of Allāh –‘azza wa jalla. The **mindset** to work to attain the benefit entirely thus securing the mercy therein.
9. The **belief** that tawfīq, isti‘ānah, and continuous steadfastness upon khayr is especially from the Mercy of Allāh –jalla jalāluhu. The **mindset** to constantly beg and invoke His Mercy, and be merciful towards others.
10. The **belief** that the Speech of Allāh is from His Mercy, and so are the previously revealed Books, His Prophets and Messengers. The **mindset**: Bond with the Speech of Allāh; you will be journeying within His Mercy, which the Prophets and Messengers all journeyed in.

⁴ This is because it is within ‘Mercy’, and mercy is ‘Justice’ and more.

⁵ Isti‘ānah must be observed in akhlāq and ādāb (good conduct); it is not limited to the domains of deeds, difficult situations and aspirations.

Isti‘ānah is indicative of one’s worship and relationship with Allāh. A true slave finds worshipping Allāh in secret easy, and longs and yearns for it.

11. The **belief** that The Greatest Mercy shown to us is the Waḥy (Revelation) itself. The fact that it exists with us today -and will do until the Last Day- is testament to that. The **mindset**, then, is to convey and establish this Greatest Mercy upon the surface of the Earth. Only then humankind can live in peace, harmony, and within the ‘Utmost Mercy’ the creation has ever experienced.
12. The **belief** that *bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* is Waḥy. The **mindset**: Repeat and reflect upon it; there are a bare minimum of 10 ḥasanah stored within every letter.
13. The **mindset** to particularize *bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* to the Waḥy and *bismillāh* for everything else⁶. These two simple utterances suffice to attain the benefit in a particular action in its entirety.
14. The **belief** that uttering the basmalah is at the very least ādab⁷. The **mindset** to speak it consciously and with love and devotion. If you forget then say it when you remember whether that is during the deed or immediately after it.
15. The **belief** that all acts of worship are for establishing the remembrance of Allāh. Equally, the basmalah is for His remembrance. The **mindset** to remember Allāh –jall fee ‘ulā– in the basmalah, and bond with Him –jalla jalāluhu– through it.
16. The **belief** remembering and mentioning Allāh within your heart—that is the most noble and greatest ibādah. The **mindset** to repeatedly renew within your heart the presence of Allāh high above the creation, above the Great Throne; above Time, above the seen and unseen; and to persistently renew the consciousness of Allāh within your heart through noble, exalted, inner deeds and conduct.

⁶ It is of note that *bismillāhir-Raḥmānir-Raḥīm* is observed at the opening of sūrahs, prayers, Qur’ānic recitals and correspondence that convey the Waḥy whilst its short form, *bismillāh*, is observed in all other areas. And Allāh knows best.

⁷ Ādab: Etiquette and good conduct. Uttering the basmalah may be obligatory such as when slaughtering an animal. It may be a sunnah like when eating or drinking. The basmalah is ādab for all actions that are within the domain of permissibility.

17. The **mindset** to routinely, daily engage in the most exalted deed of the tongue: tilāwatul-Qur'ān and the dhikr of Allāh.
18. The **belief** that every khayr is contingent upon His Speech, universally and legally (كُونًا وَشَرْعًا), in meaning and wording (مَعْنًى وَلَفْظًا). The **mindset** to trust and rely upon His Words in wording and meaning, and flow with His Sunnah, Qadar and the Waḥy.
19. The **mindset** to establish (the meanings of) Allāh's Names and Attributes within the heart in belief, the tongue in speech, the limbs in action and extending that to akhlāq and ādāb; that is the real true tawḥīd⁸.
20. The **belief** that at the heart of tawḥīd is the worship of Allāh through His Names and Attributes. The **mindset** to worship Him through them, and enjoin others to do the same.
21. The **belief** that the Names and Attributes of Allāh are broadly encoded within the fiṭrah, and understood in the shahādah. The **mindset**, then, is to ignite and embolden these Beautiful Names and Attributes to non-Muslims, new Muslims, and all who are weak in Īmān.
22. The **belief** that a detailed understanding of the Names and Attributes of Allāh is contingent on knowledge and proof. The **mindset**: It is THE GREATEST knowledge of all, and therefore attain its knowledge and proof.
23. The **mindset** to voice praiseworthy meanings (that emanate from within) which constitute worship and are in and of themselves a virtue.
24. The **mindset** that the dhikr pertinent to a current circumstance or situation is praised. It is either legally recommended or binding.
25. The **mindset** that in speech generality and brevity precedes specificity and detail.

⁸ True tawḥīd is established when manifesting it, not simply in being knowledgeable of it. Do not limit yourself to books; instead aspire to manifest His tawḥīd in your eyes and ears, in your character and manners, in your families and communities et al. Books do not equate to a muwahḥid; it is the reality of a man that does that.

26. The **mindset** that a comprehensive overview of a matter precedes delving into its specific areas. The broader understanding sets the boundaries preventing a misunderstanding of the specifics.
27. The **mindset** that the broader and more inclusive characteristics of people are given precedence over the less inclusive characteristics.
28. The **mindset** that an increase in the more inclusive characteristics as well as the less inclusive characteristics is deserving of praise.
29. The **mindset** that a numerical or quantitative increase in the praiseworthy characteristics necessitates an increase in the greatness of the individual.
30. The **mindset** that the greatest status is tied with the greatest praise; and that is being grateful to Allāh and worshipping Him alone with love, devotion and humility because He is Allāh, Al-Raḥmān, Al-Raḥīm.