

## Sūrah al-Fātiḥah I

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

In the Name of Allah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

1. All Praise is for Allah Alone, Rabb of the entire Universe.
2. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.
3. Master of the Day of Judgement.
4. You Alone do we worship and from You Alone we seek help.
5. Guide us onto the straight Path.
6. The Path of those whom You rewarded.
7. Not of those condemned by You nor of those who went astray.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ

الْمَغضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

\*\*\*\*\*

## The Secrets of Revelation

The first complete Sūrah revealed at one time.

## The Manner of Supplication

Allah has taught mankind a comprehensive and complete prayer. It opens with His praise, followed by acknowledgement of His greatness and the servitude of mankind to Him. Alongwith His glorification, it puts forth the request for His help and succour, as well as for bliss both in this world and the next. Thus it has been made clear that while praying or supplicating to Allah, the manner and the sequence should be to glorify Him first, to express one's own humility

and worthlessness; to promise complete submission to **Him**, and finally submit the request.

*All Praise is for Allah Alone, Rabb of the entire universe.*

After seeking **Allah's** protection against Satan, and then beginning in **His** Name, the first thing is to acknowledge that **Allah** is the centre of all excellence and positive attributes. Be it beauty or glory, strength or might, knowledge or skill: whenever any of the qualities is appreciated in the creation, the real credit shall always go to the Creator. By appreciating a piece of art one actually praises the artist. **Allah** is the Nourisher of the universe, the Bestower of skills and excellence to the entire creation. **His** system of Providence is so comprehensive that the whole creation benefits from it simultaneously. **He** has not only given **His** creations an existence, but has also taught them how to grow and survive and to work for betterment. **He** blessed them with the awareness of their needs, and provided them with means and resources for the fulfilment. The universe has been so designed and the workshop of life so well organised that while the sun lights the royal palaces, it also illuminates the huts of the poor at the same time. While fruits ripen in the orchards, ant's eggs are also being hatched. Air, light, rain, seasons and the perpetual cycle of day and night affect the whole creation simultaneously, by regulating them, and providing them with necessities and all the benefits of life.

### **The Divine Way of Educating the Creation**

This is the excellence of **His** Providence that while **He** has provided all that is required, **He** has also given everyone the sense to discern its needs and the means of fulfilment. A calf, instantly after birth, knows that its food is milk, and also knows where to look for it. It instinctively reaches for the udder. Similarly, a newly born tadpole starts swimming as soon as it is born. Even a tiny little ant knows its course of action. The breeze carries the aroma of grains to it. It splits the grain into halves before storing it in its burrow, lest it may sprout due to the dampness of soil and render its efforts futile. But it splits a coriander seed into quarters, fully aware that a coriander seed is capable of sprouting even from halves. This is the perfect system of Divine Providence that **He** has blessed the needy with complete realisation of its needs, along with appropriate knowledge for the fulfilment.

The Qurān presents this Divine Attribute of Providence as evidence to **Allah's** Greatness and Absolute Divinity, and establishes it as the basis of human obligation to worship **Him**.

## **Prophethood - a Proof of Allah's Providence**

This Divine Attribute of Providence is indeed a proof of the validity of Prophethood. A human being does not represent a physical body alone, but both the body and the Spirit. Whereas the human being has the knowledge of his physical needs and the ways of the fulfilment, he must also know his spiritual requirements and the means of accomplishment. The intellect and knowledge pertaining to physical body, its growth and the related sciences are granted to the mind. All minds differ in their capacity. Some people excel others in various fields, and their help is sought in matters pertaining to their particular specialisation. Similarly, the Qalb was Divinely chosen as the seat of faculties required for growth and advancement of the Spirit. Then Allah sent Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, masters of the art of reforming human hearts. Over the varying periods of time, mankind benefited from these Prophets<sup>AS</sup> and stood spiritually reformed. Those who failed to reform themselves died spiritually just like the one deprived of food dies physically. It is **Rabb, Who** communicates with the ant and the calf, and guides the honeybee to flowers and teaches it to transform nectar into honey. These are all manifestations of **His** Attribute of Providence. It is only appropriate for **His** Providence to confer Prophethood upon **His** chosen people, and thus provide for the life and development of the Spirit. **He** speaks to the Prophets<sup>AS</sup> and blesses them with Revelation or inspiration and intuition. The true and devoted followers of the Prophets<sup>AS</sup> are those who practically spend their lives according to their teachings. From amongst these devotees, some may receive a droplet of this great blessing, commensurate with their capacity, through sincere and devout adherence to the Prophet<sup>AS</sup>. That actually is a reflection of the Prophetic excellence and is known as Kashf, Ilqā or intuition. A Prophet, however, clearly and correctly discerns the content and meaning of whatever descends on him.

## **Possibility and Cause of Error in the Kashf of a Wali**

The Kashf of a Wali is also true, being a communication from Allah, yet the possibility of error in its interpretation cannot be ruled out, because the perceptions of a Wali are not as refined as that of a Prophet<sup>AS</sup>. Therefore, it is imperative that the Kashf of a Wali must conform to the teachings of the Prophet<sup>AS</sup>. Otherwise, it should be outrightly rejected. Besides, it is incumbent on the entire Ummah to obey all commands of their Prophet, while the Kashf of a Wali constitutes no authority for others to follow.

## *The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

Al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm are the two synonymous Divine Attributes pertaining to **His** Mercy. Al-Raḥmān or the Gracious signifies a transient Attribute. In Arabic grammar, verbs of such phonetic balance (ān) denote those conditions,

which do not exhibit permanency, like *ghadhbān* (to be angry), *aṭshān* (to be thirsty), *ḥairān* (to be surprised). This Attribute of Grace too, is a branch of **Allah's** Providence. Since **He** is the Creator and the **Rabb** of the entire universe, **He** is also **Raḥmān**, as it does not befit **Him** to deprive any of **His** creatures from the resources and means of sustaining life. Therefore, as long as this universe exists, all the creations will receive their share of necessities to maintain their existence. This is the general Mercy for all. Yet there is another special and classified Mercy, emanating from **His** Attribute of **al-Raḥīm**. Grammatically, the verbs in this tense in Arabic language denote permanence of attributes or actions, e.g., **ʿAlīm** (the Knower), **Ḥakīm** (the Wise). The manifestation of Mercy in this case is extensive and eternal, which will neither diminish nor disconnect.

This aspect of **His** Mercy (**al-Raḥīm**), in spite of its element of Providence is in itself only a speck of the vast field of Mercy. Another aspect of Mercy deals with educating the entire universe on each and every aspect of their existence. The knowledge given to the creation for the fulfilment of their needs is also a manifestation of this Attribute. The conferring of honour and awards upon leading a successful temporal life, and the gifts of excellence, beauty, and unlimited and unimaginable favours in the **Ākhirah**, all originate from the fountainhead of the Attribute of Mercy as no one could have compelled **Allah** to do so. And the knowledge granted by **Allah** for the fulfilment of needs is also a display of **His** Mercy.

### **Attainment of Allah's Mercy is a Human Need**

The highest form of knowledge is the one acquired through the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, which serves as the means of attaining **Allah's** Mercy by people. It should also be noted that **Allah's** Grace (flowing from **His** Attribute of **al-Raḥmān**) is being manifested only as long as this world exists, and the believers and the non-believers are equally availing it. But once this world, which is the stage for its display, comes to an end, this Attribute too would cease to manifest. Since the human beings have to pass on to the eternal world, they must seek, through the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, the eternal component of **Allah's** Mercy (flowing from **al-Raḥīm**). If people remain indifferent towards the attainment of **Allah's** Mercy, and feel contented with **His** Grace alone, they must realise that it will discontinue as soon as this life is over. Then, if they had not attained **His** Mercy, they will be seized by **His** punishment. For that reason **He** is called **Raḥmān ad-Dunya** (Gracious in the world) and **Raḥīm al-Ākhirah** (Merciful in the Hereafter). It is this Mercy, which not only creates the entire universe but also gives it a perfect balance, beauty and grandeur. In short, every change contains a positive and constructive aspect, no matter how destructive it may appear. Withering of

each flower actually heralds the blossoming of a new bud. Again, in the disappearance of the bud is the emergence of a new flower. Thus a harp made by a craftsman does not compose melodies on its own, but it is the contribution of a tree that had been felled for it.

This process of addition and elimination goes on endlessly, as **He** has indicated that **He** retains the beneficial and eradicates the useless. Any aspect of subversion is attributable to man himself, who foolishly distorts the beauty of this universe. The human life adds splendour and beauty to the canvas of this world. Every human activity defines a particular colour in this masterpiece. Thus, when man treads the righteous path he makes flowers bloom at each step. But when he commits sins and transgresses, he blemishes the beauty of the whole picture. He not only abuses his own soul by committing a sin, but the viciousness of his sin pollutes the whole environment. Sin generates and spreads mischief and trouble all around. That is why the Creator of this beautiful universe has warned the human beings: *Do not create mischief in the land*. Disobedience of this command deprives man of eternal salvation and **His Mercy**.

#### *Owner of the Day of Judgement*

The basic motive behind man's actions is the attainment of benefit. Therefore, someone who can reward his actions will naturally be the centre of all his hopes; and he would never imagine annoying such a Benefactor. While **Allah** has control over the end result of every action at all times, there shall be a Day when no soul will be absent, and no one will dare to claim any power or authority. That will be the Day of ultimate Requital. On that Day, the entire universe, including the most stubborn deniers will instantly acknowledge **Allah's** Absolute Sovereignty and Majesty, because **He** is the Fountainhead of all excellence and the Sustainer of the universe. All blessings benefiting **His** creation, whether temporary or permanent, are a manifestation of **His** Grace and Mercy. Indeed **He** Alone is the Owner, **Whose** Ownership will be acknowledged by everyone in the *Ākhirah*. **He** has always been the only One worthy of worship; and on that Day the denial of every arrogant shall be wiped away like sweepings.

By reciting this *Āyah*, the worshipper achieves a certain level of nearness with **Allah** and feels himself in **His** exalted presence. As soon as he realises this, he reverts from the indirect and submits directly: *You Alone do we worship and from You alone we seek help*. For I have observed the entire universe as resourceless and **You** alone the Provider. I worship **You**, because I am nothing within myself, and I need **Your** help and support through every moment of my life. When **You** are so Gracious and Merciful, and we so helpless and humble

pleading for your help with our foreheads touching down in Sajdah before **You**, then **O Allah!** *Guide us unto the Straight Path*. It is worth noticing that the singular pronoun 'I' has been replaced by the collective 'us'. This is because the devotee observes himself and the entire universe in a state of Sajdah, including **Allah's** chosen friends. Now he cannot isolate himself from them and entreats: "**O Allah!** *You Alone do we worship and from You alone we seek help*", so *Guide us unto the Straight Path*". The word 'us' includes all the righteous, the Shuhadā', the Şiddīqīn and the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, all of whom are requesting **Allah** for guidance and adherence to the right path. Because of the collective prayer of these noble souls, many wrongdoers also receive Mercy and guidance! Praise be to **Allah!** What an amazing prayer **He** has taught us; which can never be rejected; neither can **Allah's** Magnificence diminish, nor can the 'us' of the implorer go in vain. As this 'us' comprises mainly those who are held very dearly by **Allah** and are the bearers of **His** All-Embracing Grace; it is indeed beyond **His** Graciousness to accept the invocation of such a large group and reject the prayer of an individual. In truth, even our humblest and most devoted supplications and prayers can never be worthy of acceptance in **His** Court, because **His** Majesty and Glory are far too sublime. On the other hand our present situation is such that the element of humility and awe are totally missing from our prayers.

And when the supplications of the righteous, the Sujūd of the Shuhadā', the worship of the Mujāhidīn of Islām offered in the heat of the battle, the adoration of Angels and **Allah's** Messengers<sup>AS</sup>, and above all those offered by the Holy Prophet<sup>SAW</sup> are taken in view, then our worship appears worthless. But observe **Allah's** Mercy in the manner of prayer taught to us: "*You Alone do we worship*", this collectivity interlaces our prayers with those of the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, the Aulia and the Shuhadā' and carries them to the door of Divine acceptance.

Praise be to **Allah!** The Magnificence of **Allah** was already known to the worshipper, but as he observes the submission and humility of **His** elite, it is further endorsed on his Qalb that **Allah** Alone is the Bestower, and all the rest are dependent upon **Him**.

### **The Reality of Wasilah (Means of Approach)**

The real Wasilah is that a person must seek the company of the righteous with the intention of becoming a faithful servant of **Allah**. It is possible that with them and through them, he might achieve his desired goal. It is a pity that while some people completely deny it, others have invented all sorts of absurdities in its name.

Now, when it comes to the acceptance of supplications, the devotee further states and defines his proposition. **Allah** forbid, it is not that he is trying to elaborate things to **Allah**, but he is actually counselling himself while addressing the Almighty. "*The Path of those whom You rewarded, not of those condemned by You nor of those who went astray*". This can be illustrated by the example of a person praying for a long life, who is asked to choose between a cup of milk and a cup of poisonous drink. He will never opt for the latter if he wants to live long, because actions speak louder than words. On the contrary, if he takes poison, his prayers for long life would be meaningless. If he wants to live on, he will certainly lift the cup of milk and pray: "O **Allah**! I reject poison and seek your protection from it; please bless me with a sound health through this milk." This is the desired harmony between words and actions. Similarly, when a person says "O **Allah**! Let me follow the path of the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, Shuhadā', true believers and the righteous," he is actually telling his own self to adopt the ways of these exalted souls, according to his own capacity.

The righteous, the true friends of **Allah** and the Shuhadā' receive beneficence from the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>; who receive it directly from the Almighty. This is the channel to establish relationship with **Allah**; a cordial relationship, because Qalb is the ruler and the physical body is the subject, bound by ruler's commands. The love for the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet<sup>SAW</sup> is inspired in the Qalb by Zikr, which is also the instrument to strengthen it. For that reason, nearly eight hundred Āyāt of the Qurān, directly or indirectly, enjoin Zikr. This was the path adopted by the Prophets<sup>AS</sup> and the righteous and this is what Taṣawwuf is all about: that the Qalb be enlightened and all human actions may reflect the splendour of Divine Light. If sincerity of the Qalb is absent, the verbal declaration will be no more than a futile, untrustworthy exercise.

Maghdhūb (those who earn **Allah**'s annoyance) and Dhālīn (those who go astray) are two classes of disbelief. The first category includes those who oppose the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, both by word and action. The second category comprises those who verbally claim adherence to the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, but ideologically and practically oppose them. The seeker must keep this definition in mind during his practical life; else he may actually be taking poison while praying for a long life. He may indulge in a sinful activity like listening to music and believe that it is beautifying his eternal life, whereas his actual place is the mosque and his code of life is the Sunnah. The Holy Prophet<sup>SAW</sup> has said that Maghdhūb denotes the Jews, and Dhālīn denotes the Christians. Let us examine their characteristics, which earned them these titles. It was the blatant opposition of the Prophets<sup>AS</sup> of **Allah**! They openly denied the Prophethood of the Prophets<sup>AS</sup>, and strove hard to enforce their own concocted concepts and

customs and tried ceaselessly to efface Prophetic teachings. Now, when a pseudo intellectual of today declares the Prophetic knowledge as useless, terms the pilgrimage as a futile journey, pronounces the sacrifice to be a waste of money, and instead strives for the revival of the obscene un-Islāmic culture; he is indeed worse than both the Jews and the Christians in conduct. On the other extreme stand the ignorant, who claim to be devoted believers, but adopt their own innovations and anti-Sunnah rituals, to display this devotion. They do not comprehend that no expression of love, however profound, can cross the limits defined by **Allah**; and the only proper way of demonstrating one's love is through total adherence to the Prophet's<sup>SAW</sup> Sunnah.

Thus **Allah** has prescribed this prayer as a sure treatment of all such ailments. It is so vital to human life that it has been enjoined as an integral part of each cycle of the Ṣalāt. May **Allah** guide us all. Āmīn!