



THE GRAND QUR'AN



سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ
al-Fātihah
(The Opening)

A faithful rendition and annotated translation

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THE
GRAND QUR'AN
The First Third

القرآن العظيم
ترجمة معاني الألف الأولى

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Endowment for Cherishing the Two Glorious Revelations



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



سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

al-Fātiḥah
(The Opening)

al-Fātiḥah (The Opening)

Title: due to its merits, this sura has many names. The most well-known is: *al-Fātiḥah* (The Opening) or *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* (The Opening of the Book; al-Bukhārī: 756, Muslim: 394) because the Qur’an begins with it. Its other names include: *Umm al-Kitāb* (The Mother of the Book; al-Bukhārī: 1165), *Umm al-Qur’ān* (The Mother of the Qur’an; al-Bukhārī: 4704), *al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* (The Grand Qur’an), *Asās al-Qur’ān* (The Foundation of the Qur’an), *Sūrat al-Ḥamd* (The Sura of Thankfulness). It is also called *al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī* (The Oft-repeated Seven) because it is read in every *rak‘ah*– unit of Prayer. Additionally, it has other names that denote its healing power: *al-Shifā’* (The Cure) and *al-Ruqyah* (The Incantation; al-Bukhārī: 2276).

Merit: this is the greatest, most-often repeated sura in the Qur’an. Abū Sa‘īd Ibn al-Mu‘allā (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to him: “I shall inform you of the greatest sura of the Qur’an before you leave the mosque”. Abū Sa‘īd continues: “He took me by the hand and as he was about to leave the mosque, I said: “Messenger of Allah! You said: “I shall inform you of the greatest sura of the Qur’an”. He said: “*الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ*” (*Gratitude be to Allah the Lord of all beings*). It is *al-Sab‘ al-Mathānī* (The Oft-repeated Seven) and *al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* (The Grand Qur’an) that I have been given” (al-Bukhārī: 4703). No Prayer will be accepted of those who do not recite The Opening (al-Bukhārī: 756; Muslim: 394). It is also a light that no other Prophet before Muhammad (ﷺ) was given. Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) narrated that: “While Gabriel was sitting with the Prophet (ﷺ), he heard a creaking sound from above, lifted his head and said: “This is a Heavenly door. It is opened today and never ever has it been opened before”. Then an angel descended to Earth through it. He ‘Gabriel’ said: “This is an angel who descended to Earth and never ever has he descended before”. The angel greeted them and said: “I bring you glad tidings of two lights that you are given and never have they been given to any Prophet before you: *Fātiḥat al-Kitāb* (The Opening of the Book) and the endings of *al-Baqarah*. You shall never read a letter of any of them without your prayer being answered”. (Muslim: 806) In addition, through this sura communication takes place between Allah and His servants. Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Almighty Allah said: “I divided Prayer into two halves between Me and My servant and to

My servant shall be granted all what he asks for”. When the servant says: “*Gratitude be to Allah the Lord of all beings*”, Allah says: “My servant has thanked Me”. When the servant says: “*The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful*”, Allah says: “My servant has praised Me”. When the servant says: “*Owner of the Day of Judgement,*” Allah says: “My servant has glorified Me”. When the servant says: “*‘Only’ You do we worship, and ‘only’ from You do we seek help*”, Allah says: “This is between Me and My servant and to My servant shall be granted what he asks for”. When the servant says: “*Guide us to the straight path; the path of those on whom You have bestowed your Grace, not those on whom ‘is Your’ Wrath nor the misguided*”, Allah says: “This is for My servant and to My servant shall be granted what he asks for”. (Muslim: 395)

Theme: the main theme of *al-Fātiḥah* is that all acts of worship should be dedicated wholly and solely to Almighty God and shall be carried out with total devotion. Additionally, al-Qurtubī (1: 112) is of the opinion that it is called *al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm* because it encapsulates the totality of Qur’anic knowledge: “Praise of Almighty God with the Attributes of His Mightiness and Perfection, the command to worship Him with devotion, confessing that one is unable to carry out worship without seeking Divine help, beseeching God for guidance to the Straight Path, saving one from the ways of the misguided and making clear the final destination of the Deniers”.

Key: the key to understanding *al-Fātiḥah* is to think of it as a form of prayer or supplication, in which Believers begin by extending their thankfulness to Allah and praise to Him, then they tell of their dedication to His worship alone, only to ask Him at the end to guide them to the Straight Path, which leads to the Almighty’s Pleasure, the ultimate goal that one strives to achieve in this life.

﴿1﴾ In the Name of Allah⁽¹⁾, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful⁽²⁾.
 ﴿2﴾ Gratitude be to Allah the Lord⁽³⁾

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۝ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
 الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

- 1 Allah (الله) is God's most unique Name, grandly referred to as *Lafz al-Jalālah* (The Word of Majesty). It occurs in the Qur'an 2,697 times in 85 of its 114 suras. Allah is considered the Almighty's Supreme Name (*al-Ism al-A'zam*) by Abū Ḥanīfah (quoted in al-Ṭahāwī, *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār*, 1: 1616). According to the vast majority of scholars Allah is linguistically unique in that it is originally a proper and underived noun (cf. al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awtār*: 1: 18). None other than the Almighty is named by it: "Do you know any other of a Name like His?" (19: 65) In Abrahamic religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the concept of God basically has the same referent. He is unlimited with regards to knowledge (omniscience), power (omnipotence), existence (omnipresence) and benevolence. However, there are points of departure regarding how each religion perceives God. The most outstanding of which is that Islam Believes in a One and Only God without the slightest form of Association (cf. 3: 64): "Say: He is God, Unique. *God is the Oft-Beseched. *He begot none, nor was He begotten. *None is equal to Him" (Sura *al-Ikhlās*, Q. 112). Additionally, God in Islam has unique Names and Attributes and in accordance with Muslim belief ('*aqidah*) the Muslim conception of God is not anthropomorphic in the slightest form: "Nothing is like Him; He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing". (42: 11)
- 2 The 'Most Beneficent' and the 'Most Merciful' here stand for the Arabic *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm*, respectively. They are both intensive forms derived from the noun *raḥmah*, mercy. Whilst they both denote the trait of mercy, semantically, however, they are different; *ar-Raḥmān* is more intensive than *ar-Raḥīm* (cf. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, root: *r ḥ m*). According to exegetes, *ar-Raḥmān's* Mercy encompasses all creatures, whereas *ar-Raḥīm's* is reserved only for Believers (cf. 33:43, al-Ṭabarī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Shinqīṭī, al-Sa'dī). The extent of God's Mercy is highlighted in the following tradition: Abū Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "God has one hundred mercies. He sent down one of them on humans, jinn, animals and venomous creatures. Through it they show mercy to each other, and through it wild beasts show mercy to their young. God has reserved ninety-nine mercies with which He bestows mercy on his servants on the Day of Judgement" (al-Bukhārī: 6000; Muslim: 2752).
- 3 The Arabic *rabb* translated here as 'Lord' is semantically and lexically related to *tarbiyah*, which means to nurture, but with much care and attention (cf. Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, 2: 381). When used in its absolute form with the definite article, *al-Rabb*, it could only mean God Almighty, Who is the One Who takes care and provides for all beings.

of all beings⁽⁴⁾; ⁽³⁾ The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful; ⁽⁴⁾ Owner of the Day of Judgement⁽⁵⁾. ⁽⁵⁾ 'Only' You do we worship, and 'only' You do we seek help from. ⁽⁶⁾ Guide us to the Straight Path⁽⁶⁾; ⁽⁷⁾ the path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace⁽⁷⁾, not those on whom 'is Your' Wrath⁽⁸⁾ nor the misguided⁽⁹⁾.

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾
 إِلَهِكَ تَعْبُدُونَ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ أَهْدِنَا
 الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ
 أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ
 وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾



- 4 'All beings' here stands for *al-'ālamīn*, usually translated as 'worlds'. It means the Heavens the Earth and all that is within them and all that is between them (cf. 26: 23-24).
- 5 'The Day of Judgement', a translation of *yawm ad-dīn* in this aya, is a recurrent theme in the Qur'an. However, its nomenclature differs according to the effect intended, and whereby it is variously *Yawm ad-Dīn* (the Day of Judgement), *Yawm al-Hisāb* (the Day of Reckoning), *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (the Day of Resurrection), *al-Wāqī'ah* (the Befalling), *aṭ-Ṭammah* (the Dumbfounding), *aṣ-Ṣākhkhah* (the Deafening), *ar-Rājifah* (the Quaking), *al-Faza' al-Akbar* (the Great Fright) and *al-Hāqqah* (the Real). These many names for one and the same thing, some of which are indeed heart-rending, signify its magnitude and drive home the message: "Be Mindful of a Day on which you shall be returned to Allah". (2: 281)
- 6 *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* is the road (an Arabicized word after the Latin word *strāta*, i.e. road) which is straight, clear and has no turns or curves (al-Ṭabarī). It is used figuratively in the Qur'an to denote the correct manner in which God is to be worshipped and which leads to His Pleasure. It also denotes being spared torment in the Hereafter (cf. 6: 153).
- 7 Those who know the Truth and follow it: "Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, then those are among the ones on whom Allah has bestowed His Grace—of the Prophets, the Affirmers of Truth, the martyrs and the pious—indeed the companion of these is well off". (4: 69)
- 8 Those who know the Truth and do not follow it. (al-Ṭabarī)
- 9 Those who are ignorant of the Truth and worship God following only their whims and wishful thinking. (al-Ṭabarī)

THE GRAND QUR'AN

الْقُرْآنُ الْعَظِيمُ

ترجمة معاني

سُورَةُ الْفَاتِحَةِ

al-Fātihah

(The Opening)

At surface level, taken at face value, the Qur'an can be striking for some whilst daunting for others, especially to those whose hearts are not possessed of the sweet, blessed Faith. Yet, much of the Qur'an's beauty and real significance is to be found in what lies beneath. One can only begin to have a feel of this deep meaning once the surface is left behind and one dives deep to explore what intricate mesh of relationships ties with what hits the eyes at first appearance. Such is the life-long quest that has engaged many a celebrated scholar and many a sincere person in search of the Truth: "Would they not ponder the Qur'an or are there on some hearts their locks!" (47: 24)

The Quran is an incredibly deep text. Deeper than oceans, indeed God says: "Say, "If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord were exhausted, even if We brought the like thereof to replenish it" (18: 109). This depth is indicated, to name but a few, by the relationship that holds each sura with the preceding and following ones, the relevance of each aya to the next, parallel ayas which are similar, or slightly different, and that are to be found in different places, how the same word is strategically deployed along the suras, stories told many times over from different angles, the judicious use of synonymous and near-synonymous words, homographs, dialectical variations, grammar and syntax as also graphic representations. If at all, this translation only manages to allude to such depth, direct the inquisitive mind to it, but it would be weaving a tall story indeed to say that it has got to its bottom. This can only be found in the many centuries of scholarship that have permeated the past and will continue to do so throughout many future ones.

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