



The Thinking Muslim

SURAH AL-FATIHAH EXPLAINED

By

Rameez Abid

www.thethinkingmuslim.com

INTRODUCTION TO AL-FATIHAH



The Thinking Muslim

- Al-Fatihah literally means 'The Opening' because the Quran opens with it. It is the first chapter (surah) of the Quran and is considered its 'greatest surah'
- It is seen to be a precise table of contents of the Quranic message because some scholars of exegesis have stated that this chapter is a summary of the whole Quran
- It has other names as well, such as, the Mother of the Book, The Cure, The Commendation (Hamd), and others
 - Another name is The Seven Oft-Repeated Verses because it is recited daily in the salah

THE TA'WWUZ/ISTI'AADHA



The Thinking Muslim

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Shaytaan

Explanation:

- It is a form of supplication (du'a)
- We are commanded to say it before starting to recite the Qur'an
- Seek refuge means to seek protection and aid. He is always out to harm us
- He is cursed because he will **never** receive Allah's mercy
- We are asking Allah because He alone can save us from Him

THE BASMALAH



The Thinking Muslim

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Explanation:

- Means "I begin with the Name of Allah seeking His help in all my affairs"
 - The meaning changes based on the context
- 'Allah' is one of His Names that are **exclusive** to Him alone and cannot be given to anyone else
 - It is a general Name in reference to the Creator and Controller of all existence
- 'Ar-Rahmaan' means mercy towards all things
- 'Ar-Raheem' means **special** type of mercy towards the believers only
- Scholars differ whether it is part of every surah or not

VERSE 1



The Thinking Muslim

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds

Explanation:

- The Arabic word hamd: means praise and gratitude (shukr)
 - Hamd is something that is done only for the living and necessitates sincerity
 - The word is used as a noun in the sentence to indicate that hamd of Him is timeless and permanent
 - Gratitude (shukr)
 - Here it means to show gratitude/appreciation for whatever He does for us in our lives

VERSE 1



The Thinking Muslim

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds

Explanation:

- Shukr is in three: heart, tongue, and limbs
- The Arabic phrase Al-Hamd Lillahi means hamd only belongs to Allah alone and nobody else because He is the cause of everything
- The Arabic word Rabb (Master)
 - This is our main relationship with Him. The summary of the whole Quran is that: He is our Master and we are His slaves
 - We belong to Allah and He has complete power and control over us. We do not and cannot set limits on Him but He sets limits on us. He will judge us on the Day of Judgement and we will not judge Him

VERSE 1



The Thinking Muslim

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds

Explanation:

- Other Meanings of Rabb:
 - It can mean the giver of gifts, caretaker, maintainer (make sure something does not die), owner, etc.
- The Arabic word 'alameen (worlds)
 - It can have multiple meanings:
 - Nations of people, Ethnicities of people, Societies of people, Different species (angels, jinn, animals, etc.), People of different worlds, Generations of people

VERSE 2



The Thinking Muslim

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful

Explanation:

- The origin of both words, al-Rahman and al-Raheem, is mercy (rahmah)
 - They are put together here in one sentence to highlight the difference
- Word al-Rahman means a more general type of mercy that covers all of His creation, whereas, the word al-Raheem means that there is a special type of mercy which He gives only to the believers

VERSE 3



The Thinking Muslim

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Master of the Day of Judgement

Explanation:

- The word **maalik** means here that He is the owner of that day and its king
 - An owner pays attention to details, whereas, a king concerns himself with big things. Allah does both
 - Allah is saying that great day when judgement will take place is owned by Him
- There are only two kinds of people on that great day
 - Those who will receive His mercy
 - Those who will receive His justice

VERSE 4

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ



The Thinking Muslim

It is You we worship and You we ask for help

Explanation:

- The first part of this verse is related to worship, which means our primary task is to be His slave and submit to Him. The second part relates to seeking His help
 - When the previous three verses are understood properly, it will naturally lead to this
- We must give ourselves totally to Him
 - We can only truly be free when we enslave ourselves to our creator
- Some also suggest that the second part of the verse (seeking His aid) is requesting Allah to help us with the first part of the verse (worshipping and submitting to Him)

VERSE 5

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ



The Thinking Muslim

Guide us to the straight path

Explanation:

- This is the number one thing we should be asking for
- This is so important that we ask for it in every unit of prayer when we recite the Fatiha
 - We must beg for it
- Arabic word *siraat* (path)
 - Here it means one straight path which cannot have multiples
 - There is only one path to God
 - The word *siraat* does not have a plural because it is alone and can only be one
- Arabic word *mustaqeem* (straight): implies that it leads straight upwards to the heavens

VERSE 6



The Thinking Muslim

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor

Explanation:

- It is in reference to those righteous people that have already died upon truth and righteousness. It is not referring to those who are currently alive because they can still go astray
- The words "You have bestowed favor"
 - Meaning Allah made it easy for them
- Some said they are in reference to the: prophets, truthful, martyrs, and righteous

VERSE 7



The Thinking Muslim

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray

Explanation:

- It is interesting to note that Allah does not refer to Himself in this verse, as in the previous verse, because He does not even want to be mentioned with them. He is distancing Himself away from them
- This is also in reference to people who were given knowledge, thus, they knew the truth but still chose to go the wrong way
 - Ex: the Jews who denied the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) despite him clearly being mentioned in their books
- The Arabic word *dhaalleen* (those who are astray)
 - It is in reference to those who do not know any better and are ignorant, however, their ignorance in this case is not an excuse
 - Ex: the Christians who say Allah is one of three

CONCLUSION OF AL-FATIHAH



The Thinking Muslim

- All of humanity can be categorized into three categories:
 - Those whom He favored
 - Those with whom He is angry
 - Those who got lost
- **Iyyaka na'budu** is the conclusion of first part of the chapter and **wa iyyaka nasta'een** is the conclusion of the second part of it