



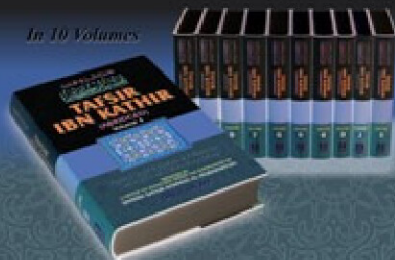
*First Time in the
English Language*

TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

ABRIDGED BY
A GROUP OF SCHOLARS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
SHAYKH SAIFUL RAHMAN AL-MUBARAKPURI

The Qur'an is the revelation of Allah's Own Words for the guidance of His Creation. Since the Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic teachings, the correct understanding of the Qur'an is necessary for every Muslim. The Tafsir of Ibn Kathir is the most renowned and accepted explanation of the Qur'an in the entire world. In it one finds the best presentation of Ahadith, History and scholarly commentary.

In 10 Volumes



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A compilation of the Abridged Tafsir Ibn Kathir Volumes 1 - 10.

In The English Language with Arabic Verses

Biography of Hafiz Ibn Kathir - The Author of Tafsir Ibn Kathir

By the Honored Shaykh `Abdul-Qadir Al-Arna'ut, may Allah protect him.

He is the respected Imam, Abu Al-Fida', `Imad Ad-Din Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Kathir Al-Qurashi Al-Busrawi - Busraian in origin; Dimashqi in training, learning and residence.

Ibn Kathir was born in the city of Busra in 701 H. His father was the Friday speaker of the village, but he died while Ibn Kathir was only four years old. Ibn Kathir's brother, Shaykh Abdul-Wahhab, reared him and taught him until he moved to Damascus in 706 H., when he was five years old.

Ibn Kathir's Teachers

Ibn Kathir studied Fiqh - Islamic jurisprudence - with Burhan Ad-Din, Ibrahim bin `Abdur-Rahman Al-Fizari, known as Ibn Al-Firkah (who died in 729 H). Ibn Kathir heard Hadiths from `Isa bin Al-Mutim, Ahmad bin Abi Talib, (Ibn Ash-Shahnah) (who died in 730 H), Ibn Al-Hajjar, (who died in 730 H), and the Hadith narrator of Ash-Sham (modern day Syria and surrounding areas); Baha Ad-Din Al-Qasim bin Muzaffar bin `Asakir (who died in 723 H), and Ibn Ash-Shirdzi, Ishaq bin Yahya Al-Ammuddi, also known as `Afif Ad-Din, the Zahiriyyah Shaykh who died in 725 H, and Muhammad bin Zarrad. He remained with Jamal Ad-Din, Yusuf bin Az-Zaki Al-Mizzi who died in 724 H, he benefited from his knowledge and also married his daughter. He also

read with Shaykh Al-Islam, Taqi Ad-Din Ahmad bin `Abdul-Halim bin `Abdus-Salam bin Taymiyyah who died in 728 H. He also read with the Imam Hafiz and historian Shams Ad-Din, Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Uthman bin Qaymaz Adh-Dhahabi, who died in 748 H. Also, Abu Musa Al-Qarafai, Abu Al-Fath Ad-Dabbusi and 'Ali bin `Umar As-Suwani and others who gave him permission to transmit the knowledge he learned with them in Egypt.

In his book, Al-Mu jam Al-Mukhtas, Al-Hafiz Adh-Dhaliabi wrote that Ibn Kathir was, "The Imam, scholar of jurisprudence, skillful scholar of Hadith, renowned Fagih and scholar of Tafsir who wrote several beneficial books."

Further, in Ad-Durar Al-Kdminah, Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar AlAsqalani said, "Ibn Kathir worked on the subject of the Hadith in the areas of texts and chains of narrators. He had a good memory, his books became popular during his lifetime, and people benefited from them after his death."

Also, the renowned historian Abu Al-Mahasin, Jamal Ad-Din Yusuf bin Sayf Ad-Din (Ibn Taghri Bardi), said in his book, AlManhal As-Safi, "He is the Shaykh, the Imam, the great scholar `Imad Ad-Din Abu Al-Fida'. He learned extensively and was very active in collecting knowledge and writing. He was excellent in the areas of Fiqh, Tafsir and Hadith. He collected knowledge, authored (books), taught, narrated Hadith and wrote. He had immense knowledge in the fields of Hadith, Tafsir, Fiqh, the Arabic language, and so forth. He gave Fatawa (religious verdicts) and taught until he died, may Allah grant him mercy. He was known for his precision and vast knowledge, and as a scholar of history, Hadith and Tafsir."

Ibn Kathir's Students

Ibn Hajji was one of Ibn Kathir's students, and he described Ibn Kathir: "He had the best memory of the Hadith texts. He also had the most knowledge concerning the narrators and authenticity, his contemporaries and teachers admitted to these qualities. Every time I met him I gained some benefit from him."

Also, Ibn Al-`Imad Al-Hanbali said in his book, *Shadhardt Adh-Dhahab*, "He is the renowned Hafiz `Imad Ad-Din, whose memory was excellent, whose forgetfulness was miniscule, whose understanding was adequate, and who had good knowledge in the Arabic language." Also, Ibn Habib said about Ibn Kathir, "He heard knowledge and collected it and wrote various books. He brought comfort to the ears with his Fatwas and narrated Hadith and brought benefit to other people. The papers that contained his Fatwas were transmitted to the various (Islamic) provinces. Further, he was known for his precision and encompassing knowledge."

Ibn Kathir's Books

- 1 - One of the greatest books that Ibn Kathir wrote was his Tafsir of the Noble Qur'an, which is one of the best Tafsir that rely on narrations [of Ahadith, the Tafsir of the Companions, etc.]. The Tafsir by Ibn Kathir was printed many times and several scholars have summarized it.
- 2- The History Collection known as *Al-Biddayah*, which was printed in 14 volumes under the name *Al-Bidayah wanNihdyah*, and contained the stories of the Prophets and previous nations, the Prophet's Seerah (life story) and Islamic history until his time. He also added a book *Al-Fitan*, about the Signs of the Last Hour.
- 3- *At-Takmil ft Ma` rifat Ath-Thiqat wa Ad-Du'afa wal Majdhil* which Ibn Kathir collected from the books of his two Shaykhs *Al-Mizzi* and *Adh-*

Dhahabi; Al-Kdmal and Mizan Al-Ftiddl. He added several benefits regarding the subject of Al-Jarh and AtT'adil.

- 4- Al-Hadi was-Sunan ft Ahadith Al-Masdnfd was-Sunan which is also known by, Jami` Al-Masdnfd. In this book, Ibn Kathir collected the narrations of Imams Ahmad bin Hanbal, Al-Bazzar, Abu Ya` la Al-Mawsili, Ibn Abi Shaybah and from the six collections of Hadith: the Two Sahihs [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] and the Four Sunan [Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, AnNasa and Ibn Majah]. Ibn Kathir divided this book according to areas of Fiqh.
- 5-Tabaqat Ash-Shaf iyah which also contains the virtues of Imam Ash-Shafi.
- 6- Ibn Kathir wrote references for the Ahadith of Adillat AtTanbfh, from the Shafi school of Fiqh.
- 7- Ibn Kathir began an explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, but he did not finish it.
- 8- He started writing a large volume on the Ahkam (Laws), but finished only up to the Hajj rituals.
- 9- He summarized Al-Bayhaqi's 'Al-Madkhal. Many of these books were not printed.
- 10- He summarized ` Ulum Al-Hadith, by Abu ` Amr bin AsSalah and called it Mukhtasar ` Ulum Al-Hadith. Shaykh Ahmad Shakir, the

Egyptian Muhaddith, printed this book along with his commentary on it and called it Al-Ba'th Al-Hathfth fi Sharh Mukhtasar `Ulum Al-Hadith.

11- As-S'rah An-Nabawiyyah, which is contained in his book Al-Bid'iyah, and both of these books are in print.

12- A research on Jihad called Al-Ijtihad ft Talabi Al-Jihad, which was printed several times.

Ibn Kathir's Death

Al-Hafiz Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani said, "Ibn Kathir lost his sight just before his life ended. He died in Damascus in 774 H." May Allah grant mercy upon Ibn Kathir and make him among the residents of His Paradise.

The Tafsir of Surat Al-Fatihah (Chapter 1)

Which was revealed in Makkah

The Meaning of Al-Fatihah and its Various Name

This Surah is called Al-Fatihah, that is, the Opener of the Book, the Surah with which prayers are begun. It is also called, Umm Al-Kitab (the Mother of the Book), according to the majority of the scholars. In an authentic Hadith recorded by At-Tirmidhi, who graded it Sahih, Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ أُمُّ الْقُرْآنِ وَأُمُّ الْكِتَابِ
وَالسَّبْعُ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنُ الْعَظِيمُ»

(Al-Hamdu lillahi Rabbil-`Alamin is the Mother of the Qur'an, the Mother of the Book, and the seven repeated Ayat of the Glorious Qur'an.)

It is also called Al-Hamd and As-Salah, because the Prophet said that his Lord said,

«قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ، فَإِذَا
قَالَ الْعَبْدُ: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، قَالَ اللَّهُ:
حَمْدِي عَبْدِي»

(`The prayer (i.e., Al-Fatihah) is divided into two halves between Me and My servants.' When the servant says, `All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of existence,' Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.')

Al-Fatihah was called the Salah, because reciting it is a condition for the correctness of Salah - the prayer. Al-Fatihah was also called Ash-Shifa' (the Cure).

It is also called Ar-Ruqyah (remedy), since in the Sahih, there is the narration of Abu Sa`id telling the the story of the Companion who used Al-Fatihah as a remedy for the tribal chief who was poisoned. Later, the Messenger of Allah said to a Companion,

«وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ أَنَّهَا رُقْيَةٌ»

(How did you know that it is a Ruqyah)

Al-Fatihah was revealed in Makkah as Ibn `Abbas, Qatadah and Abu Al-`Aliyah stated. Allah said,

(وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي)

(And indeed, We have bestowed upon you the seven Mathani) (seven repeatedly recited verses), (i.e. Surat Al-Fatihah) (15:87). Allah knows best.

How many Ayat does Al-Fatihah contain

There is no disagreement over the view that Al-Fatihah contains seven Ayat. According to the majority of the reciters of Al-Kufah, a group of the Companions, the Tabi`in, and a number of scholars from the successive generations, the Bismillah is a separate Ayah in its beginning. We will mention this subject again soon, if Allah wills, and in Him we trust.

The Number of Words and Letters in Al-Fatihah

The scholars say that Al-Fatihah consists of twenty-five words, and that it contains one hundred and thirteen letters

The Reason it is called Umm Al-Kitab

In the beginning of the Book of Tafsir, in his Sahih, Al-Bukhari said; "It is called Umm Al-Kitab, because the Qur'an starts with it and because the prayer is started by reciting it." It was also said that it is called Umm Al-Kitab, because it contains the meanings of the entire Qur'an. Ibn Jarir said, "The Arabs call every comprehensive matter that contains several specific areas an Umm. For instance, they call the skin that surrounds the brain, Umm Ar-Ra's. They also call the flag that gathers the ranks of the army an Umm." He also said, "Makkah was called Umm Al-Qura, (the Mother of the Villages) because it is the grandest and the leader of all villages. It was also said that the earth was made starting from Makkah."

Further, Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurayrah narrated about Umm Al-Qur'an that the Prophet said,

«هِيَ أُمُّ الْقُرْآنِ وَهِيَ السَّبْعُ الْمَتَانِي وَهِيَ الْقُرْآنُ الْعَظِيمُ»

(It is Umm Al-Qur'an, the seven repeated (verses) and the Glorious Qur'an.)

Also, Abu Ja`far, Muhammad bin Jarir At-Tabari recorded Abu Hurayrah saying that the Messenger of Allah said about Al-Fatihah,

«هِيَ أُمُّ الْقُرْآنِ وَهِيَ فَاتِحَةُ الْكِتَابِ وَهِيَ السَّبْعُ الْمَتَانِي»

(It is Umm Al-Qur'an, Al-Fatihah of the Book (the Opener of the Qur'an) and the seven repeated (verses).)

Virtues of Al-Fatihah

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal recorded in the Musnad that Abu Sa`id bin Al-Mu`alla said, "I was praying when the Prophet called me, so I did not answer him until I finished the prayer. I then went to him and he said, (What prevented you from coming) I said, 'O Messenger of Allah ! I was praying.' He said, (`Didn't Allah say),

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ)

(O you who believe! Answer Allah (by obeying Him) and (His) Messenger when he () calls you to that which gives you life) He then said,

«لَأُعَلِّمَنَّكَ أَكْثَرَ سُورَةٍ فِي الْقُرْآنِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَخْرُجَ مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ»

(I will teach you the greatest Surah in the Qur'an before you leave the Masjid.) He held my hand and when he was about to leave the Masjid, I said, `O Messenger of Allah! You said: I will teach you the greatest Surah in the Qur'an.' He said, (Yes.)

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(Al-Hamdu lillahi Rabbil-`Alamin)"

«نَعَمْ هِيَ السَّبْعُ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنُ الْعَظِيمُ الَّذِي أُوتِيْتُهُ»

(It is the seven repeated (verses) and the Glorious Qur'an that I was given.)"

Al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah also recorded this Hadith.

Also, Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Hurayrah said, "The Messenger of Allah went out while Ubayy bin Ka`b was praying and said, (O Ubayy!) Ubayy did not answer him. The Prophet said, (O Ubayy!) Ubayy prayed faster then went to the Messenger of Allah saying, `Peace be unto you, O Messenger of Allah!' He said, (Peace be unto you. O Ubayy, what prevented you from answering me when I called you) He said, `O Messenger of Allah! I was praying.' He said, (Did you not read among what Allah has sent down to me.)

(اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ)

(Answer Allah (by obeying Him) and (His) Messenger when he () calls you to that which gives you life) He said, `Yes, O Messenger of Allah! I will not do it again.' the Prophet said,

«أَتُحِبُّ أَنْ أُعَلِّمَكَ سُورَةً لَمْ تَنْزَلْ لَهَا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ وَلَا فِي الزَّبُورِ وَلَا فِي الْفُرْقَانِ مِثْلَهَا؟»

(Would you like me to teach you a Surah the likes of which nothing has been revealed in the Tawrah, the Injil, the Zabur (Psalms) or the Furqan (the Qur'an)) He said, `Yes, O Messenger of Allah! The Messenger of Allah said, (I hope that I will not leave through this door until you have learned it.) He (Ka`b) said, `The Messenger of Allah held my hand while speaking to me. Meanwhile I was slowing down fearing that he might reach the door before he finished his conversation. When we came close to the door, I said: O Messenger of Allah ! What is the Surah that you have promised to teach me' He said, (What do you read in the prayer.) Ubayy said, `So I recited Umm Al-Qur'an to him.' He said,

«وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ مَا أُنْزِلَ اللَّهُ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ وَلَا فِي الزَّبُورِ وَلَا فِي الْفُرْقَانِ مِثْلَهَا إِنَّهَا السَّبْعُ الْمَتَانِي»

(By Him in Whose Hand is my soul! Allah has never revealed in the Tawrah, the Injil, the Zabur or the Furqan a Surah like it. It is the seven repeated verses that I was given.)"

Also, At-Tirmidhi recorded this Hadith and in his narration, the Prophet said,

«إِنَّهَا مِنَ السَّبْعِ الْمَتَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ الَّذِي أُعْطِيْتُهُ»

(It is the seven repeated verses and the Glorious Qur'an that I was given.) At-Tirmidhi then commented that this Hadith is Hasan Sahih.

There is a similar Hadith on this subject narrated from Anas bin Malik Further, `Abdullah, the son of Imam Ahmad, recorded this Hadith from Abu Hurayrah from Ubayy bin Ka`b, and he mentioned a longer but similar wording for the above Hadith. In addition, At-Tirmidhi and An-

Nasa'i recorded this Hadith from Abu Hurayrah from Ubayy bin Ka'b who said the Messenger of Allah said,

«مَا أُنْزِلَ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ مِثْلَ أُمَّ الْقُرْآنِ وَهِيَ السَّبْعُ الْمَتَانِي وَهِيَ مَقْسُومَةٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ»

(Allah has never revealed in the Tawrah or the Injil anything similar to Umm Al-Qur'an.

It is the seven repeated verses and it is divided into two halves between Allah and His servant.)

This is the wording reported by An-Nasa'i. At-Tirmidhi said that this Hadith is Hasan Gharib.

Also, Imam Ahmad recorded that Ibn Jabir said, "I went to the Messenger of Allah after he had poured water (for purification) and said, 'Peace be unto you, O Messenger of Allah!' He did not answer me. So I said again, 'Peace be unto you, O Messenger of Allah!' Again, he did not answer me, so I said again, 'Peace be unto you, O Messenger of Allah!' Still he did not answer me. The Messenger of Allah went while I was following him, until he arrived at his residence. I went to the Masjid and sat there sad and depressed. The Messenger of Allah came out after he performed his purification and said, (Peace and Allah's mercy be unto you, peace and Allah's mercy be unto you, peace and Allah's mercy be unto you.) He then said, (O `Abdullah bin Jabir! Should I inform you of the best Surah in the Qur'an) I said, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah!' He said, (Read, 'All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the existence,' until you finish it.)" This Hadith has a good chain of narrators.

Some scholars relied on this Hadith as evidence that some Ayat and Surahs have more virtues than others.

Furthermore, in the chapter about the virtues of the Qur'an, Al-Bukhari recorded that Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri said, "Once, we were on a journey when a female servant came and said, 'The leader of this area has been poisoned and our people are away. Is there a healer among you?' Then a man whose healing expertise did not interest us stood for her, he read a Ruqyah for him, and he was healed. The chief gave him thirty sheep as a gift and some milk. When he came back to us we said to him, 'You know of a (new) Ruqyah, or did you do this before?' He said, 'I only used Umm Al-Kitab as Ruqyah.' We said, 'Do not do anything further until we ask the Messenger of Allah.' When we went back to Al-Madinah we mentioned what had happened to the Prophet . The Prophet said,

«وَمَا كَانَ يُذْرِيهِ أَنَّهَا رُقْيَةٌ أَقْسِمُوا وَأَضْرِبُوا لِي بِسَهْمٍ»

(Who told him that it is a Ruqyah Divide (the sheep) and reserve a share for me.)"

Also, Muslim recorded in his Sahih, and An-Nasa'i in his Sunan that Ibn `Abbas said, "While Jibril (Gabriel) was with the Messenger of Allah, he heard a noise from above. Jibril lifted his sight to the sky and said, `This is a door in heaven being open, and it has never been opened before now.' An angel descended from that door and came to the Prophet and said, `Receive the glad tidings of two lights that you have been given, which no other Prophet before you was given: the Opening of the Book and the last (three) Ayat of Surat Al-Baqarah. You will not read a letter of them, but will gain its benefit.'" This is the wording collected by An-Nasa'i (Al-Kubra 5:12) and Muslim recorded similar wording (1:554).

Al-Fatihah and the Prayer

Muslim recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet said,

«مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاةً لَمْ يَقْرَأْ فِيهَا أُمَّ الْقُرْآنِ فَهِيَ خِدَاجٌ ثَلَاثًا غَيْرُ تَمَامٍ»

(Whoever performs any prayer in which he did not read Umm Al-Qur'an, then his prayer is incomplete.) He said it thrice.

Abu Hurayrah was asked, "When we stand behind the Imam" He said, "Read it to yourself, for I heard the Messenger of Allah say,

« قَالَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)، قَالَ اللَّهُ: حَمْدِي عَبْدِي وَإِذَا قَالَ:

(الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ)، قَالَ اللَّهُ: أَتْنِي عَبْدِي، فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)، قَالَ اللَّهُ: مَجْدَنِي عَبْدِي وَقَالَ مَرَّةً: فَوَضَّ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ) ، قَالَ: هَذَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ، فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ - صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ) ،
قَالَ اللَّهُ: هَذَا لِعَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ»

(Allah, the Exalted, said, 'I have divided the prayer (Al-Fatihah) into two halves between Myself and My servant, and My servant shall have what he asks for.' If he says,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of existence.)

Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' When the servant says,

(الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ)

(The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.)

Allah says, 'My servant has glorified Me.' When he says,

(مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)

(The Owner of the Day of Recompense.) Allah says, 'My servant has glorified Me,' or 'My servant has related all matters to Me.' When he says,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(You (alone) we worship, and You (alone) we ask for help.) Allah says, 'This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he sought.' When he says,

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ - صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

(Guide us to the straight path. The way of those on whom You have granted Your grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your anger, nor of those who went astray), Allah says, `This is for My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he asked for.'."

These are the words of An-Nasa'i, while both Muslim and An-Nasa'i collected the following wording, "A half of it is for Me and a half for My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he asked for."

Explaining this Hadith

The last Hadith used the word `Salah' `prayer' in reference to reciting the Qur'an, (Al-Fatihah in this case) just as Allah said in another Ayah,

(وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا)

(And offer your Salah (prayer) neither aloud nor in a low voice, but follow a way between.) meaning, with your recitation of the Qur'an, as the Sahih related from Ibn `Abbas. Also, in the last Hadith, Allah said, "I have divided the prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, a half for Me and a half for My servant. My servant shall have what he asked for." Allah next explained the division that involves reciting Al-Fatihah, demonstrating the importance of reciting the Qur'an during the prayer, which is one of the prayer's greatest pillars. Hence, the word `prayer' was used here although only a part of it was actually being referred to, that is, reciting the Qur'an. Similarly, the word `recite' was used where prayer is meant, as demonstrated by Allah's statement,

(وَقُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا)

(And recite the Qur'an in the early dawn. Verily, the recitation of the Qur'an in the early dawn is ever witnessed.) in reference to the Fajr prayer. The Two Sahihs recorded that the angels of the night and the day attend this prayer.

Reciting Al-Fatihah is required in Every Rak`ah of the Prayer

All of these facts testify to the requirement that reciting the Qur'an (Al-Fatihah) in the prayer is required, and there is a consensus between the scholars on this ruling. The Hadith that we mentioned also testifies to this fact, for the Prophet said,

«مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاةً لَمْ يَقْرَأْ فِيهَا بِأَمِّ الْقُرْآنِ فَهِيَ خِدَاجٌ»

(Whoever performs any prayer in which he did not recite Umm Al-Qur'an, his prayer is incomplete.)

Also, the Two Sahihs recorded that `Ubadah bin As-Samit said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَا صَلَاةَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ»

(There is no prayer for whoever does not recite the Opening of the Book.)

Also, the Sahihs of Ibn Khuzaymah and Ibn Hibban recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَا تُجْزِئُ صَلَاةٌ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ فِيهَا بِأَمِّ الْقُرْآنِ»

(The prayer during which Umm Al-Qur'an is not recited is invalid.)

There are many other Hadiths on this subject. Therefore, reciting the Opening of the Book, during the prayer by the Imam and those praying behind him, is required in every prayer, and in every Rak'ah.

The Tafsir of Isti'adhah (seeking Refuge)

Allah said,

(خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ)
- وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ
إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ)

(Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and stay away from the foolish (i.e. don't punish them). And if an evil whisper comes to you from Shaytan (Satan), then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is Hearing, Knowing) (7:199-200),

(ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ - وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ - وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبَّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ)

(Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best-Acquainted with things they utter. And say: "My Lord! I seek refuge with You from the whisperings (suggestions) of the Shayatin (devils). And I seek refuge with You, My Lord! lest they should come near me.") (23:96-98) and,

(وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ - وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا دُوْ حَظٌّ عَظِيمٌ - وَإِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ)

(Repel (an evil) with one which is better, then verily he with whom there was enmity between you, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of happiness in the Hereafter, i.e. Paradise and of a high moral character) in this world. And if an evil whisper from Shaytan tries to turn you away (O Muhammad) (from doing good), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.) (41:34-36) These are the only three Ayat that carry this meaning. Allah commanded that we be lenient human enemy, so that his soft nature might make him an ally and a supporter. He also commanded that we seek refuge from the satanic enemy, because the devil does not relent in his enmity if we treat him with kindness and leniency. The devil only seeks the destruction of the Son of Adam due to the vicious enmity and hatred he has always had towards man's father, Adam. Allah said,

(يَبْنَىٰ آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ)

(O Children of Adam! Let not Shaytan deceive you, as he got your parents Adam and Hawwa' (Eve) out of Paradise) (7:27),

(إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَاتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا إِنَّمَا يَدْعُو
حِزْبَهُ لِيَكُونُوا مِنْ أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ)

(Surely, Shaytan is an enemy to you, so take (treat) him as an enemy. He only invites his Hizb (followers) that they may become the dwellers of the blazing Fire) (35:6) and,

(أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ لَكُمْ
عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا)

(Will you then take him (Iblis) and his offspring as protectors and helpers rather than Me while they are enemies to you What an evil is the exchange for the Zalimun (polytheists, and wrongdoers, etc)) (18:50).

The devil assured Adam that he wanted to advise him, but he was lying. Hence, how would he treat us after he had vowed,

(فَبِعِزَّتِكَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ
الْمُخْلِصِينَ)

("By Your might, then I will surely, mislead them all. Except Your chosen servants among them (i.e. faithful, obedient, true believers of Islamic Monotheism).") (38:82-83)

Also, Allah said,

(فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ
الرَّجِيمِ)

(إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَلَى
رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ - إِنَّمَا سُلْطَانُهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَوَلَّوْنَهُ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِهِ مُشْرِكُونَ)

(So when you want to recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from Shaytan, the outcast (the cursed one). Verily, he has no power over those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord (Allah). His power is only over those who obey and follow him (Satan), and those who join partners with Him.) (16:98-100).

Seeking Refuge before reciting the Qur'an

Allah said,

(فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ)

(So when you want to recite the Qur'an, seek refuge with Allah from Shaytan, the outcast (the cursed one).) meaning, before you recite the Qur'an. Similarly, Allah said,

(إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ)

(When you intend to offer As-Salah (the prayer), wash your faces and your hands (forearms)) (5:6) meaning, before you stand in prayer, as evident by the Hadiths that we mentioned. Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri said, "When the Messenger of Allah would stand up in prayer at night, he would start his prayer with the Takbir (saying "Allahu Akbar"; Allah is Greater) and would then supplicate,

«سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ،
وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ، وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ»

(All praise is due to You, O Allah, and also the thanks. Blessed be Your Name, Exalted be Your sovereignty, and there is no deity worthy of worship except You.)

He would then say thrice,

«لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ»

(There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah,).

He would then say,

«أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ
مِنْ هَمْزِهِ وَنَفْخِهِ وَنَقْثِهِ»

(I seek refuge with Allah, the Hearing, the Knowing, from the cursed Satan, from his coercion, lures to arrogance and poems.)."

The four collectors of the Sunan recorded this Hadith, which At-Tirmidhi considered the most famous Hadith on this subject.

Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah recorded that Jubayr bin Mut'im said that his father said, "When the Messenger of Allah started the prayer, he said,

«اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ كَبِيرًا ثَلَاثًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ كَثِيرًا ثَلَاثًا
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ثَلَاثًا اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ
مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ مِنْ هَمْزِهِ وَنَفْخِهِ وَنَقْثِهِ»

(Allah is the Greater, truly the Greatest (thrice); all praise is due to Allah always (thrice); and all praise is due to Allah day and night (thrice). O Allah! I seek refuge with You from the cursed Satan, from his Hamz, Nafkh and Nafth.)." `Amr said, "The Hamz means asphyxiation, the Nafkh means arrogance, and the Nafth means poetry." Also, Ibn Majah recorded that `Ali bin Al-Mundhir said that Ibn Fudayl narrated that `Ata' bin As-Sa'ib said that Abu `Abdur-Rahman As-Sulami said that Ibn Mas`ud said that the Prophet said,

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ
وَهَمْزِهِ وَنَفْخِهِ وَنَقْثِهِ»

(O Allah! I seek refuge with You from the cursed devil, from his Hamz, Nafkh and Nafth.)

He said, "The Hamz means death, the Nafkh means arrogance, and the Nafth means poetry."

Seeking Refuge with Allah when One is Angry

In his Musnad, Al-Hafiz Abu Ya'la Ahmad bin `Ali bin Al-Muthanna Al-Mawsili reported that Ubayy bin Ka'b said, "Two men disputed with each other in the presence of the Messenger of Allah and the nose of one of them became swollen because of extreme anger. The Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ شَيْئًا لَوْ قَالَهُ لَذَهَبَ عَنْهُ مَا يَجِدُ:
أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ»

(I know of some words that if he said them, what he feels will go away, 'I seek refuge with Allah from the cursed Satan.')

An-Nasa'i also recorded this Hadith in his book, Al-Yawm wal-Laylah.

Al-Bukhari recorded that Sulayman bin Surad said, "Two men disputed in the presence of the Prophet while we were sitting with him. One of them was cursing the other fellow and his face turned red due to anger. The Prophet said,

«إِنِّي لَأَعْلَمُ كَلِمَةً لَوْ قَالَهَا لَذَهَبَ عَنْهُ مَا يَجِدُ، لَوْ
قَالَ: أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ»

(I know of a statement which if he said it, will make what he feels disappear, 'I seek refuge with Allah from the cursed Satan.')

They said to the man, 'Do you not hear what the Messenger of Allah is saying' He said, 'I am not insane.'" Also, Muslim, Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i recorded this Hadith.

There are many other Hadiths about seeking refuge with Allah. One can find this subject in the books on supplication and the virtues of righteous, good deeds

Is the Isti` adhah (seeking Refuge) required

The majority of the scholars state that reciting the Isti` adhah (in the prayer and when reciting the Qur'an) is recommended and not required, and therefore, not reciting it does not constitute a sin. However, Ar-Razi recorded that `Ata' bin Abi Rabah said that the Isti` adhah is required in the prayer and when one reads the Qur'an. In support of `Ata's statement, Ar-Razi relied upon the apparent meaning of the Ayah,

(فَاسْتَعِذْ)

(Then seek refuge.) He said that the Ayah contains a command that requires implementation. Also, the Prophet always said the Isti` adhah. In addition, the Isti` adhah wards off the evil of Satan, which is necessary, the rule is that the means needed to implement a requirement of the religion is itself also required. And when one says, "I seek refuge with Allah from the cursed devil." Then this will suffice.

Virtues of the Isti` adhah

The Isti` adhah cleanses the mouth from the foul speech that it has indulged in. It also purifies the mouth and prepares it to recite the speech of Allah. Further, the Isti` adhah entails seeking Allah's help and acknowledging His ability to do everything. The Isti` adhah also affirms the servant's meekness, weakness and inability to face the enemy of his inner evil, whom Allah alone, Who created this enemy, is able to repel and defeat. This enemy does not accept kindness, unlike the human enemy. There are three Ayat in the Qur'an that affirm this fact. Also, Allah said,

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَنٌ وَكَفَىٰ رَبُّكَ
وَكِيلًا (

(Verily, My servants (i.e. the true believers of Islamic Monotheism) you have no authority over them. And sufficient is your Lord as a Guardian.) (17:65).

We should state here that the believers, whom the human enemies kill, become martyrs, while those who fall victim to the inner enemy - Satan - become bandits. Further, the believers who are defeated by the apparent enemy - disbelievers - gain a reward, while those defeated by the inner enemy earn a sin and become misguided. Since Satan sees man where man cannot see him, it is befitting that the believers seek refuge from Satan with Whom Satan cannot see. The Isti` adhah is a form of drawing closer to Allah and seeking refuge with Him from the evil of every evil creature.

What does Isti` adhah mean

Isti` adhah means, "I seek refuge with Allah from the cursed Satan so that he is prevented from affecting my religious or worldly affairs, or hindering me from adhering to what I was commanded, or luring me into what I was prohibited from." Indeed, only Allah is able to prevent the evil of Satan from touching the son of Adam. This is why Allah allowed us to be lenient and kind with the human devil, so that his soft nature might cause him to refrain from the evil he is indulging in. However, Allah required us to seek refuge with Him from the evil of Satan, because he neither accepts bribes nor does kindness affect him, for he is pure evil. Thus, only He Who created Satan is able to stop his evil. This meaning is reiterated in only three Ayat in the Qur'an. Allah said in Surat Al-A`raf,

خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ
الْجَاهِلِينَ (

(Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the foolish (i.e. don't punish them).) (7:199)

This is about dealing with human beings. He then said in the same Surah,

(وَأِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ)

(And if an evil whisper comes to you from Shaytan, then seek refuge with Allah. Verily, He is Hearing, Knowing (7: 200).)

Allah also said in Surat Al-Mu'minun,

(ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ - وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ - وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ)

(Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best-Acquainted with the things they utter. And say: "My Lord! I seek refuge with You from the whisperings (suggestions) of the Shayatin (devils). And I seek refuge with You, My Lord! lest they should come near me." (23:96-98).)

Further, Allah said in Surat As-Sajdah,

(وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ - وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا دُوْ حَظٌّ عَظِيمٌ - وَأِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ)

(The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better, then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of happiness in the Hereafter, i.e. Paradise and of a high moral character) in this world. And if an evil whisper from Shaytan tries to turn you away (from doing good), then seek refuge in Allah. Verily, He is the Hearing, the Knowing) (41:34-36).

Why the Devil is called Shaytan

In the Arabic language, Shaytan is derived from Shatana, which means the far thing. Hence, the Shaytan has a different nature than mankind, and his sinful ways are far away from every type of righteousness. It was also said that Shaytan is derived from Shata, (literally `burned'), because it was created from fire. Some scholars said that both meanings are correct, although they state that the first meaning is more plausible. Further, Sybawayh (the renowned Arab linguistic) said, "The Arabs say, `So-and-so has Tashaytan,' when he commits the act of the devils. If Shaytan was derived from Shata, they would have said, Tashayyata (rather than Tashaytan)." Hence, Shaytan is derived from the word that means, far away. This is why they call those who are rebellious (or mischievous) from among the Jinns and mankind a `Shaytan'. Allah said,

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ
وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ
غُرُورًا

(And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies Shayatin (devils) among mankind and Jinn, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception)) (6:112).

In addition, the Musnad by Imam Ahmad records that Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ تَعَوَّذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيَاطِينِ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ»

(O Abu Dharr! Seek refuge with Allah from the devils of mankind and the Jinns.) Abu Dharr said, "I asked him , `Are there human devils' He said, (Yes.)" Furthermore, it is recorded in Sahih Muslim that Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَقْطَعُ الصَّلَاةَ الْمَرْأَةُ وَالْحِمَارُ وَالْكَلْبُ الْأَسْوَدُ»

(The woman, the donkey and the black dog interrupt the prayer (if they pass in front of those who do not pray behind a Sutra, i.e. a barrier).) Abu Dharr said, "I said, `What is the difference between the black dog and the red or yellow dog' He said,

«الْكَلْبُ الْأَسْوَدُ شَيْطَانٌ»

(The black dog is a devil.)."

Also, Ibn Jarir At-Tabari recorded that `Umar bin Al-Khattab once rode a Berthawn (huge camel) which started to proceed arrogantly. `Umar kept striking the animal, but the animal kept walking in an arrogant manner. `Umar dismounted the animal and said, "By Allah! You

have adorned me on a Shaytan. I did not come to me until after I had felt something strange in my heart." This Hadith has an authentic chain of narrators.

The Meaning of Ar-Rajim

Ar-Rajim means, being expelled from all types of righteousness. Allah said,

(وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ)

(And indeed We have adorned the nearest heaven with lamps, and We have made such lamps Rujuman (as missiles) to drive away the Shayatin (devils)) (67:5).

Allah also said,

(إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَكِبِ - وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ - لَا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقَذَّفُونَ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ - دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ - إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ)

(Verily, We have adorned the near heaven with the stars (for beauty). And to guard against every rebellious devil. They cannot listen to the higher group (angels) for they are pelted from every side. Outcast, and theirs is a constant (or painful) torment. Except such as snatch away something by stealing, and they are pursued by a flaming fire of piercing brightness) (37:6-10).

Further, Allah said,

(وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ - وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ - إِلَّا مَنْ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُّبِينٌ)

(And indeed, We have put the big stars in the heaven and We have beautified it for the beholders. And We have guarded it (near heaven) from every Shaytan Rajim (outcast Shaytan). Except him (devil) who steals the hearing then he is pursued by a clear flaming fire.) (15:16-18).

There are several similar Ayat. It was also said that Rajim means, the person who throws or bombards things, because the devil throws doubts and evil thoughts in people's hearts. The first meaning is more popular and accurate.

Bismillah is the First Ayah of Al-Fatihah

The Companions started the Book of Allah with Bismillah:

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)

(1. In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.)

The scholars also agree that Bismillah is a part of an Ayah in Surat An-Naml (chapter 27). They disagree over whether it is a separate Ayah before every Surah, or if it is an Ayah, or a part of an Ayah, included in every Surah where the Bismillah appears in its beginning. Ad-Daraqutni also recorded a Hadith from Abu Hurayrah from the Prophet that supports this Hadith by Ibn Khuzaymah. Also, similar statements were attributed to `Ali, Ibn `Abbas and others.

The opinion that Bismillah is an Ayah of every Surah, except Al-Bara'ah (chapter 9), was attributed to (the Companions) Ibn `Abbas, Ibn `Umar, Ibn Az-Zubayr, Abu Hurayrah and `Ali. This opinion was also attributed to the Tabi`in: `Ata', Tawus, Sa'id bin Jubayr, Makhul and Az-Zuhri. This is also the view of `Abdullah bin Al-Mubarak, Ash-Shafi'i, Ahmad bin Hanbal, (in one report from him) Ishaq bin Rahwayh and Abu `Ubayd Al-Qasim bin Salam. On the other hand, Malik, Abu Hanifah and their followers said that Bismillah is not an Ayah in Al-Fatihah or any other Surah. Dawud said that it is a separate Ayah in the beginning of every Surah, not part of the Surah itself, and this opinion was also attributed to Ahmad bin Hanbal.

Basmalah aloud in the Prayer

As for Basmalah aloud during the prayer, those who did not agree that it is a part of Al-Fatihah, state that the Basmalah should not be aloud. The scholars who stated that Bismillah is a part of every Surah (except chapter 9) had different opinions; some of them, such as Ash-Shafi'i, said that one should recite Bismillah with Al-Fatihah aloud. This is also the opinion of many among the Companions, the Tabi`in and the Imams of Muslims from the Salaf and the later generations. For instance, this is the opinion of Abu Hurayrah, Ibn `Umar, Ibn `Abbas, Mu'awiyah, `Umar and `Ali - according to Ibn `Abdul-Barr and Al-Bayhaqi. Also, the Four Khalifahs - as Al-Khatib reported - were said to have held this view although the report from them is contradicted. The Tabi`in scholars who gave this Tafsir include Sa'id bin Jubayr, `Ikrimah, Abu Qilabah, Az-Zuhri, `Ali bin Al-Hasan, his son Muhammad, Sa'id bin Al-Musayyib, `Ata', Tawus, Mujahid, Salim, Muhammad bin Ka'b Al-Qurazi, Abu Bakr bin Muhammad bin `Amr bin Hazm, Abu Wa'il, Ibn Srin, Muhammad bin Al-Munkadir, `Ali bin `Abdullah bin `Abbas, his son Muhammad, Nafi' the freed slave of Ibn `Umar, Zayd bin Aslam, `Umar bin `Abdul-Aziz, Al-Azraq bin Qays, Habib bin Abi Thabit, Abu Ash-Sha`tha', Makhul and `Abdullah bin Ma`qil bin Muqarrin. Also, Al-Bayhaqi added `Abdullah bin Safwan, and Muhammad bin Al-Hanafiyyah to this list. In addition, Ibn `Abdul-Barr added `Amr bin Dinar.

The proof that these scholars relied on is that, since Bismillah is a part of Al-Fatihah, it should be recited aloud like the rest of Al-Fatihah. Also, An-Nasa'i recorded in his Sunan, Ibn Hibban and Ibn Khuzaymah in their Sahihs and Al-Hakim in the Mustadrak, that Abu Hurayrah once performed the prayer and recited Bismillah aloud. After he finished the prayer, he said, "Among you, I perform the prayer that is the closest to the prayer of the Messenger of Allah ." Ad-Daraqutni, Al-Khatib and Al-Bayhaqi graded this Hadith Sahih Furthermore, in Sahih Al-Bukhari it is recorded that Anas bin Malik was asked about the recitation of the Prophet . He said, "His recitation was unhurried." He then demonstrated that and recited, while lengthening the recitation of Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim, Also, in the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, the Sunan of Abu Dawud, the Sahih of Ibn Hibban and the Mustadrak of Al-Hakim - it is recorded that Umm Salamah said, "The Messenger of Allah used to distinguish each Ayah during his recitation,

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ - الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ - الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ - مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)

(In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The Owner of the Day of Recompense.)"

Ad-Daraqutni graded the chain of narration for this Hadith Sahih Furthermore, Imam Abu `Abdullah Ash-Shafi'i and Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak, recorded that Mu`awiyah led the prayer in Al-Madinah and did not recite the Bismillah. The Muhajirin who were present at that prayer criticized that. When Mu`awiyah led the following prayer, he recited the Bismillah aloud.

The Hadiths mentioned above provide sufficient proof for the opinion that the Bismillah is recited aloud. As for the opposing evidences and the scientific analysis of the narrations mentioned their weaknesses or otherwise it is not our desire to discuss this subject at this time.

Other scholars stated that the Bismillah should not be recited aloud in the prayer, and this is the established practice of the Four Khalifahs, as well as `Abdullah bin Mughaffal and several scholars among the Tabi`in and later generations. It is also the Madhhab (view) of Abu Hanifah, Ath-Thawri and Ahmad bin Hanbal.

Imam Malik stated that the Bismillah is not recited aloud or silently. This group based their view upon what Imam Muslim recorded that `A'ishah said that the Messenger of Allah used to start the prayer by reciting the Takbir (Allahu Akbar; Allah is Greater) and then recite,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.) (Ibn Abi Hatim 1:12).

Also, the Two Sahihs recorded that Anas bin Malik said, "I prayed behind the Prophet , Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman and they used to start their prayer with,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.)

Muslim added, "And they did not mention,

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)

(In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) whether in the beginning or the end of the recitation." Similar is recorded in the Sunan books from `Abdullah bin Mughaffal, may Allah be pleased with him.

These are the opinions held by the respected Imams, and their statements are similar in that they agree that the prayer of those who recite Al-Fatihah aloud or in secret is correct. All the favor is from Allah.

The Virtue of Al-Fatihah

Imam Ahmad recorded in his Musnad, that a person who was riding behind the Prophet said, "The Prophet's animal tripped, so I said, 'Cursed Shaytan.' The Prophet said,

«لَا تَقُلْ: تَعِسَ الشَّيْطَانُ، فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا قُلْتَ: تَعِسَ الشَّيْطَانُ، تَعَازَمَ وَقَالَ: يَقُوَّتِي صَرَعْتُهُ، وَإِذَا قُلْتَ: بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ تَصَاغَرَ حَتَّى يَصِيرَ مِثْلَ الدُّبَابِ»

(Do not say, 'Cursed Shaytan,' for if you say these words, Satan becomes arrogant and says, 'With my strength I made him fall.' When you say, 'Bismillah,' Satan will become as small as a fly.)

Further, An-Nasa'i recorded in his book Al-Yawm wal-Laylah, and also Ibn Marduwyah in his Tafsir that Usamah bin `Umayr said, "I was riding behind the Prophet..." and he mentioned the rest of the above Hadith. The Prophet said in this narration,

«لَا تَقُلْ هَكَذَا فَإِنَّهُ يَتَعَظَمُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ كَالْبَيْتِ،
وَلَكِنْ قُلْ: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنَّهُ يَصْغُرُ حَتَّى يَكُونَ
كَالدُّبَابَةِ»

(Do not say these words, because then Satan becomes larger; as large as a house. Rather, say, 'Bismillah,' because Satan then becomes as small as a fly.)

This is the blessing of reciting Bismillah.

Basmalah is recommended before performing any Deed

Basmalah (reciting Bismillah) is recommended before starting any action or deed. For instance, Basmalah is recommended before starting a Khutbah (speech).

The Basmalah is also recommended before one enters the place where he wants to relieve himself, there is a Hadith concerning this practice. Further, Basmalah is recommended at the beginning of ablution, for Imam Ahmad and the Sunan compilers recorded that Abu Hurayrah, Sa`id bin Zayd and Abu Sa`id narrated from the Prophet ,

«لَا وُضُوءَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَذْكُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ»

(There is no valid ablution for he who did not mention Allah's Name in it.)

This Hadith is Hasan (good). Also, the Basmalah is recommended before eating, for Muslim recorded in his Sahih that the Messenger of Allah said to `Umar bin Abi Salamah while he was a child under his care,

«قُلْ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ وَكُلْ بِيَمِينِكَ وَكُلْ مِمَّا يَلِيكَ»

(Say Bismillah, eat with your right hand and eat from whatever is next to you.)

Some of the scholars stated that Basmalah before eating is obligatory. Basmalah before having sexual intercourse is also recommended. The Two Sahih recorded that Ibn `Abbas said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَوْ أَنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ أَهْلَهُ قَالَ: بِسْمِ
اللَّهِ اللَّهُمَّ جَنِّبْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ وَجَنِّبِ الشَّيْطَانَ مَا

رَزَقْتَنَا، فَإِنَّهُ إِنْ يُقَدَّرُ بَيْنَهُمَا وَلَدٌ لَمْ يَضُرَّهُ
الشَّيْطَانُ أَبَدًا»

(If anyone of you before having sexual relations with his wife says, 'In the Name of Allah. O Allah! Protect us from Satan and also protect what you grant us (meaning the coming offspring) from Satan,' and if it is destined that they should have a child then, Satan will never be able to harm that child.)

The Meaning of "Allah

Allah is the Name of the Lord, the Exalted. It is said that Allah is the Greatest Name of Allah, because it is referred to when describing Allah by the various attributes. For instance, Allah said,

(هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ
وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ - هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ
الْمُهَيَّمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُونَ - هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَلِيقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ
الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ)

(He is Allah, beside Whom La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He) the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. He is Allah, beside Whom La ilaha illa Huwa, the King, the Holy, the One free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the Almighty, the Compeller, the Supreme. Glory be to Allah! (High is He) above all that they associate as partners with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the Best Names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorify Him. And He is the Almighty, the Wise) (59:22-24).

Hence, Allah mentioned several of His Names as Attributes for His Name Allah. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا)

(And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them) (7:180), and,

(قُلْ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا
قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ)

(Say (O Muhammad :) "Invoke Allah or invoke the Most Gracious (Allah), by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Best Names.") (17:110)

Also, the Two Sahihs recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّ لِلَّهِ تِسْعَةَ وَتِسْعِينَ اسْمًا، مِائَةٌ إِلَّا وَاحِدًا، مَنْ
أَحْصَاهَا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ»

(Allah has ninety-nine Names, one hundred minus one, whoever counts (and preserves) them, will enter Paradise.)

These Names were mentioned in a Hadith recorded by At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, and there are several differences between these two narrations.

The Meaning of Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim - the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim are two names derived from Ar-Rahmah (the mercy), but Rahman has more meanings that pertain to mercy than Ar-Rahim. There is a statement by Ibn Jarir that indicates that there is a consensus on this meaning. Further, Al-Qurtubi said, "The proof that these names are derived (from Ar-Rahmah), is what At-Tirmidhi recorded - and graded Sahih from `Abdur-Rahman bin `Awf that he heard the Messenger of Allah say,

«قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: أَنَا الرَّحْمَنُ خَلَقْتُ الرَّحِمَ
وَشَقَقْتُ لَهَا اسْمًا مِنْ اسْمِي، فَمَنْ وَصَلَهَا
وَصَلَتْهُ وَمَنْ قَطَعَهَا قَطَعْنَاهُ»

(Allah the Exalted said, 'I Am Ar-Rahman. I created the Raham (womb, i.e. family relations) and derived a name for it from My Name. Hence, whoever keeps it, I will keep ties to him, and whoever severs it, I will sever ties with him.') He then said, "This is a text that indicates the

derivation." He then said, "The Arabs denied the name Ar-Rahman, because of their ignorance about Allah and His attributes."

Al-Qurtubi said, "It was said that both Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim have the same meaning, such as the words Nadman and Nadim, as Abu `Ubayd has stated. Abu `Ali Al-Farisi said, `Ar-Rahman, which is exclusively for Allah, is a name that encompasses every type of mercy that Allah has. Ar-Rahim is what effects the believers, for Allah said,

(وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا)

(And He is ever Rahim (merciful) to the believers.)' (33:43) Also, Ibn `Abbas said - about Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim, `They are two soft names, one of them is softer than the other (meaning it carries more implications of mercy)."

Ibn Jarir said; As-Surri bin Yahya At-Tamimi narrated to me that `Uthman bin Zufar related that Al-`Azrami said about Ar-Rahman and Ar-Rahim, "He is Ar-Rahman with all creation and Ar-Rahim with the believers." Hence. Allah's statements,

(ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ)

(Then He rose over (Istawa) the Throne (in a manner that suits His majesty), Ar-Rahman) (25:59),) and,

(الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ)

(Ar-Rahman (Allah) rose over (Istawa) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His majesty).) (20:5)

Allah thus mentioned the Istawa - rising over the Throne - along with His Name Ar-Rahman, to indicate that His mercy encompasses all of His creation. Allah also said,

(وَكَانَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَحِيمًا)

(And He is ever Rahim (merciful) to the believers), thus encompassing the believers with His Name Ar-Rahim. They said, "This testifies to the fact that Ar-Rahman carries a broader scope of meanings pertaining to the mercy of Allah with His creation in both lives. Meanwhile, Ar-Rahim is exclusively for the believers." Yet, we should mention that there is a supplication that reads,

«رَحْمَنَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَرَحِيمَهُمَا»

(The Rahman and the Rahim of this life and the Hereafter)

Allah's Name Ar-Rahman is exclusively His. For instance, Allah said,

(قُلْ اِدْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ اِدْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا
فَلَهُ الْأُسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى)

(Say (O Muhammad): "Invoke Allah or invoke Ar-Rahman (Allah), by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Best Names) (17:110), and,

(وَاسْأَلْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا أَجَعَلْنَا
مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ ءَالِهَةً يُعْبَدُونَ)

(And ask (O Muhammad) those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you: "Did We ever appoint alihah (gods) to be worshipped besides Ar-Rahman (Most Gracious, Allah)" (43:45).

Further, when Musaylimah the Liar called himself the Rahman of Yamamah, Allah made him known by the name `Liar' and exposed him. Hence, whenever Musaylimah is mentioned, he is described as `the Liar'. He became an example for lying among the residents of the cities and villages and the residents of the deserts, the bedouins.

Therefore, Allah first mentioned His Name - Allah - that is exclusively His and described this Name by Ar-Rahman, which no one else is allowed to use, just as Allah said,

(قُلْ اِدْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ اِدْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيًّا مَا تَدْعُوا
فَلَهُ الْأُسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى)

(Say (O Muhammad): "Invoke Allah or invoke Ar-Rahman (Allah), by whatever name you invoke Him (it is the same), for to Him belong the Best Names." (17:110)

Only Musaylimah and those who followed his misguided ways described Musaylimah by Ar-Rahman.

As for Allah's Name Ar-Rahim, Allah has described others by it. For instance, Allah said,

(لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا
عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ)

(Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). It grieves him that you should receive any injury or difficulty. He

(Muhammad) is anxious about you (to be rightly guided) for the believers (he is) kind (full of pity), and Rahim (merciful)) (9:128).

Allah has also described some of His creation using some of His other Names. For instance, Allah said,

(إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ
فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا)

(Verily, We have created man from Nutfah (drops) of mixed semen (sexual discharge of man and woman), in order to try him, so We made him hearer (Sami`) and seer (Basir) (76:2).

In conclusion, there are several of Allah's Names that are used as names for others besides Allah. Further, some of Allah's Names are exclusive for Allah alone, such as Allah, Ar-Rahman, Al-Khaliq (the Creator), Ar-Raziq (the Sustainer), and so forth.

Hence, Allah started the Tasmiyah (meaning, `In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious Most Merciful') with His Name, Allah, and described Himself as Ar-Rahman, (Most Gracious) which is softer and more general than Ar-Rahim. The most honorable Names are mentioned first, just as Allah did here.

A Hadith narrated by Umm Salamah stated that the recitation of the Messenger of Allah was slow and clear, letter by letter,

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ - الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ - الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ - مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)

(In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The Owner of the Day of Recompense) (1:1-4).

And this is how a group of scholars recite it. Others connected the recitation of the Tasmiyah to Al-Hamd.

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(2. Al-Hamd be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.)

The Meaning of Al-Hamd

Abu Ja`far bin Jarir said, "The meaning of

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ)

(Al-Hamdu Lillah) (all praise and thanks be to Allah) is: all thanks are due purely to Allah, alone, not any of the objects that are being worshipped instead of Him, nor any of His creation. These thanks are due to Allah's innumerable favors and bounties, that only He knows the amount of. Allah's bounties include creating the tools that help the creation worship Him, the physical bodies with which they are able to implement His commands, the sustenance that He provides them in this life, and the comfortable life He has granted them, without anything or anyone compelling Him to do so. Allah also warned His creation and alerted them about the means and methods with which they can earn eternal dwelling in the residence of everlasting happiness. All thanks and praise are due to Allah for these favors from beginning to end."

Further, Ibn Jarir commented on the Ayah,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ)

(Al-Hamdu Lillah), that it means, "A praise that Allah praised Himself with, indicating to His servants that they too should praise Him, as if Allah had said, 'Say: All thanks and praise is due to Allah.' It was said that the statement,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah), entails praising Allah by mentioning His most beautiful Names and most honorable Attributes. When one proclaims, 'All thanks are due to Allah,' he will be thanking Him for His favors and bounties."

The Difference between Praise and Thanks

Hamd is more general, in that it is a statement of praise for one's characteristics, or for what he has done. Thanks are given for what was done, not merely for characteristics.

The Statements of the Salaf about Al-Hamd

Hafs mentioned that `Umar said to `Ali, "We know La ilaha illallah, Subhan Allah and Allahu Akbar. What about Al-Hamdu Lillah" `Ali said, "A statement that Allah liked for Himself, was pleased with for Himself and He likes that it be repeated." Also, Ibn `Abbas said, "Al-Hamdu Lillah is the statement of appreciation. When the servant says Al-Hamdu Lillah, Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' Ibn Abi Hatim recorded this Hadith

The Virtues of Al-Hamd

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal recorded that Al-Aswad bin Sari` said, "I said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Should I recite to you words of praise for My Lord, the Exalted, that I have collected' He said,

«أَمَّا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يُحِبُّ الْحَمْدَ»

(Verily, your Lord likes Al-Hamd.)"

An-Nasa'i also recorded this Hadith. Furthermore, Abu `Isa At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah recorded that Musa bin Ibrahim bin Kathir related that Talhah bin Khirash said that Jabir bin `Abdullah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«أَفْضَلُ الذِّكْرِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَفْضَلُ الدُّعَاءِ
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ»

(The best Dhikr (remembering Allah) is La ilaha illallah and the best supplication is Al-Hamdu Lillah.)

At-Tirmidhi said that this Hadith is Hasan Gharib. Also, Ibn Majah recorded that Anas bin Malik said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«مَا أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى عَبْدٍ نِعْمَةً فَقَالَ: الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، إِلَّا
كَانَ الَّذِي أُعْطِيَ أَفْضَلَ مِمَّا أَخَذَ»

(No servant is blessed by Allah and says, 'Al-Hamdu Lillah', except that what he was given is better than that which he has himself acquired.) Further, in his Sunan, Ibn Majah recorded that Ibn `Umar said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّ عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ كَمَا
يَنْبَغِي لِجَلَالِ وَجْهِكَ وَعَظِيمِ سُلْطَانِكَ. فَعَضَلَتْ
بِالْمَلَائِكِينَ فَلَمْ يَذَرِيَا كَيْفَ يَكْتُبَانِهَا فَصَعِدَا إِلَى اللَّهِ
فَقَالَا: يَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّ عَبْدًا قَدْ قَالَ مَقَالَةً لَا نَذَرِي كَيْفَ
نَكْتُبُهَا، قَالَ اللَّهُ، وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا قَالَ عَبْدُهُ: مَاذَا
قَالَ عَبْدِي؟ قَالَا: يَا رَبِّ إِنَّهُ قَالَ: لَكَ الْحَمْدُ يَا

رَبِّ كَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِجَلَالِ وَجْهِكَ وَعَظِيمِ سُلْطَانِكَ.
فَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَهُمَا: اكْتُبَاهَا كَمَا قَالَ عَبْدِي، حَتَّى
يَلْقَانِي فَأَجْزِيَهُ بِهَا.»

(A servant of Allah once said, 'O Allah! Yours is the Hamd that is suitable for the grace of Your Face and the greatness of Your Supreme Authority.' The two angels were confused as to how to write these words. They ascended to Allah and said, 'O our Lord! A servant has just uttered a statement and we are unsure how to record it for him.' Allah said while having more knowledge in what His servant has said, 'What did My servant say' They said, 'He said, 'O Allah! Yours is the Hamd that is suitable for the grace of Your Face and the greatness of Your Supreme Authority.' Allah said to them, 'Write it as My servant has said it, until he meets Me and then I shall reward him for it.)

Al before Hamd encompasses all Types of Thanks and Appreciation for Allah

The letters Alif and Lam before the word Hamd serve to encompass all types of thanks and appreciation for Allah, the Exalted. A Hadith stated,

«اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ كُلُّهُ، وَلَكَ الْمُلْكُ كُلُّهُ، وَبِيَدِكَ
الْخَيْرُ كُلُّهُ، وَإِلَيْكَ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ»

(O Allah! All of Al-Hamd is due to You, You own all the ownership, all types of good are in Your Hand and all affairs belong to You.)

The Meaning of Ar-Rabb, the Lord

Ar-Rabb is the owner who has full authority over his property. Ar-Rabb, linguistically means, the master or the one who has the authority to lead. All of these meanings are correct for Allah. When it is alone, the word Rabb is used only for Allah. As for other than Allah, it can be used to say Rabb Ad-Dar, the master of such and such object. Further, it was reported that Ar-Rabb is Allah's Greatest Name.

The Meaning of Al-` Alamin

Al-` Alamin is plural for ` Alam, which encompasses everything in existence except Allah. The word ` Alam is itself a plural word, having no singular form. The ` Alamin are different creations that exist in the heavens and the earth, on land and at sea. Every generation of creation is called an ` Alam. Al-Farra` and Abu ` Ubayd said, " Alam includes all that has a mind, the Jinns, mankind, the angels and the devils, but not the animals." Also, Zayd bin Aslam and Abu Muhaysin said, ` Alam includes all that Allah has created with a soul." Further, Qatadah said about,

(رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(The Lord of the `Alamin), "Every type of creation is an `Alam." Az-Zajjaj also said, "Alam encompasses everything that Allah created, in this life and in the Hereafter." Al-Qurtubi commented, "This is the correct meaning, that the `Alam encompasses everything that Allah created in both worlds. Similarly, Allah said,

(قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ - قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ)

(Fir`awn (Pharaoh) said: "And what is the Lord of the `Alamin" Musa (Moses) said: "The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, if you seek to be convinced with certainty") (26:23-24).

Why is the Creation called `Alam

`Alam is derived from `Alamah, that is because it is a sign testifying to the existence of its Creator and to His Oneness."

(الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ)

(3. Ar-Rahman (the Most Gracious), Ar-Rahim (the Most Merciful)). Allah said next,

(الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ)

(Ar-Rahman (the Most Gracious), Ar-Rahim (the Most Merciful)) We explained these Names in the Basmalah. Al-Qurtubi said, "Allah has described Himself by `Ar-Rahman, Ar-Rahim' after saying `the Lord of the Alamin', so His statement here includes a warning, and then an encouragement. Similarly, Allah said,

(نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ - وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ)

(Declare (O Muhammad) unto My servants, that truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful. And that My torment is indeed the most painful torment.) (15:49-50) Allah said,

(إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ)

(Surely, your Lord is swift in retribution. And certainly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.)
(6:165)

Hence, Rabb contains a warning while Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim encourages. Further, Muslim recorded in his Sahih that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْعُقُوبَةِ مَا طَمِعَ فِي جَنَّتِهِ أَحَدٌ، وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْكَافِرُ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ مَا قَنَطَ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ أَحَدٌ»

(If the believer knew what punishment Allah has, none would have hope in acquiring His Paradise, and if the disbeliever knew what mercy Allah has, none will lose hope of earning His earning.)

(مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)

(4. The Owner of the Day of Recompense.)

Indicating Sovereignty on the Day of Judgment

Allah mentioned His sovereignty of the Day of Resurrection, but this does not negate His sovereignty over all other things. For Allah mentioned that He is the Lord of existence, including this earthly life and the Hereafter. Allah only mentioned the Day of Recompense here because on that Day, no one except Him will be able to claim ownership of anything whatsoever. On that Day, no one will be allowed to speak without His permission. Similarly, Allah said,

(يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا)

(The Day that Ar-Ruh (Jibril (Gabriel) or another angel) and the angels will stand forth in rows, they will not speak except him whom the Most Gracious (Allah) allows, and he will speak what is right.) (78:38),

(وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا)

(And all voices will be hushed for the Most Gracious (Allah), and nothing shall you hear but the low voice of their footsteps.)(20:108), and,

(يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلَّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ
وَسَعِيدٌ)

(On the Day when it comes, no person shall speak except by His (Allah's) leave. Some among them will be wretched and (others) blessed) (11:105).

Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn `Abbas commented, "Allah says, `On that Day, no one owns anything that they used to own in the world."

The Meaning of Yawm Ad-Din

Ibn `Abbas said, "Yawm Ad-Din is the Day of Recompense for the creatures, meaning the Day of Judgment. On that Day, Allah will reckon the creation for their deeds, evil for evil, good for good, except for those whom He pardons." In addition, several other Companions, Tabi`in and scholars of the Salaf, said similarly, for this meaning is apparent and clear from the Ayah.

Allah is Al-Malik (King or Owner)

Allah is the True Owner (Malik) (of everything and everyone). Allah said,

(هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ
الْسَّلَامُ)

(He is Allah, beside Whom La ilaha illa Huwa, the King, the Holy, the One free from all defects) (59:23).

Also, the Two Sahihs recorded Abu Hurayrah saying that the Prophet said,

«أَخْنَعُ اسْمٍ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ رَجُلٌ تَسَمَّى بِمَلِكِ الْأُمَلَاكِ
وَلَا مَالِكَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ»

(The most despicable name to Allah is a person who calls himself the king of kings, while there are no owners except Allah.)

Also the Two Sahihs recorded that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَقْبِضُ اللَّهُ الْأَرْضَ وَيَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ بِيَمِينِهِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ: أَنَا الْمَلِكُ، أَيْنَ مُلُوكُ الْأَرْضِ؟ أَيْنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ؟ أَيْنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ؟»

((On the Day of Judgement) Allah will grasp the earth and fold up the heavens with His Right Hand and proclaim, 'I Am the King! Where are the kings of the earth Where are the tyrants Where are the arrogant')

Also, in the the Glorious Qur'an;

(لَمَنَ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ)

(Whose is the kingdom this Day Allah's, the One, the Irresistible.)(40:16).

As for calling someone other than Allah a king in this life, 3-24). :23NNA

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(The most despicable name to Allah is a person who calls himself the king of kings, while there are no owners except Allah.)

Also the Two Sahihs recorded that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَقْبِضُ اللَّهُ الْأَرْضَ وَيَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ بِيَمِينِهِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُ: أَنَا الْمَلِكُ، أَيْنَ مُلُوكُ الْأَرْضِ؟ أَيْنَ الْجَبَّارُونَ؟ أَيْنَ الْمُتَكَبِّرُونَ؟»

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(Whose is the kingdom this Day Allah's, the One, the Irresistible.)(40:16).

As for calling someone other than Allah a king in this life, then it is done as a figure of speech. For instance, Allah said,

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا)

(Indeed Allah appointed Talut (Saul) as a king over you.)(2:247),

(وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ)

(As there was a king behind them)(18:79), and,

(إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا)

(When He made Prophets among you, and made you kings)5:20(.

Also, the Two Sahihs recorded,

«مِثْلُ الْمُلُوكِ عَلَى الْأَسِرَّةِ»

(Just like kings reclining on their thrones)

The Meaning of Ad-Din

Ad-Din means the reckoning, the reward or punishment. Similarly, Allah said,

(يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ)

(On that Day Allah will pay them the (Dinahum) recompense (of their deeds) in full) (24:25), and,

(أَعْنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ)

(Shall we indeed (be raised up) to receive reward or punishment (according to our deeds)) (37:53). A Hadith stated,

«الْكَيِّسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ»

(The wise person is he who reckons himself and works for (his life) after death.) meaning, he holds himself accountable. Also, `Umar said, "Hold yourself accountable before you are held accountable, weigh yourselves before you are weighed, and be prepared for the biggest gathering before He Whose knowledge encompasses your deeds,

(يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ)

(That Day shall you be brought to Judgement, not a secret of yours will be hidden) (69:18)."

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(5. You we worship, and You we ask for help.) (1:5)

The Linguistic and Religious Meaning of `Ibadah

Linguistically, `Ibadah means subdued. For instance, a road is described as Mu`abbadah, meaning, `paved'. In religious terminology, `Ibadah implies the utmost love, humility and fear.

The Merit of stating the Object of the Action before the Doer of the Act, and the Merit of these Negations

You...", means, we worship You alone and none else, and rely on You alone and none else. This is the perfect form of obedience and the entire religion is implied by these two ideas. Some of the Salaf said, Al-Fatihah is the secret of the Qur'an, while these words are the secret of Al-Fatihah,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(5. You we worship, and You we ask for help from.)

The first part is a declaration of innocence from Shirk (polytheism), while the second negates having any power or strength, displaying the recognition that all affairs are controlled by Allah alone. This meaning is reiterated in various instances in the Qur'an. For instance, Allah said,

(فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَفِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ)

(So worship Him (O Muhammad) and put your trust in Him. And your Lord is not unaware of what you (people) do.) (11:123),

(قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ ءَامَنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا)

(Say: "He is the Most Gracious (Allah), in Him we believe, and in Him we put our trust.") (67:29),

(رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا)

((He alone is) the Lord of the east and the west; La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He).

So take Him alone as Wakil (Disposer of your affairs)), (73:9), and,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(You we worship, and You we ask for help from).

We should mention that in this Ayah, the type of speech here changes from the third person to direct speech by using the Kaf in the statement Iyyaka (You). This is because after the servant praised and thanked Allah, he stands before Him, addressing Him directly;

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

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(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(You we worship, and You we ask for help from).

Al-Fatihah indicates the Necessity of praising Allah. It is required in every PrayerThe beginning of Surat Al-Fatihah contains Allah's praise for Himself by His most beautiful Attributes and indicates to His servants that, they too, should praise Him in the same manner. Hence, the prayer is not valid unless one recites Al-Fatihah, if he is able. The Two Sahih recorded that `Ubadah bin As-Samit said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَا صَلَاةَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَقْرَأْ بِفَاتِحَةِ الْكِتَابِ»

(There is no valid prayer for whoever does not recite Al-Fatihah of the Book.)

Also, it is recorded in Sahih Muslim that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَقُولُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى : قَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نِصْفَيْنِ، فَنِصْفُهَا لِي وَنِصْفُهَا لِعَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ، إِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ:

«الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ يَوْمَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُؤْمِنُونَ
كَفَرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ غِشْوَةً عَلَى الْمَعْصُوبِ
يُنْفِقُونَ اللَّهَ سَوَاءَ قُلُوبِهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِمْ
قُلُوبِهِمْ تُنذِرُهُمْ يُوقِنُونَ اللَّهَ بِالْغَيْبِ سَمِعِهِمْ
يُؤْمِنُونَ قُلُوبِهِمْ تُنذِرُهُمْ يَوْمَ أَمْ اللَّهُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ
قُلُوبِهِمْ بِمَا اللَّهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُؤْمِنُونَ كَفَرُوا
اللَّهُ الْمَعْصُوبِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ»

، قَالَ اللَّهُ: أَنُنِي عَلَى عَبْدِي فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ) ، قَالَ اللَّهُ: مَجْدَنِي عَبْدِي، وَإِذَا
قَالَ:

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ) ، قَالَ: هَذَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ
عَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ، فَإِذَا قَالَ:

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ)

(صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَعْصُوبِ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ) ، قَالَ: هَذَا لِعَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي
مَا سَأَلَ»

(Allah said, 'I divided the prayer into two halves between Myself and My servant, one half is for Me and one half for My servant. My servant shall have what he asks for.' When the servant says,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.), Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' When the servant says,

(الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ)

(The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful), Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' When the servant says,

(مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ)

(The Owner of the Day of Recompense), Allah says, 'My servant has glorified Me.' If the servant says,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(You we worship, and You we ask for help), Allah says, 'This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall have what he asked.' If the servant says,

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ - صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

(Guide us to the straight path. The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your grace, not (that) of those who have earned Your anger, nor of those who went astray), Allah says, 'This is for My servant, and My servant shall have what he asked.'

Tawhid Al-Uluhiyyah

Ad-Dahhak narrated that Ibn `Abbas said,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ)

(You we worship) means, "It is You whom we single out, Whom we fear and Whom we hope in, You alone, our Lord,

(وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(And You we ask for help from), to obey you and in all of our affairs." Further, Qatadah said that the Ayah,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(You we worship, and You we ask for help from) "Contains Allah's command to us to perform sincere worship for Him and to seek His aid concerning all of our affairs." Allah mentioned,

(إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ)

(You we worship) before,

(وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ)

(And You we ask for help from), because the objective here is the worship, while Allah's help is the tool to implement this objective. Certainly, one first takes care of the most important aspects and then what is less important, and Allah knows best.

Allah called His Prophet

an ` Abd

Allah called His Messenger an ` Abd (servant) when He mentioned sending down His Book, the Prophet's involvement in inviting to Him, and when mentioning the Isra' (overnight journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to heaven), and these are the Prophet's most honorable missions. Allah said,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, Who has sent down to His servant (Muhammad) the Book (the Qur'an)) (18:1),

(وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ)

(And when the servant of Allah (Muhammad) stood up invoking Him (his Lord Allah in prayer)), (72:19) and,

(سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا)

(Glorified (and Exalted) be He (Allah) (above all that they associate with Him) Who took His servant (Muhammad) for a journey by night) (17:1).

Encouraging the Performance of the Acts of Worship during Times of Distress

Allah also recommended that His Prophet resort to acts of worship during times when he felt distressed because of the disbelievers who defied and denied him. Allah said,

(وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ -
فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ - وَاعْبُدْ
رَبَّكَ حَتَّى يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ)

(Indeed, We know that your breast is straitened at what they say. So glorify the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate themselves (to Him). And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (i.e. death)) (15:97-99).

Why Praise was mentioned First

Since the praise of Allah, Who is being sought for help, was mentioned, it was appropriate that one follows the praise by asking for his need. We stated that Allah said,

«فَنِصْفُهَا لِي وَنِصْفُهَا لِعَبْدِي، وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ»

(One half for Myself and one half for My servant, and My servant shall have what he asked.)

This is the best method for seeking help, by first praising the one whom help is sought from and then asking for His aid, and help for one's self, and for his Muslim brethren by saying.

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ)

(Guide us to the straight path.)

This method is more appropriate and efficient in bringing about a positive answer to the pleas, and this is why Allah recommended this better method.

Asking for help may take the form of conveying the condition of the person who is seeking help. For instance, the Prophet Moses said,

(رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ)

(My Lord! Truly, I am in need of whatever good that You bestow on me!) (28:24).

Also, one may first mention the attributes of whoever is being asked, such as what Dhun-Nun said,

(لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ)

(La ilaha illa Anta (none has the right to be worshipped but You (O Allah)), Glorified (and Exalted) be You (above all that they associate with You)! Truly, I have been of the wrongdoers) (21:87).

Further, one may praise Him without mentioning what he needs. The Meaning of Guidance mentioned in the Surah

The guidance mentioned in the Surah implies being directed and guided to success. Allah said,

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ)

(Guide us to the straight path) meaning guide, direct, lead and grant us the correct guidance. Also,

(وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ)

(And shown him the two ways (good and evil)) (90:10), means, 'We explained to him the paths of good and evil.' Also, Allah said,

(اجْتَبَاهُ وَهَدَاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)

(He (Allah) chose him (as an intimate friend) and guided him to a straight path) (16:121), and,

(فَاهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ)

(And lead them on to the way of flaming Fire (Hell)) (37:23). Similarly, Allah said,

(وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)

(And verily, you (O Muhammad) are indeed guiding (mankind) to the straight path) (42:52), and,

(الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَذَا)

(All praise and thanks be to Allah, Who has guided us to this) (7:43), meaning, guided us and directed us and qualified us for this end - Paradise.

The Meaning of As-Sirat Al-Mustaqim, the Straight Path.

As for the meaning of As-Srat Al-Mustaqim, Imam Abu Ja`far At-Tabari said, "The Ummah agreed that Srat Al-Mustaqim, is the clear path without branches, according to the language of the Arabs. For instance, Jarir bin `Atiyah Al-Khatafi said in a poem, `The Leader of the faithful is on a path that will remain straight even though the other paths are crooked." At-Tabari also stated that, "There are many evidences to this fact." At-Tabari then proceeded, "The Arabs use the term, Srat in reference to every deed and statement whether righteous or wicked. Hence the Arabs would describe the honest person as being straight and the wicked person as being crooked. The straight path mentioned in the Qur'an refers to Islam.

Imam Ahmad recorded in his Musnad that An-Nawwas bin Sam`an said that the Prophet said,

«ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا، وَعَلَى جَنْبَيْهِ الصِّرَاطِ سُورَانِ فِيهِمَا أَبْوَابٌ مَقْتَحَةٌ، وَعَلَى الْأَبْوَابِ سُورٌ مُرْخَاةٌ، وَعَلَى بَابِ الصِّرَاطِ دَاعٍ يَقُولُ: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ادْخُلُوا الصِّرَاطَ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَعُوجُوا، وَدَاعٍ يَدْعُو مِنْ فَوْقِ الصِّرَاطِ، فَإِذَا أَرَادَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يَفْتَحَ شَيْئًا

مِنْ تِلْكَ الْأَبْوَابِ قَالَ: وَيْحَكَ لَا تَفْتَحْهُ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ
فَتَحْتَهُ تَلِجُهُ فَاَلصِّرَّاطُ: الْإِسْلَامُ وَالسُّورَانِ: حُدُودُ
اللَّهِ وَالْأَبْوَابُ الْمُفْتَحَةُ مَحَارِمُ اللَّهِ وَذَلِكَ الدَّاعِي
عَلَى رَأْسِ الصِّرَاطِ كِتَابُ اللَّهِ، وَالدَّاعِي مِنْ
فَوْقِ الصِّرَاطِ وَاعِظُ اللَّهِ فِي قَلْبِ كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ»

(Allah has set an example: a Srat (straight path) that is surrounded by two walls on both sides, with several open doors within the walls covered with curtains. There is a caller on the gate of the Srat who heralds, 'O people! Stay on the path and do not deviate from it.' Meanwhile, a caller from above the path is also warning any person who wants to open any of these doors, 'Woe unto you! Do not open it, for if you open it you will pass through.' The straight path is Islam, the two walls are Allah's set limits, while the doors resemble what Allah has prohibited. The caller on the gate of the Srat is the Book of Allah, while the caller above the Srat is Allah's admonishment in the heart of every Muslim.)

The Faithful ask for and abide by Guidance

If someone asks, "Why does the believer ask Allah for guidance during every prayer and at other times, while he is already properly guided Has he not already acquired guidance"

The answer to these questions is that if it were not a fact that the believer needs to keep asking for guidance day and night, Allah would not have directed him to invoke Him to acquire the guidance. The servant needs Allah the Exalted every hour of his life to help him remain firm on the path of guidance and to make him even more firm and persistent on it. The servant does not have the power to benefit or harm himself, except by Allah's permission. Therefore, Allah directed the servant to invoke Him constantly, so that He provides him with His aid and with firmness and success. Indeed, the happy person is he whom Allah guides to ask of Him. This is especially the case if a person urgently needs Allah's help day or night. Allah said,

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي
أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ)

(O you who believe! Believe in Allah, and His Messenger (Muhammad), and the Book (the Qur'an) which He has sent down to His Messenger, and the Scripture which He sent down to those before (him)) (4:16).

Therefore, in this Ayah Allah commanded the believers to believe, and this command is not redundant since what is sought here is firmness and continuity of performing the deeds that help one remain on the path of faith. Also, Allah commanded His believing servants to proclaim,

(رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ)

(Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate (from the truth) after You have guided us, and grant us mercy from You. Truly, You are the Bestower.) (3:8). Hence,

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ)

(Guide us to the straight way) means, "Make us firm on the path of guidance and do not allow us to deviate from it."

(صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

(7. The way of those upon whom You have bestowed Your grace, not (that) of those who earned Your anger, nor of those who went astray).

We mentioned the Hadith in which the servant proclaims,

(اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ)

(Guide us to the straight way) and Allah says, "This is for My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he asks for." Allah's statement.

(صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(The way of those upon whom You have bestowed Your grace) defines the path. `Those upon whom Allah has bestowed His grace' are those mentioned in Surat An-Nisa' (chapter 4), when Allah said,

(وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا - ذَلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا)

(And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad), then they will be in the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His grace, the Prophets, the Sddiqin (the truly faithful), the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are! Such is the bounty from Allah, and Allah is sufficient to know) (4:69-70).

Allah's statement,

(غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

(Not (the way) of those who earned Your anger, nor of those who went astray) meaning guide us to the straight path, the path of those upon whom you have bestowed Your grace, that is, the people of guidance, sincerity and obedience to Allah and His Messengers. They are the people who adhere to Allah's commandments and refrain from committing what He has prohibited. But, help us to avoid the path of those whom Allah is angry with, whose intentions are corrupt, who know the truth, yet deviate from it. Also, help us avoid the path of those who were led astray, who lost the true knowledge and, as a result, are wandering in misguidance, unable to find the correct path. Allah asserted that the two paths He described here are both misguided when He repeated the negation `not'. These two paths are the paths of the Christians and Jews, a fact that the believer should beware of so that he avoids them. The path of the believers is knowledge of the truth and abiding by it. In comparison, the Jews abandoned practicing the religion, while the Christians lost the true knowledge. This is why `anger' descended upon the Jews, while being described as `led astray' is more appropriate of the Christians. Those who know, but avoid implementing the truth, deserve the anger, unlike those who are ignorant. The Christians want to seek the true knowledge, but are unable to find it because they did not seek it from its proper resources.

This is why they were led astray. We should also mention that both the Christians and the Jews have earned the anger and are led astray, but the anger is one of the attributes more particular of the Jews. Allah said about the Jews,

(مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ)

(Those (Jews) who incurred the curse of Allah and His wrath) (5:60).

The attribute that the Christians deserve most is that of being led astray, just as Allah said about them,

(قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ
سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ)

(Who went astray before and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the right path) (5:77).

There are several Hadiths and reports from the Salaf on this subject. Imam Ahmad recorded that `Adi bin Hatim said, "The horsemen of the Messenger of Allah seized my paternal aunt and some other people. When they brought them to the Messenger of Allah, they were made to stand in line before him. My aunt said, `O Messenger of Allah! The supporter is far away, the offspring have stopped coming and I am an old woman, unable to serve. Grant me your favor, may Allah grant you His favor.' He said, `Who is your supporter' She said, `Adi bin Hatim.' He said, `The one who ran away from Allah and His Messenger' She said, `So, the Prophet freed me.' When the Prophet came back, there was a man next to him, I think that he was `Ali, who said to her, `Ask him for a means of transportation.' She asked the Prophet, and he ordered that she be given an animal.

"`Adi then said, "Later on, she came to me and said, `He (Muhammad) has done a favor that your father (who was a generous man) would never have done. So and-so person came to him and he granted him his favor, and so-and-so came to him and he granted him his favor.' So I went to the Prophet and found that some women and children were gathering with him, so close that I knew that he was not a king like Kisra (King of Persia) or Caesar. He said, `O `Adi! What made you run away, so that La ilaha illallah is not proclaimed Is there a deity worthy of worship except Allah What made you run away, so that Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greater) is not proclaimed Is there anything Greater than Allah' I proclaimed my Islam and I saw his face radiate with pleasure and he said:

«إِنَّ الْمَغْضُوبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْيَهُودُ وَ إِنَّ الضَّالِّينَ
النَّصَارَى»

(Those who have earned the anger are the Jews and those who are led astray are the Christians.)"

This Hadith was also collected by At-Tirmidhi who said that it is Hasan Gharib.

Also, when Zayd bin `Amr bin Nufayl went with some of his friends - before Islam - to Ash-Sham seeking the true religion, the Jews said to him, "You will not become a Jew unless you carry a share of the anger of Allah that we have earned." He said, "I am seeking to escape Allah's anger." Also, the Christians said to him, "If you become one of us you will carry a share in Allah's discontent." He said, "I cannot bear it." So he remained in his pure nature and avoided worshipping the idols and the polytheistic practices. He became neither a Jew, nor Christian. As for his companions, they became Christians because they found it more pure than Judaism. Waraqah bin Nawfal was among these people until Allah guided him by the hand of His Prophet, when he was sent as Prophet, and Waraqah believed in the revelation that was sent to the Prophet may Allah be pleased with him.

The Summary of Al-Fatihah

The honorable Surah Al-Fatihah contains seven Ayat including the praise and thanks of Allah, glorifying Him and praising Him by mentioning His most Beautiful Names and most high Attributes. It also mentions the Hereafter, which is the Day of Resurrection, and directs Allah's servants to ask of Him, invoking Him and declaring that all power and strength comes from Him. It also calls to the sincerity of the worship of Allah alone, singling Him out in His divinity, believing in His perfection, being free from the need of any partners, having no rivals nor equals. Al-Fatihah directs the believers to invoke Allah to guide them to the straight path, which is the true religion, and to help them remain on that path in this life, and to pass over the actual Srat (bridge over hell that everyone must pass over) on the Day of Judgment. On that Day, the believers will be directed to the gardens of comfort in the company of the Prophets, the truthful ones, the martyrs and the righteous. Al-Fatihah also encourages performing good deeds, so that the believers will be in the company of the good-doers on the Day of Resurrection. The Surah also warns against following the paths of misguidance, so that one does not end up being gathered with those who indulge in sin, on the Day of Resurrection, including those who have earned the anger and those who were led astray.

The Bounties are because of Allah, not the Deviations

Allah said,

(صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(The way of those upon whom you have bestowed Your grace), when He mentioned His favor. On mentioning anger, Allah said,

(غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(Not (that) of those who earned Your anger), without mentioning the subject, although it is He Who has sent down the anger on them, just as Allah stated in another Ayah,

(أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(Have you (O Muhammad) not seen those (hypocrites) who take as friends a people upon whom is the wrath of Allah (i.e. Jews)) (58:14).

Also, Allah relates the misguidance of those who indulged in it, although they were justly misguided according to Allah's appointed destiny. For instance, Allah said,

(مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا)

(He whom Allah guides, he is the rightly-guided; but he whom He sends astray, for him you will find no Wali (guiding friend) to lead him (to the right path)) (18:17)

and,

(مَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(Whomsoever Allah sends astray, none can guide him; and He lets them wander blindly in their transgression) (7:186).

These and several other Ayat testify to the fact that Allah alone is the One Who guides and misguides, contrary to the belief of the Qadariyyah sect, who claimed that the servants choose and create their own destiny. They rely on some unclear Ayat avoiding what is clear and contradicts their desires. Theirs, is the method of the people who follow their lust, desire and wickedness. An authentic Hadith narrated,

«إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ سَمَّى اللَّهُ فَاَحْذَرُوهُمْ»

(When you see those who follow what is not so clear in it (the Qur'an), then they are those whom Allah has mentioned (refer to 3:7). Hence, avoid them.)

The Prophet was referring to Allah's statement,

(فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ)

(So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah (polytheism and trials), and seeking for its hidden meanings)(3:7).

Verily, no innovator in the religion could ever rely on any authentic evidence in the Qur'an that testifies to his innovation. The Qur'an came to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and

guidance and misguidance. The Qur'an does not contain any discrepancies or contradictions, because it is a revelation from the Most Wise, Worthy of all praise.

Saying Amin

It is recommended to say Amin after finishing the recitation of Al-Fatihah. Amin means, "O Allah! Accept our invocation." The evidence that saying Amin is recommended is contained in what Imams Ahmad, Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi recorded, that Wa'il bin Hujr said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah recite,

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(Not (that) of those who earned Your anger, nor of those who went astray), and he said `Amin' extending it with his voice."

Abu Dawud's narration added, "Raising his voice with it." At-Tirmidhi then commented that this Hadith is Hasan and was also narrated from `Ali and Ibn Mas'ud. Also, Abu Hurayrah narrated that whenever the Messenger of Allah would recite,

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Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah recorded this Hadith with the addition, "Then the Masjid would shake because of (those behind the Prophet) reciting Amin." Also, Ad-Daraqutni recorded this Hadith and commented that it is Hasan.

Further, Bilal narrated that he said, "O Messenger of Allah! Do not finish saying Amin before I can join you." This was recorded by Abu Dawud.

In addition, Abu Nasr Al-Qushayri narrated that Al-Hasan and Ja'far As-Sadiq stressed the `m' in Amin.

Saying Amin is recommended for those who are not praying (when reciting Al-Fatihah) and is strongly recommended for those who are praying, whether alone or behind the Imam. The Two Sahihis recorded that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِذَا أَمَّنَ الْإِمَامُ فَأَمُّنُوا، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ وَاَقَقَ تَأْمِينُهُ
تَأْمِينِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ»

(When the Imam says, 'Amin', then say, 'Amin', because whoever says, 'Amin' with the angels, his previous sins will be forgiven.)

Muslim recorded that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِذَا قَالَ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي الصَّلَاةِ: آمِينَ، وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ فِي السَّمَاءِ: آمِينَ، فَوَافَقَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْآخَرَى غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ»

(When any of you says in the prayer, 'Amin' and the angels in heaven say, 'Amin', in unison, his previous sins will be forgiven.)

It was said that the Hadith talks about both the angels and the Muslims saying Amin at the same time. The Hadith also refers to when the Amins said by the angels and the Muslims are equally sincere (thus bringing about forgiveness).

Further, it is recorded in Sahih Muslim that Abu Musa related to the Prophet that he said,

«إِذَا قَالَ يَعْنِي الْإِمَامُ : وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ، فَقُولُوا: آمِينَ، يُجِيبُكُمْ اللَّهُ»

(When the Imam says, 'Walad-dallin', say, 'Amin' and Allah will answer your invocation.)

In addition, At-Tirmidhi said that 'Amin' means, "Do not disappoint our hope", while the majority of scholars said that it means, "Answer our invocation."

Also, in his Musnad, Imam Ahmad recorded that 'A'ishah said that when the Jews were mentioned to him, the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَحْسُدُونَا عَلَى شَيْءٍ كَمَا يَحْسُدُونَا عَلَى الْجُمُعَةِ الَّتِي هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَا وَضَلُّوا عَنْهَا، وَعَلَى الْقِبْلَةِ الَّتِي هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَا وَضَلُّوا عَنْهَا وَعَلَى قَوْلِنَا خَلْفَ الْإِمَامِ: آمِينَ»

(They will not envy us for anything more than they envy us for Friday which we have been guided to, while they were led astray from it, and for the Qiblah which we were guided to, while they were led astray from it, and for our saying 'Amin' behind the Imam.)

Also, Ibn Majah recorded this Hadith with the wording,

«مَا حَسَدَتْكُمْ الْيَهُودُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مَّا حَسَدَتْكُمْ عَلَى
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(The Jews have never envied you more than for your saying the Salam (Islamic greeting) and for saying Amin.) rgiveness). veneooA ? Further, it is recorded in Sahih Muslim that Abu Musa related to the Prophet that he said,

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(The Jews have never envied you more than for your saying the Salam (Islamic greeting) and for saying Amin.)

Surat Al-Baqarah

Which was revealed in Al-Madinah

The Virtues of Surat Al-Baqarah

In Musnad Ahmad, Sahih Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa'i, it is recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet said,

«لَا تَجْعَلُوا بُيُوتَكُمْ قُبُورًا فَإِنَّ الْبَيْتَ الَّذِي تُقْرَأُ فِيهِ سُورَةُ الْبَقَرَةِ لَا يَدْخُلُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ»

(Do not turn your houses into graves. Verily, Shaytan does not enter the house where Surat Al-Baqarah is recited.) At-Tirmidhi said, "Hasan Sahih.

Also, `Abdullah bin Mas`ud said, "Shaytan flees from the house where Surat Al-Baqarah is heard." This Hadith was collected by An-Nasa'i in Al-Yawm wal-Laylah, and Al-Hakim recorded it in his Mustadrak, and then said that its chain of narration is authentic, although the Two Sahihs did not collect it. In his Musnad, Ad-Darimi recorded that Ibn Mas`ud said, "Shaytan departs the house where Surat Al-Baqarah is being recited, and as he leaves, he passes gas." Ad-Darimi also recorded that Ash-Sha`bi said that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud said, "Whoever recites ten Ayat from Surat Al-Baqarah in a night, then Shaytan will not enter his house that night. (These ten Ayat are) four from the beginning, Ayat Al-Kursi (255), the following two Ayat (256-257) and the last three Ayat." In another narration, Ibn Mas`ud said, "Then Shaytan will not come near him or his family, nor will he be touched by anything that he dislikes. Also, if these Ayat were to be recited over a senile person, they would wake him up."

Further, Sahl bin Sa`d said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَنَامًا، وَإِنَّ سَنَامَ الْقُرْآنِ الْبَقَرَةُ، وَإِنَّ مَنْ قَرَأَهَا فِي بَيْتِهِ لَيْلَةً لَمْ يَدْخُلْهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ، وَمَنْ قَرَأَهَا فِي بَيْتِهِ نَهَارًا لَمْ يَدْخُلْهُ الشَّيْطَانُ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ»

(Everything has a hump (or, high peek), and Al-Baqarah is the high peek of the Qur'an. Whoever recites Al-Baqarah at night in his house, then Shaytan will not enter that house for three nights. Whoever recites it during a day in his house, then Shaytan will not enter that house for three days.) This Hadith was collected by Abu Al-Qasim At-Tabarani, Abu Hatim Ibn Hibban in his Sahih and Ibn Marduwyah.

At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah recorded that Abu Hurayrah said, "The Messenger of Allah sent an expedition force comprising of many men and asked each about what they memorized of the Qur'an. The Prophet came to one of the youngest men among them and asked him, 'What have you memorized (of the Qur'an) young man' He said, 'I memorized such and such Surahs and also Al-Baqarah.' The Prophet said, 'You memorized Surat Al-Baqarah' He said, 'Yes.' The Prophet said, 'Then you are their commander.' One of the noted men (or chiefs) commented, 'By Allah! I did not learn Surat Al-Baqarah, for fear that I would not be able to implement it. The Messenger of Allah said,

«تَعَلَّمُوا الْقُرْآنَ وَاقْرَءُوهُ، فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ الْقُرْآنِ لِمَنْ
تَعَلَّمَهُ فَقَرَأَ وَقَامَ بِهِ كَمَثَلِ جِرَابٍ مَحْشُوٍّ مِسْكَ
يَفُوحُ رِيحُهُ فِي كُلِّ مَكَانٍ، وَمَثَلُ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَهُ
فَيَرُقُدُ وَهُوَ فِي جَوْفِهِ كَمَثَلِ جِرَابٍ أُوكِيَ عَلَى
مِسْكِ»

(Learn Al-Qur'an and recite it, for the example of whoever learns the Qur'an, recites it and adheres to it, is the example of a bag that is full of musk whose scent fills the air. The example of whoever learns the Qur'an and then sleeps (i.e. lazy) while the Qur'an is in his memory, is the example of a bag that has musk, but is closed tight.)

This is the wording collected by At-Tirmidhi, who said that this Hadith is Hasan. In another narration, At-Tirmidhi recorded this same Hadith in a Mursal manner, so Allah knows best.

Also, Al-Bukhari recorded that Usayd bin Hudayr said that he was once reciting Surat Al-Baqarah while his horse was tied next to him. The horse started to make some noise. When Usayd stopped reciting, the horse stopped moving about. When he resumed reading, the horse started moving about again. When he stopped reciting, the horse stopped moving, and when he resumed reading, the horse started to move again. Meanwhile, his son Yahya was close to the horse, and he feared that the horse might step on him. When he moved his son back, he looked up to the sky and saw a cloud radiating with light that looked like lamps. In the morning, he went to the Prophet and told him what had happened and then said, "O Messenger of Allah! My son Yahya was close to the horse and I feared that she might step on him. When I attended to him and raised my head to the sky, I saw a cloud with lights like lamps. So I went, but I couldn't see it." The Prophet said, "Do you know what that was" He said, "No." The Prophet said,

«تِلْكَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ دَنَتْ لِمِصْرَتِكَ وَلَوْ قَرَأْتَ
لَأُصْبَحْتَ يَنْظُرُ النَّاسُ إِلَيْهَا، لَا تَتَوَارَى مِنْهُمْ»

(They were the angels, they came close hearing your voice (reciting Surat Al-Baqarah), and if you had kept reading, the people would have been able to see the angels when the morning came, and the angels would not be hidden from their eyes.)

This is the narration reported by Imam Abu Ubayd Al-Qasim bin Salam in his book Fada'il Al-Qur'an.

Virtues of Surat Al-Baqarah and Surat Al `Imran

Imam Ahmad said that Abu Nu'aym narrated to them that Bishr bin Muhajir said `Abdullah bin Buraydah narrated to him from his father, 'I was sitting with the Prophet and I heard him say,

«تَعَلَّمُوا سُورَةَ الْبَقَرَةِ فَإِنَّ أَخْذَهَا بَرَكَةٌ، وَتَرْكُهَا حَسْرَةٌ، وَلَا تَسْتَطِيعُهَا الْبَطَلَةُ»

(Learn Surat Al-Baqarah, because in learning it there is blessing, in ignoring it there is sorrow, and the sorceresses cannot memorize it.)

He kept silent for a while and then said,

«تَعَلَّمُوا سُورَةَ الْبَقَرَةِ وَالْ عِمْرَانَ فَإِنَّهُمَا الزَّهْرَاوَانِ، يُظَلَّانِ صَاحِبَهُمَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَأَنَّهُمَا غَمَامَتَانِ أَوْ غَيَّائَتَانِ أَوْ فِرْقَانِ مِنْ طَيْرٍ صَوَافٍ، وَإِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ يَلْقَى صَاحِبَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِينَ يَنْشَقُّ عَنْهُ قَبْرُهُ كَالرَّجُلِ الشَّاحِبِ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: هَلْ تَعْرِفُنِي؟ فَيَقُولُ: مَا أَعْرِفُكَ. فَيَقُولُ: أَنَا صَاحِبُكَ الْقُرْآنُ الَّذِي أَظْمَأْتُكَ فِي الْهَوَاجِرِ وَأَسْهَرْتُ لَيْلَكَ وَإِنَّ كُلَّ تَاجِرٍ مِنْ وَرَاءِ تِجَارَتِهِ، وَإِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ كُلِّ تِجَارَةٍ فَيُعْطَى الْمَلِكُ بِيَمِينِهِ وَالْخُلْدَ بِشِمَالِهِ وَيُوضَعُ عَلَى رَأْسِهِ تَاجُ الْوَقَارِ، وَيُكْسَى وَالِدَاهُ حُلَّتَانِ لَا يَقُومُ لَهُمَا أَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا، فَيَقُولَانِ: بِمَا كُسِبْنَا هَذَا؟ فَيُقَالُ: بِأَخْذِ وَلَدِكُمَا الْقُرْآنَ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ: اقْرَأْ وَاصْعَدْ فِي دَرَجِ

الْجَنَّةِ وَغُرْفِهَا، فَهُوَ فِي صُعُودٍ مَا دَامَ يَقْرَأُ هَذَا
كَانَ أَوْ تَرْتِيلاً»

(Learn Surat Al-Baqarah and Al `Imran because they are two lights and they shade their people on the Day of Resurrection, just as two clouds, two spaces of shade or two lines of (flying) birds. The Qur'an will meet its companion in the shape of a pale-faced man on the Day of Resurrection when his grave is opened. The Qur'an will ask him, 'Do you know me' The man will say, 'I do not know you.' The Qur'an will say, 'I am your companion, the Qur'an, which has brought you thirst during the heat and made you stay up during the night. Every merchant has his certain trade. But, this Day, you are behind all types of trade.' Kingship will then be given to him in his right hand, eternal life in his left hand and the crown of grace will be placed on his head. His parents will also be granted two garments that the people of this life could never afford. They will say, 'Why were we granted these garments' It will be said, 'Because your son was carrying the Qur'an.' It will be said (to the reader of the Qur'an), 'Read and ascend through the levels of Paradise.' He will go on ascending as long as he recites, whether reciting slowly or quickly.)"

Ibn Majah also recorded part of this Hadith from Bishr bin Al-Muhajir, and this chain of narrators is Hasan, according to the criteria of Imam Muslim.

A part of this Hadith is also supported by other Hadiths. For instance, Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Umamah Al-Bahili said that he heard the Messenger of Allah say,

«اقْرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ فَإِنَّهُ شَافِعٌ لِأَهْلِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ
اقْرَأُوا الزَّهْرَاوَيْنِ، الْبَقْرَةَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ، فَإِنَّهُمَا
يَأْتِيَانِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَأَنَّهُمَا غَمَامَتَانِ، أَوْ كَأَنَّهُمَا
غَيَايَتَانِ أَوْ كَأَنَّهُمَا فِرْقَانِ مِنْ طَيْرٍ صَوَافٍ،
يُحَاجَّانِ عَنْ أَهْلِهِمَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

(Read the Qur'an, because it will intercede on behalf of its people on the Day of Resurrection. Read the two lights, Al-Baqarah and Al `Imran, because they will come in the shape of two clouds, two shades or two lines of birds on the Day of Resurrection and will argue on behalf of their people on that Day.)

The Prophet then said,

« اِقْرَأُوا الْبَقْرَةَ فَإِنَّ أَخْذَهَا بَرَكَةٌ وَتَرْكُهَا حَسْرَةٌ
وَلَا تَسْتَطِيعُهَا الْبَاطِلَةُ »

(Read Al-Baqarah, because in having it there is blessing, and in ignoring there is a sorrow and the sorceresses cannot memorize it.)

Also, Imam Muslim narrated this Hadith in the Book of Prayer

Imam Ahmad narrated that An-Nawwas bin Sam`an said that the Prophet said,

« يُؤْتَى بِالْقُرْآنِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَأَهْلِيهِ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا
يَعْمَلُونَ بِهِ تَقْدَمُهُمْ سُورَةُ الْبَقْرَةِ وَآلُ عِمْرَانَ »

(On the Day of Resurrection the Qur'an and its people who used to implement it will be brought forth, preceded by Surat Al-Baqarah and Al `Imran.)

An-Nawwas said, "The Prophet set three examples for these two Surahs and I did not forget these examples ever since. He said,

« كَأَنَّهُمَا غَمَامَتَانِ، أَوْ ظِلَّتَانِ سَوْدَاوَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا
شَرْقٌ، أَوْ كَأَنَّهُمَا فِرْقَانِ مِنْ طَيْرٍ صَوَافٍ،
يُحَاجَّانِ عَنْ صَاحِبَيْهِمَا »

(They will come like two clouds, two dark shades or two lines of birds arguing on behalf of their people.)

It was also recorded in Sahih Muslim and At-Tirmidhi narrated this Hadith, which he rendered Hasan Gharib.

Surat Al-Baqarah was revealed in Al-Madinah

There is no disagreement over the view that Surat Al-Baqarah was revealed in its entirety in Al-Madinah. Moreover, Al-Baqarah was one of the first Surahs to be revealed in Al-Madinah, while, Allah's statement,

(وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا تُرْجَعُونَ فِيهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ)

(And be afraid of the Day which shall be brought back to Allah.) (2:281) was the last Ayat to be revealed from the Qur'an. Also, the Ayat about usury were among the last Ayat to be revealed. Khalid bin Ma'dan used to call Al-Baqarah the Fustat (tent) of the Qur'an. Some of the scholars said that it contains a thousand news incidents, a thousand commands and a thousand prohibitions. Those who count said that the number of Al-Baqarah's Ayat is two hundred and eighty-seven, and its words are six thousand two hundred and twenty-one words. Further, its letters are twenty-five thousand five hundred. Allah knows best.

Ibn Jurayj narrated that `Ata' said that Ibn `Abbas said, "Surat Al-Baqarah was revealed in Al-Madinah." Also, Khasif said from Mujahid that `Abdullah bin Az-Zubayr said; "Surat Al-Baqarah was revealed in Al-Madinah." Several Imams and scholars of Tafsir issued similar statements, and there is no difference of opinion over this as we have stated.

The Two Sahihs recorded that Ibn Mas`ud kept the Ka`bah on his left side and Mina on his right side and threw seven pebbles (at the Jamrah) and said, "The one to whom Surat Al-Baqarah was revealed (i.e. the Prophet) performed Rami (the Hajj rite of throwing pebbles) similarly." The Two Sahihs recorded this Hadith.

Further, Ibn Marduwyah reported a Hadith of Shu`bah from `Aqil bin Talhah from `Utbah bin Marthad; "The Prophet saw that his Companions were not in the first lines and he said,

«يَا أَصْحَابَ سُورَةِ الْبَقَرَةِ»

(O Companions of Surat Al-Baqarah.) I think that this incident occurred during the battle of Hunayn when the Companions retreated. Then, the Prophet commanded Al-`Abbas (his uncle) to yell out,

«يَا أَصْحَابَ الشَّجَرَةِ»

(O Companions of the tree!) meaning the Companions who participated in the pledge of Ar-Ridwan (under the tree). In another narration, Al-`Abbas cried, "O Companions of Surat Al-Baqarah!" encouraging them to come back, so they returned from every direction. Also, during the battle of Al-Yamamah, against the army of Musaylimah the Liar, the Companions first retreated because of the huge number of soldiers in Musaylimah's army. The Muhajirun and the Ansar called out for each other, saying; "O people of Surat Al-Baqarah!" Allah then gave them victory over their enemy, may Allah be pleased with all of the companions of all the Messengers of Allah.

(بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ)

(الم)

(In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) (1. Alif Lam Mim).

The Discussion of the Individual Letters

The individual letters in the beginning of some Surahs are among those things whose knowledge Allah has kept only for Himself. This was reported from Abu Bakr, `Umar, `Uthman, `Ali and Ibn Mas'ud. It was said that these letters are the names of some of the Surahs. It was also said that they are the beginnings that Allah chose to start the Surahs of the Qur'an with. Khasif stated that Mujahid said, "The beginnings of the Surahs, such as Qaf, Sad, Ta Sin Mim and Alif Lam Ra, are just some letters of the alphabet." Some linguists also stated that they are letters of the alphabet and that Allah simply did not cite the entire alphabet of twenty-eight letters. For instance, they said, one might say, "My son recites Alif, Ba, Ta, Tha..." he means the entire alphabet although he stops before mentioning the rest of it. This opinion was mentioned by Ibn Jarir.

The Letters at the Beginning of Surahs

If one removes the repetitive letters, then the number of letters mentioned at the beginning of the Surahs is fourteen: Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad, Ra, Kaf, Ha, Ya, `Ayn, Ta, Sin, Ha, Qaf, Nun.

So glorious is He Who made everything subtly reflect His wisdom.

Moreover, the scholars said, "There is no doubt that Allah did not reveal these letters for jest and play." Some ignorant people said that some of the Qur'an does not mean anything, (meaning, such as these letters) thus committing a major mistake. On the contrary, these letters carry a specific meaning. Further, if we find an authentic narration leading to the Prophet that explains these letters, we will embrace the Prophet's statement. Otherwise, we will stop where we were made to stop and will proclaim,

(ءَامَنَّا بِهِ كُلُّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا)

(We believe in it; all of it (clear and unclear verses) is from our Lord) (3:7).

The scholars did not agree on one opinion or explanation regarding this subject. Therefore, whoever thinks that one scholar's opinion is correct, he is obliged to follow it, otherwise it is better to refrain from making any judgment on this matter. Allah knows best.

These Letters testify to the Miraculous Qur'an

The wisdom behind mentioning these letters in the beginning of the Surahs, regardless of the exact meanings of these letters, is that they testify to the miracle of the Qur'an. Indeed, the servants are unable to produce something like the Qur'an, although it is comprised of the same letters with which they speak to each other. This opinion was mentioned by Ar-Razi in his Tafsir who related it to Al-Mubarrid and several other scholars. Al-Qurtubi also related this opinion to Al-Farra' and Qutrub. Az-Zamakhshari agreed with this opinion in his book, Al-Kashshaf. In addition, the Imam and scholar Abu Al-`Abbas Ibn Taymiyyah and our Shaykh Al-Hafiz Abu Al-Hajjaj Al-Mizzi agreed with this opinion. Al-Mizzi told me that it is also the opinion of Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah. KAz-Zamakhshari said that these letters, "Were not all mentioned once in the beginning of the Qur'an. Rather, they were repeated so that the challenge (against the creation) is more daring. Similarly, several stories were mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an,

and also the challenge was repeated in various areas (i.e., to produce something like the Qur'an). Sometimes, one letter at a time was mentioned, such as Sad, Nun and Qaf. Sometimes two letters were mentioned, such as

(حم)

(Ha Mim) (44:1) Sometimes, three letters were mentioned, such as,

(الم)

(Alif Lam Mim (2: 1)) and four letters, such as,

(المر)

(` Alif Lam Mim Ra) (13:1), and

(المص)

(Alif Lam Mim Sad) (7:1).

Sometimes, five letters were mentioned, such as,

(كهيعص)

(Kaf Ha Ya ` Ayn Sad) (19:1), and;

(حم - تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ)

(Ha Mim. ` Ayn Sin Qaf) (42:1-2).

This is because the words that are used in speech are usually comprised of one, two, three, four, or five letters."

Every Surah that begins with these letters demonstrates the Qur'an's miracle and magnificence, and this fact is known by those well-versed in such matters. The count of these Surahs is twenty-nine. For instance, Allah said,

(الم ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ)

(Alif Lam Mim) This is the Book (the Qur'an), wherein there is no doubt (2:1-2),

(الم - ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ
نُزِّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ)

(Alif Lam Mim. Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), Al-Hayyul-Qayyum (the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists). It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Qur'an) to you (Muhammad) with truth, confirming what came before it.) (3:1-3), and,

(المص كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ
حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ)

(Alif Lam Mim Sad. (This is the) Book (the Qur'an) sent down unto you (O Muhammad), so let not your breast be narrow therefrom) (7:1-2).

Also, Allah said,

(الر كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ
الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ)

(Alif Lam Ra. (This is) a Book which We have revealed unto you (O Muhammad) in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness (of disbelief and polytheism) into the light (of belief in the Oneness of Allah and Islamic Monotheism) by their Lord's leave) (14:1),

(الم - ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(Alif Lam Mim. The revelation of the Book (this Qur'an) in which there is no doubt, is from the Lord of the `Alamin (mankind, Jinn and all that exists)!) (32:1-2),

(حم - تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ)

(Ha Mim. A revelation from (Allah) the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful) (41:1-2), and,

(حم - تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ -
غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَائِلِ التَّوْبِ شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي
الطَّوْلِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ)

(Ha Mim. `Ain Sn Qaf. Likewise Allah, the Almighty, the Wise sends revelation to you (O Muhammad) as (He sent revelation to) those before you.) (42:1-3).

There are several other Ayat that testify to what we have mentioned above, and Allah knows best.

(ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(2. That is Book in which there is no Rayb, guidance for the Muttaqin).

There is no Doubt in the Qur'an

The Book, is the Qur'an, and Rayb means doubt. As-Suddi said that Abu Malik and Abu Salih narrated from Ibn `Abbas, and Murrah Al-Hamadani narrated from Ibn Mas`ud and several other Companions of the Messenger of Allah that,

(لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ)

(In which there is no Rayb), means about which there is no doubt. Abu Ad-Darda', Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid, Sa`id bin Jubayr, Abu Malik, Nafi` `Ata', Abu Al-`Aliyah, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, Muqatil bin Hayyan, As-Suddi, Qatadah and Isma`il bin Abi Khalid said similarly. In addition, Ibn Abi Hatim said, "I do not know of any disagreement over this explanation." The meaning of this is that the Book, the Qur'an, is without a doubt revealed from Allah. Similarly, Allah said in Surat As- Saj dah,

(الم - ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(Alif Lam Mim). The revelation of the Book (this Qur'an) in which there is no doubt, is from the Lord of all that exists) (32:1-2).

Some scholars stated that this Ayah - 2:2 - contains a prohibition meaning, "Do not doubt the Qur'an." Furthermore, some of the reciters of the Qur'an pause upon reading,

(لَا رَيْبَ)

(there is no doubt) and they then continue;

(فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(in which there is guidance for the Muttaqin (the pious and righteous persons)). However, it is better to pause at,

(لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ)

(in which there is no doubt) because in this case,

(هُدًى)

(guidance) becomes an attribute of the Qur'an and carries a better meaning than,

(فِيهِ هُدًى)

(in which there is guidance).

Guidance is granted to Those Who have Taqwa

Hidayah - correct guidance - is only granted to those who have Taqwa - fear of Allah. Allah said,

(قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ فِي ءَاذَانِهِمْ وَقْرٌ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَمًى أُولَٰئِكَ يُنَادَوْنَ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ)

(Say: It is for those who believe, a guide and a healing. And as for those who disbelieve, there is heaviness (deafness) in their ears, and it (the Qur'an) is blindness for them. They are those who are called from a place far away (so they neither listen nor understand)) (41:44), and,

(وَنَزَّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْءَانِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا)

(And We send down of the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism and act on it), and it increases the Zalimin (wrongdoers) in nothing but loss) (17:82).

This is a sample of the numerous Ayat indicating that the believers, in particular, benefit from the Qur'an. That is because the Qur'an is itself a form of guidance, but the guidance in it is only granted to the righteous, just as Allah said,

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ
وَشِفَاءٌ لِّمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
(

(O mankind! There has come to you a good advice from your Lord (i. e. the Qur'an, enjoining all that is good and forbidding all that is evil), and a healing for that (disease of ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy and differences) which is in your breasts, a guidance and a mercy (explaining lawful and unlawful things) for the believers) (10:57).

Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Mas`ud and other Companions of the Messenger of Allah said,

(هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(guidance for the Muttaqin (the pious and righteous persons), means, a light for those who have Taqwa.

The Meaning of Al-Muttaqin

Ibn `Abbas said about,

(هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(guidance for the Muttaqin) that it means, "They are the believers who avoid Shirk with Allah and who work in His obedience." Ibn `Abbas also said that Al-Muttaqin means, "Those who fear Allah's punishment, which would result if they abandoned the true guidance that they recognize and know. They also hope in Allah's mercy by believing in what He revealed." Further, Qatadah said that,

(لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ)

(Al-Muttaqin), are those whom Allah has described in His statement;

(الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ)

(Who believe in the Ghayb and perform the Salah) (2:3), and the following Ayat. Ibn Jarir stated that the Ayah (2:2) includes all of these meanings that the scholars have mentioned, and this is the correct view. Also, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah narrated that `Atiyah As-Sa`di said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«لَا يَبْلُغُ الْعَبْدُ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ حَتَّى يَدَعَ مَا لَا بَأْسَ بِهِ حَذَرًا مِمَّا بِهِ بَأْسٌ»

(The servant will not acquire the status of the Muttaqin until he abandons what is harmless out of fear of falling into that which is harmful.) At-Tirmidhi then said "Hasan Gharib."

There are Two Types of Hidayah (Guidance)

Huda here means the faith that resides in the heart, and only Allah is able to create it in the heart of the servants. Allah said,

(إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ)

(Verily, you (O Muhammad) guide not whom you like) (28:56),

(لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ)

(Not upon you (Muhammad) is their guidance) (2:272),

(مَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ)

(Whomsoever Allah sends astray, none can guide him) (7:186), and,

(مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا)

(He whom Allah guides, he is the rightly guided; but he whom He sends astray, for him you will find no Wali (guiding friend) to lead him (to the right path)) (18:17).

Huda also means to explain the truth, give direction and lead to it. Allah, the Exalted, said,

(وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)

(And verily, you (O Muhammad) are indeed guiding (mankind) to the straight path (i.e. Allah's religion of Islamic Monotheism)) (42: 52),

(إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ)

(You are only a warner, and to every people there is a guide) (13:7), and,

(وَأَمَّا تَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَى عَلَى الْهُدَى)

(And as for Thamud, We showed and made clear to them the path of truth (Islamic Monotheism) through Our Messenger (i.e. showed them the way of success), but they preferred blindness to guidance) (41:17).

testifying to this meaning.

Also, Allah said,

(وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ)

(And shown him the two ways (good and evil).) (90:10)

This is the view of the scholars who said that the two ways refer to the paths of righteousness and evil, which is also the correct explanation. And Allah knows best.

Meaning of Taqwa

The root meaning of Taqwa is to avoid what one dislikes. It was reported that `Umar bin Al-Khattab asked Ubayy bin Ka`b about Taqwa. Ubayy said, "Have you ever walked on a path that has thorns on it" `Umar said, "Yes." Ubayy said, "What did you do then" He said, "I rolled up my sleeves and struggled." Ubayy said, "That is Taqwa."

(الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ)

(3. Those Who have faith in the Ghayb).

The Meaning of Iman

Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi said that Al-`Ala' bin Al-Musayyib bin Rafi` narrated from Abu Ishaq that Abu Al-Ahwas said that `Abdullah said, "Iman is to trust.". `Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said,

(يُؤْمِنُونَ)

(who have faith) means they trust. Also, Ma`mar said that Az-Zuhri said, "Iman is the deeds." In addition, Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi said that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said that, `They have faith', means, they fear (Allah).

Ibn Jarir (At-Tabari) commented, "The preferred view is that they be described as having faith in the Unseen by the tongue, deed and creed. In this case, fear of Allah is included in the general meaning of Iman, which necessitates following deeds of the tongue by implementation. Hence, Iman is a general term that includes affirming and believing in Allah, His Books and His Messengers, and realizing this affirmation through adhering to the implications of what the tongue utters and affirms."

Linguistically, in the absolute sense, Iman merely means trust, and it is used to mean that sometimes in the Qur'an, for instance, Allah the Exalted said,

(يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَيُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ)

(He trusts (yu'minu) in Allah, and trusts (yu'minu) in the believers.) (9: 61)

Prophet Yusuf's brothers said to their father,

(وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَّنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ)

(But you will never believe us even when we speak the truth) (12:17).

Further, the word Iman is sometimes mentioned along with deeds, such as Allah said,

(إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ)

(Save those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds) (95:6).

However, when Iman is used in an unrestricted manner, it includes beliefs, deeds, and statements of the tongue. We should state here that Iman increases and decreases.

There are many narrations and Hadiths on this subject, and we discussed them in the beginning of our explanation of Sahih Al-Bukhari, all favors are from Allah. Some scholars explained that Iman means Khashyah (fear of Allah). For instance, Allah said;

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ)

(Verily, those who fear their Lord unseen (i.e. they do not see Him, nor His punishment in the Hereafter)) (67:12), and,

(مَنْ خَشِيَ الرَّحْمَنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَجَاءَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنِيبٍ)

(Who feared the Most Gracious (Allah) in the Ghayb (unseen) and brought a heart turned in repentance (to Him and absolutely free from every kind of polytheism)) (50: 33).

Fear is the core of Iman and knowledge, just as Allah the Exalted said,

(إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ)

(It is only those who have knowledge among His servants that fear Allah) (35:28).

The Meaning of Al-Ghayb

As for the meaning of Ghayb here, the Salaf have different explanations of it, all of which are correct, indicating the same general meaning. For instance, Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi quoted Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, reporting from Abu Al-`Aliyah about Allah's statement, i

(يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ)

((Those who) have faith in the Ghayb), "They believe in Allah, His angels, Books, Messengers, the Last Day, His Paradise, Fire and in the meeting with Him. They also believe in life after death and in Resurrection. All of this is the Ghayb." Qatadah bin Di`amah said similarly.

Sa'id bin Mansur reported from `Abdur-Rahman bin Yazid who said, "We were sitting with `Abdullah bin Mas`ud when we mentioned the Companions of the Prophet and their deeds being superior to our deeds. `Abdullah said, 'The matter of Muhammad was clear for those who saw him. By He other than Whom there is no God, no person will ever acquire a better type of faith than believing in Al-Ghayb.' He then recited,

(الم - ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ
الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ)

(Alif Lam Mim. This is the Book, wherein there is no doubt, a guidance for the Muttaqin. Those who believe in the Ghayb), until,

(المُفْلِحُونَ)

(the successful). " Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Marduwyah and Al-Hakim, in his Mustadrak, recorded this Hadith. Al-Hakim commented that this Hadith is authentic and that the Two Shaykhs - Al-Bukhari and Muslim - did not collect it, although it meets their criteria.

Ahmad recorded a Hadith with similar meaning from Ibn Muhayriz who said: I said to Abu Jumu`ah, "Narrate a Hadith for us that you heard from the Messenger of Allah." He said, "Yes. I will narrate a good Hadith for you. Once we had lunch with the Messenger of Allah . Abu `Ubaydah, who was with us, said, `O Messenger of Allah! Are people better than us We embraced Islam with you and performed Jihad with you.' He said,

«نَعَمْ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ بَعْدِكُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِي وَلَمْ يَرَوْْنِي»

(Yes, those who will come after you, who will believe in me although they did not see me.)"

This Hadith has another route collected by Abu Bakr bin Marduwyah in his Tafsir, from Salih bin Jubayr who said: `Abu Jumu`ah Al-Ansari, the Companion of the Messenger of Allah , came to Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) to perform the prayer. Raja' bin Haywah was with us, so when Abu Jumu`ah finished, we went out to greet him. When he was about to leave, he said, "You have a gift and a right. I will narrate a Hadith for you that I heard from the Messenger of Allah. " We said, "Do so, and may Allah grant you mercy." He said, "We were with the Messenger of Allah, ten people including Mu`adh bin Jabal. We said, "O Messenger of Allah! Are there people who will acquire greater rewards than us We believed in Allah and followed you.' He said,

«مَا يَمْنَعُكُمْ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ بَيْنَ أَظْهُرِكُمْ
يَأْتِيكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ، بَلْ قَوْمٌ بَعْدَكُمْ يَأْتِيهِمْ
كِتَابٌ مِّنْ بَيْنِ لَوْحَيْنِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَعْمَلُونَ بِمَا
فِيهِ، أُولَٰئِكَ أَكْثَرُ مِنْكُمْ أَجْرًا مَّرَّتَيْنِ»

(What prevents you from doing so, while the Messenger of Allah is among you, bringing you the revelation from heaven There are people who will come after you and who will be given a book

between two covers (the Qur'an), and they all believed in it and implement its commands. They have a greater reward than you, even twice as much.)"

(وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ)

(And perform Salah, and spend out of what we have provided for them)

Meaning of Iqamat As-Salah

Ibn `Abbas said that,

(وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ)

(And perform the Salah), means, "Perform the prayer with all of the obligations that accompany it." Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn `Abbas said, "Iqamat As-Salah means to complete the bowings, prostrations, recitation, humbleness and attendance for the prayer." Qatadah said, "Iqamat As-Salah means to preserve punctuality, and the ablution, bowings, and prostrations of the prayer." Muqatil bin Hayyan said Iqamat As-Salah means "To preserve punctuality for it, as well as completing ones purity for it, and completing the bowings, prostrations, recitation of the Qur'an, Tashahhud and blessings for the Prophet . This is Iqamat As-Salah."

The Meaning of "Spending" in this Ayah

Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said,

(وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ)

(And spend out of what We have provided for them) means, "The Zakah due on their wealth." As-Suddi said that Abu Malik and Abu Salih narrated from Ibn `Abbas, as well as Murrah from Ibn Mas`ud and other Companions of the Messenger of Allah , that,

(وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ)

(And spend out of what We have provided for them) means, "A man's spending on his family. This was before the obligation of Zakah was revealed." Juwaybir narrated from Ad-Dahhak, "General spending (in charity) was a means of drawing nearer to Allah, according to one's discretion and capability. Until the obligation of charity was revealed in the seven Ayat of Surat Bara'ah (chapter 9), were revealed. These abrogated the previous case."

In many instances, Allah mentioned prayer and spending wealth together. Prayer is a right of Allah as well as a form of worshipping Him. It includes singling Him out for one's devotion, praising Him, glorifying Him, supplicating to Him, invoking Him, and it displays one's dependence upon Him. Spending is form of kindness towards creatures by giving them what will benefit them, and those people most deserving of this charity are the relatives, the wife, the

servants and then the rest of the people. So all types of required charity and required spending are included in Allah's saying,

(وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ)

(And spend out of what we have provided for them). The Two Sahihs recorded that Ibn `Umar said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ: شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ، وَحَجِّ الْبَيْتِ»

(Islam is built upon five (pillars): Testifying that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayer, giving Zakah, fasting Ramadan and Hajj to the House.)

There are many other Hadiths on this subject.

The Meaning of Salah

In the Arabic language, the basic meaning of Salah is supplication. In religious terminology, Salah is used to refer to the acts of bowing and prostration, the remaining specified acts associated with it, specified at certain times, with those known conditions, and the characteristics, and requirements that are well-known about it.

(وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ)

(4. And who have faith in what is revealed to you and in what was revealed before you, and in the Hereafter they are certain.)

Ibn `Abbas said that,

(وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ)

(And who have faith in what is revealed to you, and in what is revealed before you.) means, "They believe in what Allah sent you with, and in what the previous Messengers were sent with, they do not distinguish between (believing) them, nor do they reject what they brought from their Lord."

(وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ)

(And in the Hereafter they are certain) that is the resurrection, the standing (on the Day of Resurrection), Paradise, the Fire, the reckoning and the the Scale that weighs the deeds (the Mizan). The Hereafter is so named because it comes after this earthly life.

Attributes of the Believers

The people described here (2:4) are those whom Allah described in the preceding Ayah,

(الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ)

(Those who have faith in the Ghayb and perform Salah, and spend out of what we have provided for them.)

Mujahid once stated, "Four Ayat at the beginning of Surat Al-Baqarah describe the believers, two describe the disbelievers, and thirteen describe the hypocrites." The four Ayat mentioned in this statement are general and include every believer, whether an Arab, non-Arab, or a person of a previous Scripture, whether they are Jinns or humans. All of these attributes complement each other and require the existence of the other attributes. For instance, it is not possible that one believes in the Unseen, performs the prayer and gives Zakah without believing in what the Messenger of Allah and the previous Messengers were sent with. The same with certainty in the Hereafter, this is not correct without that, for Allah has commanded the believers,

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ
وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي
أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ)

(O you who believe! Believe in Allah, and His Messenger, and the Book (the Qur'an) which He has revealed to the Messenger, and the Book which He sent down to those before (him)) (4:136),

(وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ
إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ)

(And argue not with the People of the Book, unless it be in (a way) that is better, except with such of them as do wrong; and say (to them): "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; our Ilah (God) and your Ilah (God) is One (i.e. Allah)" (29:46),

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا
مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ)

(O you who have been given the Book (Jews and Christians)! Believe in what We have revealed (to Muhammad) confirming what is (already) with you) (4:47), and,

(قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تُقِيمُوا
التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ)

(Say (O Muhammad): "O People of the Book (Jews and Christians)! You have nothing until you act according to the Tawrah (Torah), the Injil (Gospel), and what has (now) been revealed to you from your Lord (the Qur'an).") (5:68).

Also, Allah the Exalted described the believers;

(ءَامَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ
وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ
وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ)

(The Messenger (Muhammad) believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, and (so do) the believers. Each one believes in Allah, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. (They say,) "We make no distinction between any of His Messengers") (2: 285), and,

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ

(And those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and make no distinction between any of them (Messengers)) (4:152),

This is a sample of the Ayat that indicate that the true believers all believe in Allah, His Messengers and His Books.

The faithful among the People of the Book, have a special significance here, since they believe in their Books and in all of the details related to that, so when such people embrace Islam and sincerely believe in the details of the religion, then they will get two rewards. As for the others, they can only believe in the previous religious teachings in a general way. For instance, the Prophet stated,

«إِذَا حَدَّثَكُمْ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ فَلَا تُكَذِّبُوهُمْ وَلَا تُصَدِّقُوهُمْ وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا: آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ»

(When the People of the Book narrate to you, neither reject nor affirm what they say. Rather, say, "We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you.")

However, the faith that many Arabs have in the religion of Islam as it was revealed to Muhammad might be more complete, encompassing and firmer than the faith of the People of the Book who embraced Islam. Therefore, if the believers in Islam among the People of the Book gain two rewards, other Muslims who have firmer Islamic faith might gain an equal reward that compares to the two the People of the Book gain (upon embracing Islam). And Allah knows best.

(أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ)

(5. They are on guidance from their Lord, and they are the successful.)

Guidance and Success are awarded to the Believers

Allah said,

(أُولَئِكَ)

(They are) refers to those who believe in the Unseen, establish the prayer, spend from what Allah has granted them, believe in what Allah has revealed to the Messenger and the Messengers before him, believe in the Hereafter with certainty, and prepare the necessary requirements for the Hereafter by performing good deeds and avoiding the prohibitions. Allah then said,

(عَلَى هُدًى)

(On guidance) meaning, they are (following) a light, guidance, and have insight from Allah,

(وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ)

(And they are the successful) meaning, in this world and the Hereafter. They shall have what they seek and be saved from the evil that they tried to avoid. Therefore, they will have rewards, eternal life in Paradise, and safety from the torment that Allah has prepared for His enemies.

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ)

-(6. Verily, those who disbelieve, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe.)

Allah said,

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا)

(Verily, those who disbelieve) meaning, covered the truth and hid it. Since Allah has written that they would do so, it does not matter if you (O Muhammad) warn them or not, they would still have disbelieved in what you were sent with. Similarly, Allah said,

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ - وَلَوْ جَاءَهُمْ كُلُّ ءَايَةٍ حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ)

(Truly, those against the Word (wrath) of your Lord (suffer) will not believe. Even if every sign should come to them, until they see the painful torment) (10:96-97).

About the rebellious People of the Book, Allah said,

(وَلَئِنْ أَتَيْتَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ بِكُلِّ آيَةٍ مَا تَتَّبِعُوا قِبَلَتَكَ)

(And even if you were to bring to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) all the Ayat, they would not follow your Qiblah (prayer direction)) (2:5).

These Ayat indicate that whomever Allah has written to be miserable, they shall never find anyone to guide them to happiness, and whomever Allah directs to misguidance, he shall never find anyone to guide him. So do not pity them - O Muhammad - deliver the Message to them. Certainly, whoever among them accepts the Message, then he shall gain the best rewards. As for those who turn away in rejection, do not feel sad for them or concerned about them, for

(فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلْغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ)

(Your duty is only to convey (the Message) and on Us is the reckoning) (13: 40), and,

(إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ)

(But you are only a warner. And Allah is a Wakil (Disposer of affairs, Trustee, Guardian) over all things) (11:12).

`Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said about Allah's statement,

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ)

(Verily, those who disbelieve, it is the same to them whether you (O Muhammad) warn them or do not warn them, they will not believe) "That the Messenger of Allah was eager for all the people to believe and follow the guidance he was sent with. Allah informed him that none would believe except for those whom He decreed happiness for in the first place, and none would stray except those who Allah has decreed to do so in the first place."

(خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى
أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ)

(7. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes there is a covering. Theirs will be a great torment).

Meaning of Khatama

As-Suddi said that,

(خَتَمَ اللَّهُ)

(Khatama Allah) means, "Allah has sealed." Qatadah said that this Ayah means, "Shaytan controlled them when they obeyed him. Therefore, Allah sealed their hearts, hearing and sight, and they could neither see the guidance nor hear, comprehend or understand." Ibn Jurayj said that Mujahid said,

(خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ)

(Allah has set a seal on their hearts), "A stamp. It occurs when sin resides in the heart and surrounds it from all sides, and this submersion of the heart in sin constitutes a stamp, meaning a seal." Ibn Jurayj also said that the seal is placed on the heart and the hearing. In addition, Ibn Jurayj said, that `Abdullah bin Kathir narrated that Mujahid said, "The stain is not as bad as the stamp, the stamp is not as bad as the lock which is the worst type." Al-A' mash said, "Mujahid demonstrated with his hand while saying, `They used to say that the heart is just like this - meaning the open palm. When the servant commits a sin, a part of the heart will be rolled up - and he rolled up his index finger. When the servant commits another sin, a part of the heart will be rolled up' - and he rolled up another finger, until he rolled up all of his fingers. Then he said, `Then, the heart will be sealed.' Mujahid also said that this is the description of the Pan (refer to 83:14)."

Al-Qurtubi said, "The Ummah has agreed that Allah has described Himself with sealing and closing the hearts of the disbelievers, as a punishment for their disbelief. Similarly, Allah said,

(بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ)

(Nay, Allah has set a seal upon their hearts because of their disbelief) (4:155)."

He then mentioned the Hadith about changing the hearts, (in which the Prophet supplicated),

«يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قُلُوبَنَا عَلَى دِينِكَ»

(O You Who changes the hearts, make our hearts firm on Your religion.)

He also mentioned the Hadith by Hudhayfah recorded in the Sahih, in which the Messenger of Allah said,

«تُعْرَضُ الْفِتَنُ عَلَى الْقُلُوبِ كَالْحَصِيرِ عُوْدًا
عُوْدًا، فَأَيُّ قَلْبٍ أَشْرَبَهَا نُكِتَ فِيهِ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءُ
وَأَيُّ قَلْبٍ أَنْكَرَهَا نُكِتَ فِيهِ نُكْتَةٌ بَيْضَاءُ حَتَّى
تَصِيرَ عَلَى قَلْبَيْنِ: عَلَى أَبْيَضَ مِثْلِ الصَّفَا، فَلَا
تَضُرُّهُ فِتْنَةٌ مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَالْآخِرُ
أَسْوَدُ مُرْبَادًّا كَالْكُوزِ مُجَحِّيًا لَا يَعْرِفُ مَعْرُوقًا
وَلَا يُنْكِرُ مُنْكَرًا»

(The Fitna (trials, tests) are offered to the hearts, just as the straws that are sewn into a woven mat, one after another. Any heart that accepts the Fitna, then a black dot will be engraved on it. Any heart that rejects the Fitna, then a white dot will be engraved on it. The hearts will therefore become two categories: white, just like the barren rock; no Fitnah shall ever harm this category as long as the heavens and earth still exist. Another category is black, just as the cup that is turned upside down, for this heart does not recognize righteousness or renounce evil.)

Ibn Jarir said, "The truth regarding this subject is what the authentic Hadith from the Messenger of Allah stated. Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ إِذَا أَذْنَبَ ذَنْبًا كَانَتْ نُكْتَةٌ سَوْدَاءُ فِي
قَلْبِهِ، فَإِنْ تَابَ وَنَزَعَ وَاسْتَعْتَبَ صَقِلَ قَلْبُهُ وَإِنْ
زَادَ زَادَتْ حَتَّى تَعْلُو قَلْبَهُ، فَذَلِكَ الرَّانُ الَّذِي قَالَ
اللَّهُ تَعَالَى:

(كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ)

(When the believer commits a sin, a black dot will be engraved on his heart. If he repents, refrains and regrets, his heart will be polished again. If he commits more errors, the dots will increase until they cover his heart. This is the Ran (stain) that Allah described,

(كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ)

(Nay! But on their hearts is the Ran (stain) which they used to earn)" (83:14).

At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah recorded this Hadith, and At-Tirmidhi said that it is Hasan Sahih.

The Meaning of Ghishawah

Reciting the Ayah,

(خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ)

(Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing), then pausing, then continuing with,

(وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَوَةٌ)

(And on their eyes there is a Ghishawah (covering)) is accurate, for the stamp is placed on the heart and the hearing while the Ghishawah, the covering, is appropriately placed on the eyes. In his Tafsir, As-Suddi said that Ibn ` Abbas and Ibn Mas` ud said about Allah's statement,

(خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ)

(Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing), "So that they neither understand nor hear. Allah also said that He placed a covering on their sight, meaning eyes, and so, they do not see."

The Hypocrites

We mentioned that four Ayat in the beginning of Surat Al-Baqarah described the believers. The two last Ayat (2:6-7) describe the disbelievers. Afterwards, Allah begins to describe the hypocrites who show belief and hide disbelief. Since the matter of the hypocrites is vague and many people do not realize their true reality, Allah mentioned their description in detail. Each of the characteristics that Allah used to described them with is a type of hypocrisy itself. Allah revealed Surat Bara'ah (chapter 9) and Surat Al-Munafiqun (chapter 63) about the hypocrites. He also mentioned the hypocrites in Surat An-Nur (24) and other Surahs, so that their description would be known and their ways and errors could be avoided. Allah said,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَيَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ
وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ - يُخَدِّعُونَ اللّٰهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(8. And of mankind, there are some who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in fact they do not believe). (9. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, while they only deceive themselves, and perceive (it) not!)

Meaning of Nifaq

Nifaq means to show conformity - or agreement - and to conceal evil. Nifaq has several types: Nifaq in the creed that causes its people to reside in Hell for eternity, and Nifaq in deed, which is one of the major sins, as we will explain soon, Allah willing. Ibn Jurayj said of the hypocrite that, "His actual deeds are different from what he publicizes, what he conceals is different from what he utters, his entrance and presence are not the same as his exit and absence."

The Beginning of Hypocrisy

The revelations about the characteristics of the hypocrites were revealed in Al-Madinah, this is because there were no hypocrites in Makkah. Rather the opposite was the situation in Makkah, since some people were forced to pretend that they were disbelievers, while their hearts concealed their faith. Afterwards, the Messenger of Allah migrated to Al-Madinah, where the Ansar from the tribes of Aws and Khazraj resided. They used to worship idols during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance, just as the rest of the Arab idolators. Three Jewish tribes resided in Al-Madinah, Banu Qaynuqa` -allies of Al-Khazraj, Banu An-Nadir and Banu Qurayzah-allies of the Aws. Many members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes embraced Islam. However, only a few Jews embraced Islam, such as `Abdullah bin Salam. During the early stage in Al-Madinah, there weren't any hypocrites because the Muslims were not strong enough to be feared yet. On the contrary, the Messenger of Allah conducted peace treaties with the Jews and several other Arab tribes around Al-Madinah. Soon after, the battle of Badr occurred and Allah gave victory to Islam and its people. `Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salul was a leader in Al-Madinah. He was Al-Khazraj's chief, and during the period of Jahiliyyah he was the master of both tribes - Aws and Khazraj. They were about to appoint him their king when the Message reached Al-Madinah, and many in Al-Madinah embraced Islam. Ibn Salul's heart was filled with hatred against Islam and its people. When the battle of Badr took place, he said, "Allah's religion has become apparent." So he pretended to be Muslim, along with many of those who were just like him, as well as many among the People of the Book. It was then that hypocrisy began in Al-Madinah and among the surrounding nomad tribes. As for the Emigrants, none of them were hypocrites, since they emigrated willingly (seeking the pleasure of Allah). Rather, when a Muslim would emigrate from Makkah, he would be forced to abandon all of his wealth, offspring and land; he would do so seeking Allah's reward in the Hereafter.

Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated that Ibn `Abbas said that,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَيَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرِ
وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ)

(And of mankind, there are some who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in fact they do not believe) "This refers to the hypocrites among the Aws and Khazraj and those who behaved as they did."

This is how Abu Al-`Aliyah, Al-Hasan, Qatadah and As-Suddi explained this Ayah. Allah revealed the characteristics of the hypocrites, so that the believers would not be deceived by their outer appearance, thus saving the believers from a great evil. Otherwise, the believers might think that the hypocrites were believers, when in reality they are disbelievers. To consider the sinners as righteous people is extremely dangerous, Allah said,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَيَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرِ
وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ)

(And of mankind, there are some who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in fact they do not believe) meaning, they utter these false statements only with their tongues, just as Allah said,

(إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ)

(When the hypocrites come to you (O Muhammad), they say: "We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allah." Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger) (63:1).

This Ayah means that the hypocrites utter these statements only when they meet you, not because they actually believe what they are saying. The hypocrites emphasize their belief in Allah and the Last Day with their words, when that is not the case in reality. Therefore, Allah stated that the hypocrites lie in their testimony of creed, when He said,

(وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ)

(And Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars.) (63:1), and,

(وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ)

(while in fact they believe not)

Allah said,

(يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا)

(They try to deceive Allah and those who believe). The hypocrites show belief outwardly while concealing disbelief. They think that by doing this, they will mislead Allah, or that the statements they utter will help them with Allah, and this is an indication of their total ignorance. They think that such behavior will deceive Allah, just as it might deceive some of the believers. Similarly, Allah said,

(يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيَحْلِفُونَ لَهُ كَمَا يَحْلِفُونَ لَكُمْ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ)

(On the Day when Allah will resurrect them all together; then they will swear to Him as they swear to you. And they think that they have something (to stand upon). Verily, they are liars!) (58:18). Hence, Allah refuted their way by saying,

(وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(While they only deceive themselves, and perceive (it) not!) Allah stated that the hypocrites only deceive themselves by this behavior, although they are unaware of this fact. Allah also said,

(إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ)

(Verily, the hypocrites try to deceive Allah, but it is He Who deceives them) (4:142).

Also, Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that Ibn Jurayj commented on Allah's statement,

(إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَدِّعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ)

(Verily, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is He Who deceives them), "The hypocrites pronounce, 'There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah' seeking to ensure the sanctity of their blood and money, all the while concealing disbelief." Sa'id said that Qatadah said,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَيَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرِ
وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ - يُخَدِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(And of mankind, there are some who say: "We believe in Allah and the Last Day" while in fact they believe not. They try to deceive Allah and those who believe, while they only deceive themselves, and perceive (it) not!) "This is the description of a hypocrite. He is devious, he says the truth with his tongue and defies it with his heart and deeds. He wakes up in a condition other than the one he goes to sleep in, and goes to sleep in a different condition than the one he wakes up in. He changes his mind just like a ship that moves about whenever a wind blows."

(فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ ۖ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ)

(10. In their hearts is a disease and Allah has increased their disease. A painful torment is theirs because they used to tell lies.)

The Meaning of 'Disease' in this Ayah

As-Suddi narrated from Abu Malik and (also) from Abu Salih, from Ibn `Abbas, and (also) Murrah Al-Hamdani from Ibn Mas'ud and other Companions that this Ayah,

(فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ)

(In their hearts is a disease) means, 'doubt', and,

(فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا)

(And Allah has increased their disease) also means 'doubt'. Mujahid, `Ikrimah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Abu Al-`Aliyah, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and Qatadah also said similarly. `Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam commented on,

(فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ)

(In their hearts is a disease), "A disease in the religion, not a physical disease. They are the hypocrites and the disease is the doubt that they brought to Islam.

(فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا)

(And Allah has increased their disease) meaning, increased them in shameful behavior." He also recited,

(فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَزَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَهُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رَجْسًا إِلَى رَجْسِهِمْ)

(As for those who believe, it has increased their faith, and they rejoice. But as for those in whose hearts is a disease, it will add disgrace to their disgrace.) (9:124-125) and commented, "Evil to their evil and deviation to their deviation." This statement by `Abdur-Rahman is true, and it constitutes a punishment that is compatible to the sin, just as the earlier scholars stated. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَالَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا زَادَهُمْ هُدًى وَءَاتَاهُمْ تَقْوَاهُمْ)

(While as for those who accept guidance, He increases their guidance and grants them their piety) (47:17).

Allah said next,

(بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ)

(Because they used to tell lies). The hypocrites have two characteristics, they lie and they deny the Unseen.

The scholars who stated that the Prophet knew the hypocrites of his time have only the Hadith of Hudhayfah bin Al-Yaman as evidence. In it the Prophet gave him the names of fourteen hypocrites during the battle of Tabuk. These hypocrites plotted to assassinate the Prophet during the night on a hill in that area. They planned to excite the Prophet's camel, so that she would throw him down the hill. Allah informed the Prophet about their plot, and the Prophet told Hudhayfah their names.

As for the other hypocrites, Allah said about them,

(وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُم مِّنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنْفِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ
الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُّوا عَلَى النَّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ
نَعْلَمُهُمْ)

(And among the bedouins around you, some are hypocrites, and so are some among the people of Al-Madinah who persist in hypocrisy; you (O Muhammad) know them not, We know them) (9:101), and,

(لَّيِّنَ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ
وَالْمُرْجِفُونَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لَنُغْرِيَنَّكَ بِهِمْ ثُمَّ لَا
يُجَاوِرُونَكَ فِيهَا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا - مَّلْعُونِينَ أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا
أُخِذُوا وَقُتِّلُوا تَقْتِيلًا)

(If the hypocrites, and those in whose hearts is a disease, and those who spread false news among the people in Al-Madinah do not cease, We shall certainly let you overpower them, then they will not be able to stay in it as your neighbors but a little while. Accursed, they shall be seized wherever found, and killed with a (terrible) slaughter) (33:60-61).

These Ayat prove that the Prophet was not informed about each and everyone among the hypocrites of his time. Rather, the Prophet was only informed about their characteristics, and he used to assume that some people possessed these characteristics. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَأَرَيْنَاكَهُمْ فَלَعَرَفْتَهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ
وَلَتَعْرِفَنَّهُمْ فِي لَحْنِ الْقَوْلِ)

(Had We willed, We could have shown them to you, and you should have known them by their marks; but surely, you will know them by the tone of their speech!) (47:30).

The most notorious hypocrite at that time was `Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Salul; Zayd bin Arqam - the Companion - gave truthful testimony to that effect. In addition, `Umar bin Al-Khattab once mentioned the matter of Ibn Salul to the Prophet , who said,

«إِنِّي أَكْرَهُ أَنْ تَتَحَدَّثَ الْعَرَبُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا يَقْتُلُ أَصْحَابَهُ»

(I would not like the Arabs to say to each other that Muhammad is killing his Companions.)

Yet, when Ibn Salul died, the Prophet performed the funeral prayer for him and attended his funeral just as he used to do with other Muslims. It was recorded in the Sahih that the Prophet said,

«إِنِّي خَيْرْتُ فَأَخْتَرْتُ»

(I was given the choice (to pray for him or not), so I chose.)

In another narration, the Prophet said,

«لَوْ أَعْلَمُ أَنِّي لَوْ زِدْتُ عَلَى السَّبْعِينَ يُعْفَرُ لَهُ لَزِدْتُ»

(If I knew that by asking (Allah to forgive Ibn Salul) more than seventy times that He would forgive him, then I would do that.)

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ - أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(11. And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peacemakers.") (12. Verily, they are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive not.)

Meaning of Mischief

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi said that Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Mas`ud commented,

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ)

(And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peacemakers.") "They are the hypocrites. As for,

(لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ)

("Do not make mischief on the earth"), that is disbelief and acts of disobedience." Abu Ja'far said that Ar-Rabi' bin Anas said that Abu Al-'Aliyah said that Allah's statement,

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ)

(And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth,"), means, "Do not commit acts of disobedience on the earth. Their mischief is disobeying Allah, because whoever disobeys Allah on the earth, or commands that Allah be disobeyed, he has committed mischief on the earth. Peace on both the earth and in the heavens is ensured (and earned) through obedience (to Allah)." Ar-Rabi' bin Anas and Qatadah said similarly.

Types of Mischief that the Hypocrites commit

Ibn Jarir said, "The hypocrites commit mischief on earth by disobeying their Lord on it and continuing in the prohibited acts. They also abandon what Allah made obligatory and doubt His religion, even though He does not accept a deed from anyone except with faith in His religion and certainty of its truth. The hypocrites also lie to the believers by saying contrary to the doubt and hesitation their hearts harbor. They give as much aid as they can, against Allah's loyal friends, and support those who deny Allah, His Books and His Messengers. This is how the hypocrites commit mischief on earth, while thinking that they are doing righteous work on earth."

The statement by Ibn Jarir is true, taking the disbelievers as friends is one of the categories of mischief on the earth. Allah said,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُنْ فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ)

(And those who disbelieve are allies of one another, if you do not do this (help each other), there will be turmoil and oppression on the earth, and great mischief.) (8:73), In this way Allah severed the loyalty between the believers and the disbelievers. Similarly, Allah said,

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ
مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ
سُلْطَانًا مُّبِينًا)

(O you who believe! Do not take disbelievers as Awliya' (protectors or helpers or friends) instead of believers. Do you wish to offer Allah a manifest proof against yourselves) (4: 144).

Allah then said,

(إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ
تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا)

(Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depth of the Fire; no helper will you find for them) (4:145).

Since the outward appearance of the hypocrite displays belief, he confuses the true believers. Hence, the deceitful behavior of the hypocrites is an act of mischief, because they deceive the believers by claiming what they do not believe in, and because they give support and loyalty to the disbelievers against the believers.

If the hypocrite remains a disbeliever (rather than pretending to be Muslim), the evil that results from him would be less. Even better, if the hypocrite becomes sincere with Allah and makes the statements that he utters conform to his deeds, he will gain success. Allah said,

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا
نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ)

(And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peacemakers.") meaning, "We seek to be friends with both parties, the believers and the disbelievers, and to have peace with both parties." Similarly, Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said,

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا
نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ)