

Tafseer of Surah Fatiha

Summary: Why we need Tafseer

- Understand what Allah is telling us. Quran as a book of guidance, containing literal and ambiguous verses. So we need tafseer to understand the verses. To understand what Allah is telling us.
- 5:15-16
- 3:7

Surah Fatiha is a very important surah. We recite it at least 10 times a day. So it's important that we understand what we are reciting.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Merciful

بِسْمِ - 'In the name' which implies 'I begin in the name'

2 names of Allah are mentioned in this verse.

رَحْمَان is the mercy of Allah, which He gives to everyone. Plants, animals, humans e.t.c. It is mercy which He gives to believers and disbelievers alike. The air we breathe, food we have, parents, families, comforts of life, wealth, property e.t.c

رَحِيم is the mercy of Allah, which He gives specifically to the believers. It is Allah's special grace for His chosen servants

A person should recite Bismillah when beginning any task. He should Keep Allah at the beginning of everything he do. Allah blesses the work a person does when he starts with His name.

Beginning in the name of Allah, helps a person to make sure that everything he does is actually for the sake of Allah, and not anything else.

Imam Sadiq(a.s) has said that sometimes it happens that a person may forget to recite bismillah at the time of beginning any work, and because of that Allah puts him in some trouble so that he may be warned and thank and praise Allah; and then Allah may forgive him.

Once Abdallah bin Yahya came to visit Imam Ali (a.s). The Imam asked him to take a seat in front of him. While seating, the chair tumbled on one side and Abdallah fell headlong on the ground. He hurt his head and the wound bled. Imam Ali (a.s) called for some water and got the wound washed. Then he asked Abdallah to come near him. When he did so, Imam Ali passed his blessed hand over the wound and put his saliva on it. The wound healed at once and the pain vanished as if nothing happened at all.

Thereafter, Imam Ali (a.s) said, 'Oh Abdallah, Allah Almighty deserves all praise. He made worldly troubles and sorrows as a means of forgiveness of sins for our shias so that obedience and worship may continue and entitle them to rewards in the hereafter.'

Abdallah enquired, 'O Amirul Mumineen, could we be punished for our sins in this world only?'

The Imam (a.s) replied, 'Yes, have you not heard the Prophet (s.a.w) say: This world is a prison for a believer and a paradise for the infidel? Undoubtedly, Almighty Allah puts our shias to worries and anxieties and creates such causes which result in their forgiveness and pardon. He purifies them from the filth of sins.

He says in the Holy Quran in 42:30

'And whatever affliction befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought, and(yet) He pardons most (of your faults).'

Imam Ali (a.s) then continues saying, 'I have heard from the holy Prophet, that there were 2 people; one was an obedient believer and the other was a disbeliever, who considered the friends of God as his enemies, and befriended the enemies of God. Both ruled over large kingdoms. Once, incidentally the infidel king fell ill and desired to catch a fish which was only found in very deep waters in that season. Nobody was able to catch the fish. Doctors told him that there was no hope of his remaining alive much longer; he should better appoint someone as his successor. He was also told that his living longer depended only on getting the fish which was almost impossible to get. Almighty Allah commanded an angel to drive the fish to waters which were easily accessible to the king's men. In short, that fish was brought and the king ate it, whereby he became healthy. He continued to rule over his kingdom for a long time thereafter.

Then it so happened, that the faithful king also developed the same illness at the time when the fish was easily available. But when he desired to eat that fish and the doctors also prescribed it, Allah ordered the angel to drive away the fish to far away deep waters so that none could catch it. Consequently the faithful king died due to unavailability of the medical fish. The angels in the skies and the residents of that place were amazed at the strange happening and were about to be caught in some trial in the matter of faith. They wondered why Allah made a difficult thing easy for a disbeliever and made a easy thing difficult for a believer?

Allah sent a revelation to the messenger of that time: I am the omnipotent and Most Merciful God. I do not lose by granting nor do I gain by denying facilities to anyone. I never commit even as much as an iota of injustice on anyone. I made the fish matter easy for the unbeliever so that he may get the reward of a good thing he has done in this world as i never ignore anyone's good deed. I did that so that no good mat remain in his account when he arrives on the day of Judgement. and he may enter hell because of his disbelief.

I made the same fish unavailable to the believer king because of a mistake committed by him in this world, whereby he may appear before Me without any punishable sin and enter My paradise.

After hearing this story, Abdallah bin Yahya requested the Imam: 'You have benefited me very much. Kindly so some more favour and let me know my mistake because of which I suffered injury and anxiety in this meeting, so that I may not repeat that mistake.'

The Imam (a.s) said: 'You did not recite Bismillah while sitting on the chair. Almighty Allah made this injury a means of forgiving you for this mistake of giving up a recommended thing. Do you not know that the Prophet has quoted a saying from Almighty Allah that every deed on which Allah's name is not taken, is a bad deed?' Abdallah said: 'Yes o Chief! May my parents be sacrificed for you, I will hereafter never give up saying Bismillah.

The Imam Said: ' If you do so, you will obtain a very great benefit and will be successful.

Thereafter Abdullah said: 'Oh Amirul Mumineen? What is the tafseer of Bismillahir rahmanir rahim?

The Imam (a.s) replied,' If one desires to recite or do something and says Bismillah at the beginning, it means that he begins in the Name of God; then Almighty Allah blesses that deed.

One way to look at it: When we do good deeds, we put our deed into the market for auction with many bidders. One of the bidders (and the highest bidder) is Allah (s.w.t).

When we do a deed for someone, all the bidders, including Allah step down. And we will get our reward from the person we did the deed for. What a waste this would be. Thus we should always work hard to do everything only for Allah.

Allah uses the Word Rahman and Rahim in different places in the Quran.

Rahman - 20:5

Rahim - 33:43; 9:117

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

All praise is to Allah, the lord of the Worlds

رب means Lord, Cherisher, Nourisher.
Allah manages the affairs of His servants.

He is the owner of the worlds

Why do we praise Him?

- Because He created everything.
See verse 40:62
- He deserves to be praised.
- Every good comes from Him. Ultimately we only praise Him, and no one else.
- Even His names are the best Names. 20:8
7:180

Imam Zainul Abideen says that for every thanks he gives to Allah, he needs to thank Allah for that; because it is Allah who gave him the ability to thank Him.

Imam Hassan al Askari(a.s) said, 'A man came to Imam Ridha(a.s) and requested for the tafseer of 'All praise is to Allah, the lord of the worlds.' He said, 'My honourable father, Imam Musa Kadhim(a.s), quoting his forefathers told me that once a man requested Imam Ali(a.s) for this tafseer. Imam Ali (a.s) said, 'Alhamdulillah' means all kinds of praise are due to Allah. God merely gave a brief introduction of the bounties granted by Him, because people do not have the ability to understand God's bounties in detail since they are uncountable and beyond appreciation. So the lord Almighty commanded just to recite 'Al hamdulillah' which means: 'We praise Allah for all the bounties granted by Him to us.'

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

The beneficent, the Merciful

- Rahmah- To all people
- Rahim- specific to believers

A person needs to qualify for the special Mercy of Allah.

Rahman is a specific name of Allah
17:110

Say, "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names." And do not recite [too] loudly in your prayer or [too] quietly but seek between that an [intermediate] way

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

'Master of the day of Judgement.'

Allah is the master of this world as well. But why does He emphasize that He is the Master of the day of Judgement?.

This is because it will become clear that He is the master on the day of judgement. People will actually see that the authority on that day only lies with Allah. In this world, people may not be aware that Allah is the Master. Allah has given us free will to act as we wish. We see causes and effects, but in reality it is Allah who is behind every cause.

On the day of judgement:

1 day= 50,000 yrs.

It is the day where we will all be accounted for our deeds.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

‘You alone do we serve, and You alone do we ask for help’

The tone of Surah suddenly changes. We are now addressing Allah in first person. Before this verse, we were praising Allah in third person.

After praising Allah, we have become familiar with Him. So we can speak to Him in a personal way.

In Arabic, the rule is that the verb comes first. In this case, the verb is **نَعْبُدُ**, which should come first. But the structure in the verse is reversed. This is to create **emphasis** to show that it is only Allah that we worship and it is only Him that we ask for help.

We notice that the pronoun used in this verse is '**We**' not 'I'

This shows a community spirit. We are telling Allah that all of us together worship Him and all of us together ask Him for help.

Islam stresses great emphasis on unity. If we look at the salaah we pray, there is much greater thawaab in praying in congregation than praying alone. In Hajj we all carry out the obligations together as brothers and sisters in the way of Allah. Even when looking for a spouse, we look for someone who will help us in our journey to Allah, so that together we may soar to Him.

The word **نَعْبُدُ** means serving. We are telling Allah that we only serve Him. To serve someone is to give your life totally to Him, such that the person has no will of his own except the pleasure of His master. Servitude is obedience. It is to be in a place where Allah wants to see you, and not to be in a place where Allah doesn't want to see you.

Even the word **اسلام** means submission to the will Allah. Nothing comes before Allah.

Imam Ali says that he sees nothing except he sees Allah before it, with it and after it.

This verse shows us that we are nothing without Allah. It is only with Allah's help that we can do anything. The very fact of being a Muslim and being able to serve Him is only out of His Mercy. If it wasn't for Him we would be nothing.

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

Keep us to the straight path

In this verse, we are making a prayer to Allah. We ask Allah to keep us on the right path.

Again we notice that the pronoun used is we, and not 'I' showing the community spirit. We are asking Allah together.

It is only through Allah's guidance that we can be and stay on the right path.

We make this prayer a minimum of 10 times in our daily salaah.

One of the famous prayers of Prophet Ibrahim is to die as a Muslim.

This should also be a prayer we should be making, as we don't know if we are going to die as Muslims. In fact we should always pray that our end is good.

Look at the following verses:

7:126

12:101

The True devotion of Prophet Ibrahim is displayed in these verses.

2:128-132

The word used here is الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

In Arabic whenever the letters ال are put before a word it shows that that word is definite.

الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ means 'THE straight path'

Thus there is only one straight path. *This is the path of submission to the will of Allah.*

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا
الضَّالِّينَ

The path of those upon whom You hast bestowed Your favours. Not (the path) of those upon whom Your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray.

In this verse, we are praying to Allah to bless us with His favours, by keeping us amongst those who are on the right path; and not amongst those on whom Allah's anger has fallen.

The path that Allah has favoured is the path of the the Holy Prophet and His Ahlulbayt(a.s)