A Brief Explanation of

Soorah al-Faatihah

by Ṣaалиh ibn Fawzaan al-Fawzaan

Translated by Aboo Shaybah
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1- Importance and Significance

This soorah has tremendous importance, since it is the greatest soorah in the Qur’aan, just as Aayab al-Kursi is the greatest aayah in the Qur’aan. Due to its significance, it is written at the beginning of the mus-haf and this is why it is named Faatiha al-Kitaab (the Opening of the Book). All this goes to show its importance, and it was not placed as the first soorah in the mus-haf except due to its tremendous significance.

2- Ruling of Reciting it in Salaah

Another indication of its significance is that Allaah obligated its recitation in each rak‘ah during salaah.

The majority of scholars hold that its recitation in salaah is obligatory. If someone is able to recite it but does not do so, his salaah is invalid. This is based on the statement of the Messenger of Allaah س, “There is no salaah for someone who did not recite Faatiha al-Kitaab.”1 However, if someone is unable to recite it due to him being unable to memorize it, he recites whatever other ayaat of the Qur’aan he may know. If he does not know any portion of the Qur’aan at all, he says words of thikr, such as: subhaanallaah, al-hamdu lillah, laa ilaaha illallaah, allaahu akbar, laa hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah. This is based on the statement of the Messenger of Allaah س, “When you stand to perform salaah, say allaahu akbar. If you know some amount of the Qur’aan, recite. Otherwise, say al-hamdu lillah, allaahu akbar, and laa ilaaha illallaaah, then move on to the rukoo’ position…”2

The majority of scholars hold that it is obligatory for the imam (person leading others in salaah), as well as the munfarid (person performing salaah by himself), to recite Soorah al-Faatihah. However, they have differed concerning its obligation as it relates to the ma’moor (person being led in salaah by someone else). There are three views about this:

The first: it is obligatory for every person – whether imam, ma’moor, or munfarid – to recite it. This is based on the statement of the Messenger of Allaah س, “There is no salaah for someone who did not recite Faatiha al-Kitaab.” This statement is general and applies to anyone who performs salaah. The Messenger of Allaah س also said to some of his Companions, “Perhaps you recite behind your Imam?” They replied, “Yes, Messenger of Allaah.” He said, “Do not do that except for Faatiha al-Kitaab, because there is no salaah for someone who did not recite it.”3 This is the view held by ash-Shaafi’ee and many of the scholars of hadeeth, including al-Bukhaaree and others. They hold that its recitation is obligatory for the imam, ma’moor, and munfarid.

The second: it is not obligatory for the ma’moor because the recitation of the imam is sufficient for those following him. This is based on the statement ascribed to the Messenger of Allaah س, “If someone has an imam, then the recitation of the imam is sufficient for him.”4 However, the chain of narration for this hadeeth is deficient and does not stand up to scrutiny.

Those who hold this view also use the statement of Allaah,

واداؤذ قرىت الفریقان فأسرعتوا لله وآصلیتما لله اسمه نحوراً

1 Collected by al-Bukhaaree in Kitaab al-Athbaan, chapter 95, number 756, [2/306], and Muslim in Kitaab al-Salaah, number 394, from ‘Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit.
2 Collected by Aboo Daawood in Kitaab al-Salaah, chapter 148, number 861, [1/377], and at-Tirmidhee in Kitaab al-Salaah, chapter 110, number 302, [2/100], from Rifa’ee ibn Raffi’.
3 A similar wording was collected by Aboo Daawood in Kitaab al-Salaah, chapter 136, number 824, [1/362], and an-Nasaa’ee in Kitaab al-Iftitaah, chapter 29, number 919, [1/479], from ‘Ubaadah ibn as-Saamit.
4 Narrated by Jaabir, and collected by Ahsan (14698) [5/125], ibn Maajah in Kitaab Iqaamah al-Salaah, chapter 13, number 850, [1/463], and al-Bayhaqee – with the wording cited – in his Sunan, Kitaab al-Salaah, chapter 265, number 2898, [2/228].
“And whenever the Qur’aan is recited, listen to it attentively and remain quiet in order for you to receive mercy” [al-A’raaf:204]. They understand the aayah to mean that Allaah commands listening to recitation of the Qur’aan and remaining quiet, and the aayah is in reference to listening to the recitation in salaah. In other words, when the imaam recites, the ma’moom is to remain quiet and just listen. Thus, the aayah is understood to mean that the ma’moom does not recite anything, and the recitation of the imaam suffices for him as well as those following him. This view is held by Aboo Haneefah and Ahmad.

The third: the view held by Maalik, and also chosen by ibn Taymiyyah and a number of scholars, is that its recitation is obligatory for the ma’moom when recitation in salaah is done silently and the imaam does not recite aloud, such as Thubr and ‘Ajr. As for the salaah when recitation is aloud, the recitation of the imaam is sufficient for all, and the ma’moom remains quiet and listens attentively.

Those who hold this view say that it simultaneously combines all of the evidences; the ones which obligate recitation of al-Faatihah are understood to apply to salaah in which recitation is done quietly, and the others as well as the aayah are understood to apply to salaah in which recitation is aloud. This view appears to be the most balanced, in shaa Allaah.

3- Its Names

Several names have been given to this soorah, each of which reflects a certain meaning. When something is given many names, this shows its excellence and virtue.

It is called Faatihah al-Kitaab (the Opening of the Book) because it is written at the beginning of the mus-haf.

It is called Umm al-Qur’aan (the Mother of the Qur’aan) because the entire Qur’aan revolves around the meanings contained in this soorah, and all the meanings detailed throughout the entire Qur’aan are summarized in it.

It is called ar-Ruqyah (the Cure) because it is used to cure the ill. This is based on the saheeh narration where a group of the Companions requested that people in a certain village host them. However, those people refused. Then, the head of that village was bitten or stung – by a snake or scorpion – and his people requested the group of Companions to cure him. However, the Companions said that since the people in the village refused to host them, they would only treat him for a fee, and they agreed on a flock of sheep. One of the Companions then went to the head of the village, recited Soorah al-Faatihah upon him, and he was cured from his ailment as if he had previously been tied up and was now released.

The Companions took the sheep, but did not make any further use of them until they asked permission from the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ. When they returned to him and told him all that transpired he asked, “How did you know it was a ruqyah?” He then also said to them, “Divide the sheep among yourselves, and give me a share as well.”

The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ also said, “The most deserving thing for which you could take a fee is the Book of Allaah.”

It is also called asb-Shaafi’iyah (the Remedy) because, by the permission of Allaah, it is a remedy for ailments affecting the heart – such as doubts, misconceptions, and whisperings from shaaytaan – as well ailments and pains affecting the body, as in the aforementioned case with the head of the village who was bitten.

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5 Collected by al-Bukhaaree in Kitaab al-Ijaarah, chapter 16, number 2276, [4/571], and Muslim, in Kitaab as-Salaam, chapter 23, from Aboo Sa’eed al-Khudree.

6 Collected by al-Bukhaaree from ibn ‘Abbaas in Kitaab at-Tibb, chapter 34, number 5737, [10/244].
It is also called ُهـَبِلْهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ُهِبَأْرَعَ ُهَلْكَانِ (the Seven Frequently Repeated). Allaah has stated,

“And We have granted you seven which are frequently repeated, and the tremendous Qur’aan” \(\text{[al-Hijr:87]}\). This is in reference to Soorah al-Faatihah because it consists of seven aayaat and they are repeated in every rak’ah of prayer. The Prophet ﷺ also said in reference to Soorah al-Faatihah,

“It is the seven frequently repeated and the tremendous Qur’aan which I have been given.”

It is also called ُهـَبِلْهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ُهِبَأْرَعَ ُهَلْكَانِ (the Prayer) as in the qudsee narration where Allaah says, “I have divided ُهـَبِلْهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ُهِبَأْرَعَ ُهَلْكَانِ between myself and my worshipping servant into two halves…” and ُهـَبِلْهُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ُهِبَأْرَعَ ُهَلْكَانِ was then explained as being al-Faatihah.

4- Number of Aayaat

The soorah contains seven aayaat based on the aforementioned statement of Allaah,

“And We have granted you seven which are frequently repeated, and the tremendous Qur’aan.”

“All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation” is one aayah;

“The Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful” is the second;

“Owner and Sovereign of the Day of Reckoning” is the third;

“You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek assistance” is the fourth;

“Guide us to the straight path” is the fifth;

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your favor” is the sixth; and

“Not those who have earned wrath, and not those who have gone astray” is the seventh. This is the view held by the majority of scholars regarding the number of its aayaat.

However, ash-Shaafi’ee held the view that

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7 Collected by al-Bukhaaree from Aboo Sa’eed ibn al-Mu’allaah in Kitaab at-Tafseer, chapter 1, number 4474, [8/196].
8 Collected by Muslim from Aboo Hurayrah in Kitaab al-Salaah, chapter 11, number 395, [2/324].
“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your favor, not those who have earned wrath, and not those who have gone astray” altogether is the seventh aayah, and that

“In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful” is the first aayah of the soorah.

Due to this difference, in some copies of the mus-haf, the number one is written at the end of the basmalah, like this:

indicating that it is one of the aayaat of Soorah al-Faatihah. In other copies of the mus-haf, there is no number written after it, conforming with the view that it is not an aayah from Soorah al-Faatihah.

Thus, the basmalah is an aayah from the soorah according to ash-Shaafi’ee, while the majority of scholars hold the view that it is not an aayah from Soorah al-Faatihah or any other soorah, with the exception of the aayah in Soorah an-Nas.

“It is from Sulaymaan, and it is in the name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the especially Merciful,” [an-Nas:30], where it is a portion of that aayah by unanimous scholarly consensus.

Other than what has been mentioned, the basmalah is an independent aayah which is not specific to any soorah. This is why the number one will not be found written after it in any soorah except for al-Faatihah. The basmalah was revealed as an individual aayah which is a sort of partition between each soorah and the one before it. Thus, it is at the beginning of each soorah except for Soorah Baraa’ab because it was not revealed to the Messenger of Allaah ﷺ at the beginning of that soorah, while it was revealed to him for every other soorah. One of the possible reasons which has been suggested for that is because Baraa’ab is a continuation of Soorah al-Anfaal. It has also been suggested that its contents have to do with combat and punishment, and it begins with baraa’ab – Allaah absolving Himself and His Messenger from the musriikeen – and mentioning mercy before such a declaration would not be suitable; and Allaah knows best.

5- Explanation of the Isti’aathah and Basmalah

أعوذ بِاللهِ مِن الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ I seek refuge in Allaah from ash-shaytaan ar-rajeem

This phrase is, without doubt, not part of al-Faatihah. It is only said in fulfillment of the command of Allaah

“And when you recite the Qur’aan, seek refuge with Allaah from ash-shaytaan ar-rajeem” [an-Nas:98]. Thus, when a Muslim wishes to recite the Qur’aan he should say a’oodhu billaahi min ash-shaytaan ar-rajeem at the onset of his recitation.

A’oodhu means: I seek refuge with Allaah, Most Glorious and Most High, and I seek His protection from this enemy, shaytaan.

Shaytaan refers to any completely rebellious, disobedient being, whether human, jinn, or animal. It is either derived from shaat which means to become severe, or from shatana which means to be distanced, and that is because the shaytaan is distanced and far removed from any type of good.
Rajeem means something which is hurled or cast out, since flames from the heavens are hurled at the shaytaan and they are unable to listen to things that are said there. They are also cast out by the mention and remembrance of Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted. Thus, shaytaan is driven out and away from all forms of good, and the Muslim must take recourse to His Lord and seek refuge with Allaah from the hamz, nafkh, and nafih of shaytaan as has been narrated from the Prophet ﷺ.

Hamz can refer to possession, since shaytaan may sometimes take control of a person and he may become insane. This type of possession is something that comes from shaytaan, as Allaah says:

> "...a person driven by shaytaan to insanity" [al-Baqarah:275]. Thus, shaytaan enters a person and pervades his body just as his own blood does, and shaytaan may sometimes take possession of a person. Thus, if Allaah does not protect someone from shaytaan, he can harm the person with whisperings, misconceptions, even possession leading to insanity.

Nafkh refers to haughtiness and arrogance which are things that come from shaytaan since he blows into a person and inflates his ego and sense of conceited pride.

Nafih refers to rhymes and poetry. Allaah has said,

> "and the poets are followed by people who are astray" [as-Saa‘eed:224]. Rhymes and poetry are from shaytaan, unless they are clean and have good contents and meanings; in this case they would be praiseworthy. The Messenger of Allaah ﷺ said, “Some types of speech can captivate and put the listener into a trance; and some types of poetry contain profound wisdom.” However, the majority of rhymes and poetry are of a bad nature, and they are from the nafih of shaytaan.

Nafih can also refer to magic and witchcraft. Allaah has said,

> "...and from the evil of those who blow upon knots" [al-Fadl:4].

It is mustahabb to say the ist`a‘alab before recitation both in and out of salaah based on the statement of Allaah,

> “And when you recite the Qur’aan, seek refuge with Allaah from ash-shaytaan ar-RAJEEM,”

and this applies to all cases in general, whether performing salaah or not.

In the Name of Allaah, the Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful

The letter baa in the basmalah signifies seeking assistance from Allaah. Thus, the intended meaning is: I seek assistance with the name of Allaah, or I seek protection with the name of Allaah. Also, the word ism (name) here is mufrad (singular) and it is in a construction of ıdaaf that entails that it applies to all the names that Allaah possesses. Thus, the meaning conveyed would be: I seek refuge with and seek good from all the names of Allaah, the Most Perfect and Exalted. All of the

9 As in the hadith about seeking refuge with Allaah while praying, narrated by Aboo Sa’eed al-Khudree. It was collected by Al-‘Ajam (11493) [4/129]; Aboo Daawood in Kitab al-Salaah, chapter 122, number 775, [1/344]; and at-Tirmidhee in Kitab al-Salaah, chapter 65, number 242, [2/9]. Ibn Maajah also collected similar narrations from Jabayr ibn Murjam (807) and Ibn Mas’ood (808).

10 Collected by Al-‘Ajam (2424) [1/701] from ibn `Abbaas. He also collected the first portion of the narration from several Companions. It was also collected by Aboo Daawood in Kitab al-Adab, chapter 95, number 5011, [5/174].
names of Allaah contain infinite good, and are used in order to attain good. Allaah has said,

“And infinite goodness is in the names of Your Lord, the Owner of all Glory and Bounty” [ar-Rahmaan:78]. Also, part of what the Prophet ﷺ said while supplicating at the beginning of salaat is, “wa tabaarakasmuka (and Your names contain all good)”. Hence, the name of Allaah is something by which you attain all forms of good, and this is what you seek by all the names of Allaah. When you say bismillaah, the letter baa and the word ism after it are linked to words which are omitted, and we infer these as being: I seek good from, and seek refuge with, the names of Allaah.

The word Allaah is the proper name which applies to the supreme being who is the one deserving of all worship. Allaah is one of His greatest names and it conveys the meaning of the one who is to be deified and worshipped. Thus, Allaah is the one deserving of worship, and the one to be sought out in fulfilling all of one’s needs.

Ar-Rahmaan is a name of Allaah which entails His attribute of mercy, and ar-Raheem is also a name of Allaah which entails His attribute of mercy. Therefore, ar-Rahmaan and ar-Raheem are both names of Allaah, and rahma (mercy) is one of His attributes. Each name of Allaah denotes a certain one of His attributes.

The distinction between ar-Rahmaan and ar-Raheem is that the former refers to His mercy which is general and encompasses all of His creation, while the latter refers to His mercy which He bestows upon the people of eemaan specifically, as He has stated,

“ever merciful to the Mu’timeen” [al-Ahqaaq:43].

6- Explanation of the Aayaat in Soorah al-Faatihah

All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation

Al-Hamd is praise of Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted. Allaah is praised for His names, attributes, and actions. Hamd (praise) is more comprehensive in meaning than shukr (gratitude), since shukr is only offered for actions. As for hamd, it is given for names, attributes, and actions. Thus hamd is more comprehensive than shukr, and this is the distinction between the two terms.

The al in al-hamdu lillaahi conveys the idea that all forms of praise are due to Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted; they all belong to Him and He deserves them. Nothing deserves all praise in an absolute sense besides Allaah, Most Majestic and Exalted, because He is the one that bestows all blessings in an absolute sense, and it follows that praise belongs to Him absolutely. Thus, al-hamdu lillaahi means that all forms of praise are due to Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted.

As for any created being, it can only be praised in proportion to the good that emanates from it; however, since Allaah is the one who put the good in that created being, the origin of that praise still returns back to Allaah, Most Mighty and Majestic.

The Rabb is the one who nurtures His creatures with His blessings and has complete dominion over them all. Rabb refers to the one who nurtures. It further refers to the one who owns, as Allaah is the owner of all creation. It also refers to the one that renders everything in order and puts everything in its suitable place, as Allaah is the one who sets things in order for His worshipping servants. The term ar-Rabb in a definitive sense is not to be used to refer to anything except Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted. Rabb may be used in a restricted, limited sense to refer to
other things, as in a construction which expresses ownership such as the rabb of a house, or the rabb of a set of camels, referring to the owner. However, ar-Rabb and Rabb al‘Aalameen are to be used in reference to Allaah only, and it is incorrect to describe anything else with these terms.

Al‘Aalameen is the plural of ‘aalam which refers to everything besides Allaah. This covers many realms, including humans, jinn, angels, inanimate objects, animals and others. Only Allaah knows all the realms that exist within the creation; all of them comprise ‘aalam, and Allaah is their Rabb and nothing is excluded from this quality He has over them.

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**The Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful**

Ar-Rahmaan and ar-Raheem were already discussed in the explanation of the basmalah.

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**Owner and Sovereign of the Day of Reckoning**

There are some recitations which say Maalik and others which say Malik. Both are valid, and Allaah is the Maalik (Sole Owner) as well as the Malik (Supreme Sovereign).

Ad-Deen refers to being held accountable and also being recompensed for one’s deeds. Allaah has said,

“No! On the contrary, you deny ad-deen.”[al-Infitar9] and also,

“Have you seen the person who denies ad-deen?”[al-Ma‘in:1] and also,

“So what is it that would still cause you to deny ad-deen after all this?”[al-Tern:7]. All of these are in reference to denying being held accountable and recompensed for deeds, and being brought back to life on the Day of Resurrection.

Despite Allaah being the Sole Owner and Supreme Sovereign of all days, the Day of ad-Deen was specifically mentioned because no one will own anything or have authority over anything on that day except Allaah, as He has said,

“To whom belongs all dominion on this day? To Allaah, the Unique, the One who Overpowers all else”[Ghaafir:16]. On that day, rulers and subjects will all be equal, and none will have any sort of authority except Allaah, Most Majestic and Exalted. This is the significance of making specific reference to Allaah being the only owner and authority on the Day of ad-Deen – despite Him having that quality for all other days as well – since authority will be removed from everyone else but Him. This is also in line with the hadeeth which mentions that Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted, will say, “I am the Sole Sovereign! Where are the prideful? Where are the haughty?”[1] similar to the aforementioned statement of Allaah.

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“To whom belongs all dominion on this day? To Allaah, the Unique, the One who Overpowers all else” [Ghafir:16]. All people will be equals on that day: kings, slaves, nobles, impoverished, and affluent. None will have any distinction over another except by way of righteous deeds.

You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek assistance

Iyyaka na’budu means we specify You with acts of worship. Iyyaka was put first to convey the idea that the worship is being directed only to Allaah, and none else deserves worship except Him. This construction falls under what is called ba’gh in the Arabic language, and it conveys the meaning “none deserves to be worshipped except You.”

Nasta’een refers to seeking assistance, and doing so is itself an act of worship. Therefore, why was it specifically mentioned despite it being part of what preceded in the phrase iyyaka na’budu? Scholars have explained that this is a case of first mentioning something comprehensive and then mentioning a specific instance of it afterwards. Worship is the right of Allaah, while receiving assistance is the right of His servants, since it is the creation that seeks assistance from Allaah and asks of Him to fulfil their needs.

Iyyaka was repeated twice to emphasize the fact that nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allaah, and assistance is not to be sought from anything other than Allaah. In fact, all of Islam revolves around worshipping Allaah and seeking His assistance, which are both in the phrase iyyaka na’budu wa iyyaka nasta’een.

Guide us to the straight path

Ihdinaa-sirajatal-mustaqeem is a supplication where a request is made. Al-hamdu lillaahi rabbil-‘aalameen at the beginning of the soorah is a supplication of worship. This distinction is made since supplications are of two types: the first is worship, which comprises praise and glorification of Allaah; the second is where a request is made, and an instance of this is from ihdinasa-sirajatal-mustaqeem until the end of the soorah, where one asks for guidance to the straight path.

Ibdinaa is a request for guidance in the form of being shown what is correct. Guidance may be classified into four categories, but the most important of them are two:

The first category of guidance is directing someone to what is right. This type of guidance is the more general of them from two perspectives. It is more general from the perspective of the guidance itself, because it is given to both the mu’min and kaafir alike. Allaah has given this type of guidance to the kaafir by showing and directing him to what is correct, as in the statement of Allaah,

“As for Thamood, We gave them direction. However, they preferred blindness over guidance” [Fussilat:17]. It is also more general from the perspective of the one providing the guidance and direction, because it includes the Messenger ﷺ and those who follow him:

“You indeed guide to a path which is straight” [asb. Suroor:52].
The second category of guidance is allowing someone to accept what is right. This type of guidance is the more specific of them from the same two perspectives: it is only granted to the mu’min, and it is something which only Allaah can provide. This is why Allaah denied that His Messenger ﷺ could provide this type of guidance, as He stated,

"You cannot guide those whom you love guidance for. Rather, Allaah guides whom He wishes." [at-Tabari:56].

Thus, ibdinaa is a request for both types of guidance from Allaah: to be shown and directed to what is right, as well as to be allowed to accept it and remain firm in following it. 

As-Siraat literally means a path upon which humans and other creatures walk. However, the intended meaning of as-siraat here is the path of Islaam, the Qur’aan, and the Messenger ﷺ. These are referred to as paths because each of them is a path that leads to Allaah, Most Perfect and Exalted. 

Al-Mustaqeen means straight without any divergence, and clear without any obscurity, such that anyone who traverses it would not stray from it or get lost. Contrary to this are the many divergent, crooked paths where one becomes lost and strays from his objective. This is why Allaah said,

\[ \text{وَأَنَّ هَذَا صَرَطُ ٱلسُّتْقِيَّةُ ٱلْمُقْتَدِمُ ۖ ۛلَوْ نَزَاعٌ عَنْ ٱلسَّمِّى} \]

"This is My straight path. Therefore, follow it, and do not follow the other paths as they will divert you from His path. This is what He has commanded you in order that you would observe taqwa” [al-At-Taubah:153]. Hence, the path of Allaah is one and has no divergence, crookedness, or obscurity, whereas the other divergent paths are crooked and lead one astray – and we seek refuge in Allaah from this. Such is the reason for what the Prophet ﷺ did when he recited this aqybah: “This is My straight path. Therefore, follow it, and do not follow the other paths…” He drew a straight line and then drew many other divergent lines off to its right and left. He then said in reference to the straight line, “This is the path of Allaah,” and he said about the other lines, “These are the other paths. Each of them has a shaytaan calling to it.”\(^{12}\)

\[ \text{سَرَطُ ٱلْذِّيْنَ أَعْصَمَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ} \]

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your favor

Allaah sometimes ascribes the path to Himself, as in

\[ \text{وَأَنَّ هَذَا صَرَطُ ٱلسُّتْقِيَّةُ} \]

"This is My straight path” [al-At-Taubah:153], as well as

\[ \text{وَأَنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ إِلَى صَرَطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ} \]

“You indeed guide to a path which is straight: the path of Allaah.” [as-Saheeha:52-53]. Allaah ascribes the path to Himself because it is the path which leads to Him, and He is the one who has directed all people to it, clarified it, and commanded that it be followed. Thus, its ascription to Allaah shows its honor and distinction, as well as the fact that it leads to Allaah.

However, sometimes Allaah ascribes the path to those who follow and traverse it, as in the

\(^{12}\) Collected by Aḥmad (4142) and al-Haakim in Kitāb at-Taafsir (3294) from ibn Mas’ood. Al-Haakim said it is saheeh al-insaadh and that al-Bukhaaree and Muslim did not collect it in their respective books. It was also collected by ibn Maajah in his introduction from Jaabir, chapter 1, number 11, [1/15].
aayah here in Soorah al-Faatihah, “The path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your favor.” The path is ascribed to those people because they are the ones who traverse it, contrary to others who follow the divergent paths which cause them to get lost and lead them astray.

The favor referred to is that of guiding them to this correct path and allowing them to accept it and follow it, and this is the greatest of favors that someone can have from Allaah. These people have been specified by Allaah in His statement,

“And whoever obeys Allaah and the Messenger shall be with those upon whom Allaah has bestowed His favor; among the Prophets, the siddeeqeen (who are foremost in affirming the truthfulness of what the Prophets brought), the shuhadaa’ (who are martyred in the path of Allaah), and the saaliheen (who are the righteous worshipping servants of Allaah)…” [an-Nisaa’ 4:69]. These are the people who follow this path. The first category comprises the Prophets, and they are the foremost of all who follow it; next are the siddeeqeen, and they are the best of all creation after the Prophets; next are the shuhadaa’ martyred in the path of Allaah, and they come after the siddeeqeen in rank; and next come the saaliheen, and they comprise all the rest of the mu’mineen.

Thus, the people who follow this straight path are of levels: first come the Prophets, may Allaah send salaah and salaam upon them all; next come the siddeeqeen; next come the shuhadaa’; and next come the saaliheen from every people and nation.

We implore Allaah to make us all followers of this straight path and place us in the company of those aforementioned people,

“and they are certainly fine company to be part of” [an-Nisaa’ 4:69]. However, when a person traverses that straight path, he may find pressures, problems, and harms in this world, and he may feel estranged and alone. People may physically harm him, or perhaps mock at him, or threaten and insult him. Yet, when he calls to mind the company he is in – those upon whom Allaah has bestowed His favor – he finds tranquility and he can persevere through whatever he faces along the way. The path he traverses is surrounded by hardships and adverse circumstances, and it is not a bed of roses. It is, thus, necessary for you to follow and traverse it persevering with great patience and firm resolve, and one of the things which will assist you in doing so is to realize you are in the company of those aforementioned people. However, this is something which requires eemaan, and few are those who are guided to this reality.

“None would be guided to these qualities except those who persevere, and none would be guided to them except those who have a tremendous portion” [Fussilat 40:35].

The people upon whom Allaah has bestowed His favor are those who have beneficial knowledge and perform righteous actions, among the Prophets, siddeeqeen, shuhadaa’, and saaliheen.

Not those who have earned wrath, and not those who have gone astray

“Not those who have earned wrath” refers to those who have knowledge but do not act accordingly. They are people who have beneficial knowledge and understanding, yet they do not perform the deeds which are in conformity with the knowledge they have. Thus, they earn wrath
since they disobey Allaah while fully aware of what they are doing. This description applies to all who do not act in conformity with their knowledge, and at the head of such people are the *yahood* since they had knowledge, and Allaah described them as people of scripture and people who possessed knowledge. However, they did not act in accordance with their knowledge, and this earned them the wrath of Allaah. Yet, it must be kept in mind that all this is not specific to them alone; rather, it is general and applies to anyone who follows that same course of acquiring knowledge but not acting in accordance with it.\(^\text{13}\)

"**Not those who have gone astray**" refers to those who act without having necessary knowledge, since acting in such away shows that they are not following any type of guidance. They are like a person who wanders about not knowing where he is going. When someone wanders about the Earth without knowing where to go or which path to follow is he not referred to – in a literal sense – as being lost or straying? Is it not also perhaps said that he is putting himself in great danger? Similarly, when someone acts without necessary knowledge, he is astray – and we seek refuge in Allaah from this. This is the case even if a person performs many deeds, puts himself through great hardship, wails and weeps, earnestly desires *Jannah*, and thinks he is drawing closer to Allaah. The fact that he did not traverse the right path will prevent him from reaching his destination. The phrase “**those who have gone astray**” includes the *nasaraa* due to them acting without knowledge, and it also includes people who follow various superstitions and innovated acts ascribed to Islaam, since their actions are not based upon knowledge.

Hence, when someone prays or recites this *Soorah*, he is asking Allaah to protect him from these two categories of people: those who possess knowledge but to not act in conformity with it, and those who act without having necessary knowledge.

There are currently certain groups and organizations which discourage people from knowledge and being educated. They tell people to engage themselves with certain acts of worship or words of remembrance, and to set out with them “fee sabeelillaah” as they put it. However, what they really mean by “fee sabeelillaah” is to merely travel to various places and move about, while they discourage people from learning and they belittle knowledge and the people who have it! This approach is misguidance, and we seek refuge with Allaah from it. It is necessary to have knowledge first, based on the statement of Allaah,

> **“Have knowledge that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah, and seek forgiveness for your sin”** [Muhammad\(^\text{19}\)] where He began with knowledge before statement and action.

The aforementioned *aegaat* from *Soorah al-Faatihah* show that people fall into three categories with respect to knowledge and deeds:

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\(^\text{13}\) [Publisher’s note] In the author’s book, *al-Mulakhkhal al-Fiqhoh*, he also mentioned in the section about the merits of acquiring knowledge of Islaam (pg.9) that Muhammad ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhaab said, “In the statement of Allaah ‘**not those who have earned wrath, and not those who have gone astray**’ the ones who earn wrath are people who do not act according to what they know, while the ones who go astray are people who act without having any knowledge. The first applies to the *yahood* and the second applies to the *nasaraa*. However, when an ignorant person reads in *tafeer* that the *yahood* are the ones who earned wrath and the *nasaraa* are the ones who went astray, he thinks those descriptions apply only to them and no one else. Yet, he also reads that his Lord has obligated making this supplication and seeking refuge from following the ways of such people. *Subh'aanallaah!* Is it conceivable that Allaah would teach someone this supplication, specifically choose it for him to say, and obligate that he always supplicate his Lord using it, while there is no danger of the person himself having such characteristics? Compounding things is that the person doesn’t even realize that this way of thinking reflects that he actually thinks ill of Allaah.” The author then commented that, in the cited passage, Muhammad ibn ‘Abdil-Wahhaab explained to us some of the wisdom behind the obligation of reciting *Soorah al-Faatihah* in every *rak'ah* of prayer, whether obligatory or optional. It is due to the profound meanings which this tremendous *soorah* contains, and one of them is a person supplicating Allaah to guide him to the path of those who have beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds, since that is the path that would save him in this world and the hereafter. In addition, it also contains supplicating Allaah to keep one away from the path of those who have destroyed themselves as a result of neglecting either righteous deeds or beneficial knowledge.\(^\text{12}\)
Those who combine beneficial knowledge with righteous deeds are the ones upon whom Allaah bestows His favor. It is their path which you ask Allaah to guide you to follow when you recite this soorah.

Then, those who have knowledge but neglect deeds, and these are the people who have earned wrath, regardless of what affiliation they have or what religion they ascribe to. There are also those who take action and perform deeds, but without having any knowledge, and these are the people who are astray. Both of these categories have lost out, and we ask Allaah to protect us from that.

Thus, if you reflect upon this soorah, you should realize how profoundly important it truly is, and realize that Allaah did not designate it to be recited in every rak‘ah of prayer except due to its outstanding significance over every other soorah.

Another aspect of this significance is the tremendous supplication which the soorah contains: a supplication of praise and worship at the beginning, and a supplication of request at the end. The entire soorah is a supplication, and this is why it is mustalabb for the imaam, ma‘moom, and munfarid to say aameen after reciting it while praying. Aameen means “O Allaah, respond to this supplication.” It is a request for Allaah to respond to the supplication in this soorah. Although it is not waajib to say aameen while praying, it remains mustalabb for the imaam, ma‘moom, and munfarid to say aameen aloud if the recitation in prayer is aloud, and to say it silently if the recitation is silent.

7- Some Merits of the Soorah

One of the merits which shows the significance of this soorah is reported in a qudeee narration collected in Sahheeh Muslim where Allaah says, “I have divided as-Salaah between myself and My worshipping servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he requests.” The intended meaning of “as-Salaah” here is Soorah al-Faatihah, which is named as-Salaah due to it being recited during prayer (as-Salaah), as well as the fact that as-Salaah literally means supplication (ad-Du‘a‘), and Soorah al-Faatihah is a supplication.

Bearing in mind that the soorah contains seven aayah, the statement “between myself and My worshipping servant into two halves” means that three-and-a-half of the aayah are for Allaah, and three-and-a-half are for the servant.

When he says, “All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation,” Allaah, Most Exalted, says, “My servant has praised Me.”

When he says, “The Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful,” Allaah, Most Exalted, says, “My servant has glorified Me.”

When he says, “Owner and Sovereign of the Day of Reckoning,” Allaah, Most Exalted, says, “My servant has extolled Me.”

When he says, “You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek assistance,” Allaah, Most Exalted, says, “This is between Myself and My servant, and My servant shall have what he requests.”

“You alone we worship” is for Allaah, while “and from You alone we seek assistance” is for the servant. Therefore, the portion for the servant is from “and from You alone we seek assistance” until the end of the soorah because he supplicates his Lord here. Whereas, the portion for Allaah is from “All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation…” until up to “You alone we worship” because this is all praise for Allaah, Most Majestic and Exalted. All this reflects the true greatness of this soorah.

Thus, when the servant then says “Guide us to the straight path; the path of those upon whom You have bestowed Your favor, not those who have earned wrath, and not those who have gone astray,” Allaah then says, “This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he
8- Other Points Gleaned from the Soorah

Among the things which further demonstrate the significance of this soorah are statements the scholars have made about the tremendously profound meanings which it contains.

Firstly, it affirms the three categories of tawheed. “All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation” reflects tawheed ar-ruboobiyyah. “The Most Merciful, the Especially Merciful. Owner and Sovereign of the Day of Reckoning” reflects tawheed al-asma’ was-gifaat. “You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek assistance” reflects tawheed al-uloohiyyah. Thus, it contains reference to the three categories of tawheed.

Secondly, it affirms that Messengers were sent. “Rabb of all creation” affirms the rubooqiyah of Allaah, and that implies that He would not neglect His servants, leaving them without the things which would lead to their betterment. One of the things that would be most advantageous for them is to send Messengers to them, and this is evident in the statement “Guide us to the straight path” since that path cannot be clearly distinguished without sending Messengers to mankind. Thus, it contains reference to Messengers being sent.

Thirdly, it disproves the various misguided factions.

It disproves the ideas of the mulhiddeen, who deny the existence of a supreme Lord altogether.

“Rabb of all creation” disproves those who claim that this world has no supreme Lord and it is the creation which makes itself, and nature which originates everything. Such a claim defies the intellect, since every created thing must have a maker, and it is not possible for things to happen within this creation without some agent to make them happen. All things in this world are indicative of their Creator, Most Perfect and Exalted, and indicative of the fact that He is the one who brought them into being and regulates them.

It also disproves the ideas of the mushrikeen, who believe in a supreme Lord, yet still worship others along with Him. “All praise is due to Allaah, Rabb of all creation”, “You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek assistance”, and “Guide us to the straight path” all disprove the idea of worshipping Allaah while also worshipping others at the same time.

It also disproves certain ideas of the jahmiyyah, mut’aqilah, and others deny the attributes of Allaah.

It further disproves those who deny being brought back to life after passing on from this world. “Owner and Sovereign of the Day of Reckoning” refers to the day when everyone will be taken to account and given fair recompense. Thus, it affirms being brought back to life after death.

It disproves the methods followed by the yahood and nasara as well as others who either follow the course of having knowledge but not acting in conformity with it, or follow the course of taking action without having sound knowledge. Thus, it reprimands any knowledgeable person who does not act in conformity to his knowledge, as well as anyone who takes action without basing it on sound knowledge.

This is why scholars have said this soorah disproves all the various factions there are. Thus, it

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14 Collected by Muslim from Aboo Hurayrah in Kitab as-Salaah, chapter 11, number 395, [2/324].

[Publisher’s note] In Madaarij as-Saalikeen (1/22-23) ibn al-Qayyim states, “Since asking Allaah for guidance to the straight path is the loftiest objective there is, and nothing better can be attained than it, Allaah taught His worshipping servants how to ask of Him. He commanded them to first begin by praising and extolling Him, and then to make mention of their worshipping servitude to Him alone. These two – using His names and attributes, as well as using His sole right to their worshipping servitude – are means to achieving their objective, and a supplication would almost never be rejected when the two of them are used together. Soorah al-Faatihah combines both of these: seeking means to Allaah by praising and extolling Him, and seeking means to Him by affirming His sole right to be worshipped. After using those two means comes the request for guidance, which is the objective of utmost importance and it is the best thing one can seek after. Thus, when someone calls upon Allaah like this, he deserves to be answered.
deserves to be called *Umm al-Kitaab* because the *Umm* of any unit is the thing which all the components of that unit return back to and revolve around; and all of the Qur’aan returns back to this *soorah* since all of Qur’aan revolves around the meanings which this *soorah* contains.

This magnificent *soorah* is recited and repeated by multitudes of people, but that may merely be done verbally without having any concept or comprehension of what it actually means. To such people, it is merely something they say as if it were a formula in a foreign language. This is dreadfully incorrect and it is a devastating shortcoming, as the Qur’aan was revealed for us to reflect upon it and understand what it means.

And Allaah knows best, and may He send *salaab* and *salaam* upon our Prophet, Muhammed, and upon his family and Companions.

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Note: referencing for narrations mentioned in this booklet were taken from *Duroos min al-Qur’aan al-Kareem*, also by the same author, published by *Daar al-Aa3imah*. 