



Introduction to Qur'an

Third Session (3/4)

NOVA Life-Long Learning (NOVA-LLI)

Instructor: Dr. Daoud Nassimi
Adjunct Associate Professor of Religion

Introduction to Qur'an - Outline

- **Session 1:**
 - Belief in Divine books
 - Meaning and definition of Qur'an
 - History of revelation and Prophet Muhammad
 - History of collection and compilation
 - Different names of Qur'an
 - Contents, main topics, and main purpose
 - Qur'an and other divine scriptures
 - Preservation of text
- **Session 2:**
 - Organization and main units
 - Presentation style and literary quality
 - The sound of the Qur'an
 - Addressees of Qur'an
 - Some sciences of the Qur'an
 - Translations of Qur'an
- **Session 3:**
 - **Interpretation of Qur'an (Exegesis/Tafseer)**
 - **Understanding the meaning**
 - **Other sciences of Qur'an**
- **Session 4:**
 - Scientific knowledge in the Qur'an

Commentaries of Qur'an

- Science of Commentary/Interpretation (*Tafseer*)
 - History
 - Qur'an as a source of explanation for its own verses
 - Prophet as the primary interpreter
 - Role of the prophet's companions
 - Qur'anic Sciences
- Later scholars (classic and modern)
- Some with special areas of emphasis

Some Benefits of Tafseer

- Explains one verse in light of other related verses
- Explains related Hadith or Sunnah
- Explains the understanding of the companions of the prophet
- Explains revelation events or references for particular verses to better understand
- Explains intended meaning for words with multiple meanings
- Explains in light of other available knowledge on the subject
- Discovers relevant teachings to every time and situation

A Translation and Tafseer Example : Surah Faatiha

Translation	Transliteration	Arabic Text
In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful (1)	Bismi Allah ir rahmaa nir raheem	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
The praise (all kinds of praises and thanks) belongs to Allah, the Lord of the entire universe (2)	Al-Hamdu lillaahi rabbil 'aalameen	الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
The most Gracious, the most Merciful (3)	Ar-rahmaa nir raheem	الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
The Master of the Day of Judgment (4)	Maaliki yawm iddeen	مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
You alone we worship, and from You alone we seek help (5)	Iyyaaka na'budu wa iyyaaka nas ta'een	إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
Guide us to the straight path (6)	Ihdi naş şiraatal mustaqeem	اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
The path of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, Not of those who have incurred the wrath, nor of those who have gone astray (7)	Şiraatal ladheena ana'mta a'laihim ghairil maghdoobe 'alaihim walad daaleen	صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

Example of Tafseer by Qur'an

- Rabbul 'Alameen : explained in 26:23 as *the Lord of the heaven and the earth and whatever is in between them*
- Yawmid-deen: explained in 82:17-19 (*the day in which no one has any power to help another, and the command belongs only to Allah*)
- Siraatal Mustaqeem:
 - Explained by Jesus (3:51 and 19:36: *Indeed, my Lord and your Lord is Allah, then worship Him, this is the straight path*)
 - Path of worship and servitude to Allah (36:61)
 - *You (Muhammad) are in the straight path (36:3-4)*
 - Explained by Prophet Muhammad as his path and Abraham's path (6:161)
 - *Whoever holds firmly to Allah, is surely led to the straight path. 3:101*)
 - Etc.

Tafseer of Surah Fatiha

Towards Understanding the Quran

Translation in English by: Zafar Ishaq Ansari (Original Tafseer is from Maududi)

- **Chapter Introduction**

- **Name:** This Surah is named AL-FATIHA because of its subject-matter. Fatiha is that which opens a subject or a book or any other thing. In other words, Al-Fatiha is a sort of preface.
- **Period of Revelation:** It is one of the very earliest Revelations to the Prophet. As a matter of fact, we learn from authentic Traditions that it was the first complete Surah which was revealed to Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him). Before this, only a few miscellaneous verses were revealed which form parts of `ALAQ, MUZ-ZAMMIL, MUD-DATH-THIR, etc.
- **Theme:** This Surah is in fact a prayer which Allah has taught to all those who want to make a study of His book. It has been placed at the very beginning of the book to teach this lesson to the reader: if you sincerely want to benefit from the Qur'an, you should offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe.
- This preface is meant to create a strong desire in the heart of the reader to seek guidance from the Lord of the Universe, Who alone can grant it. Thus AL-FATIHA indirectly teaches that the best thing for a man is to pray for guidance to the straight path, to study the Quran with the mental attitude of a seeker-after-truth and to recognize the fact that the Lord of the Universe is the source of all knowledge. He should, therefore, begin the study of the Quran with a prayer to him for guidance.
- From this theme, it becomes clear that the real relation between AL-FATIHA and the Quran is not that of an introduction to a book but that of a prayer and its answer. AL-FATIHA is the prayer from the servant and the Quran is the answer from the Master to his prayer. The servant prays to Allah to show him guidance and the Master places the whole of the Quran before him in answer to his prayer, as if to say, "This is the Guidance you begged from Me."

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: First verse

- Note that the translation of each verse is written in bold text followed by the commentary for each verse in the form of numbered Endnotes.

• بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

- **(1:1) In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate¹**

- 1 One of the many practices taught by Islam is that its followers should begin their activities in the name of God. This principle, if consciously and earnestly followed, will necessarily yield three beneficial results.

- First, one will be able to restrain oneself from many misdeed, since the habit of pronouncing the name of God is bound to make one wonder when about to commit some offence how such an act can be reconciled with the saying of God's holy name.

- Second, if a man pronounces the name of God before starting good and legitimate tasks, this act will ensue that both his starting point and his mental orientation are sound.

- Third - and this is the most important benefit - when a man begins something by pronouncing God's name, he will enjoy God's support and help; God will bless his efforts and protect him from the plots and temptation of Satan. For whenever man turns to God, God turns to him as well.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Second verse

- الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

(1:2) Praise² be to Allah, the Lord³ of the entire universe.

- 2. As we have already explained, the character of this surah is that of a prayer. The prayer begins with praise of the One to whom our prayer is addressed. This indicates that whenever one prays one ought to pray in a dignified manner. It does not become a cultivated person to blurt out his petition. Refinement demands that our requests should be preceded by a wholehearted acknowledgement of the unique position, infinite benevolence and unmatched excellence of the One to Whom we pray. Whenever we praise someone, we do so for two reasons.

- First, because excellence calls for praise, irrespective of whether that excellence has any direct relevance to us or not. Second, we praise one who, we consider to be our benefactor; when this is the case our praise arises from a deep feeling of gratitude. God is worthy of praise on both counts. It is incumbent on us to praise Him not only in recognition of His infinite excellence but also because of our feeling of gratitude to Him, arising from our awareness of the blessings He has lavished upon us. It is important to note that what is said here is not merely that praise be to God, but that all praise be to God alone. Whenever there is any beauty, any excellence, any perfection-in whatever thing or in whatever shape it may manifest itself- its ultimate source is none other than God Himself. No human beings, angels, Demigods, heavenly bodies-in short, no created beings-are possessed of an innate excellence; where excellence exists, it is a gift from God. Thus, if there is anyone at all whom we ought to adore and worship, to whom we ought to feel indebted and grateful, towards whom we should remain humble and obedient, it is the creator of excellence, rather than its possessor.

- 3. In Arabic the word Rabb has three meanings: (i) Lord and Master; (ii) Sustainer, Provider, Supporter, Nourisher and Guardian, and (iii) Sovereign, Ruler, He Who controls and directs. God is the Rabb of the universe in all three meanings of the term.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Third verse

- الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ
- **(1:3) The Merciful, the Compassionate⁴**
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- 4. Whenever we are deeply impressed by the greatness of something, we try to express our feelings by using superlatives. If the use of one superlative does not do full justice to our feelings, we tend to re-emphasize the extraordinary excellence of the object of our admiration by adding a second superlative of nearly equivalent meaning.*
- This would seem to explain the use of the word Rahim following Rahman. The form of the word Rahman connotes intensity. Yet God's mercy and beneficence towards His creatures is so great, so extensive and of such an infinite nature that no one word, however strong its connotation, can do it full justice. The epithet Rahim was therefore added to that of Rahman.
- Note: This is not a repeat of the first verse. In the first verse, these two attributes of Allah were mentioned due to the fact that without the mercy of Allah, one cannot start and continue any action. In here, it is mentioned as a part of introducing who Allah is and why Allah should be praised.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Fourth verse

• مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

- **(1:4) The Master of the Day of Recompense⁵.**
- 5. God will be the Lord of the Day when all generations of mankind gather together on order to render an account of their conduct, and when each person will be finally rewarded or punished for his deeds.
- The description of God as Lord of the Day of Judgment following the mention of his benevolence and compassion indicates that we ought to remember another aspect of God as well-namely, that He will judge us all, that He is so absolutely powerful, that on the Day of Judgment no one will have the power either to resist the enforcement of punishments that He decrees or to prevent anyone from receiving the rewards that He decides to confer.
- Hence, we ought not only to love Him for nourishing and sustaining us and for His compassion and mercy towards us, but should also hold Him in awe because of His justice, and should not forget that our ultimate happiness or misery rests completely with Him.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Fifth verse

- اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
- **(1:5) You alone do we worship⁶, and You alone do we turn for help⁷**
- 6. The term *ibadah* is used in three sense: (i) worship and adoration; (ii) obedience and submission; and (iii) service and subjection. In this particular context the term carries all these meanings simultaneously. In other words, we say to God that we worship and adore Him, that we are obedient to Him and follow His will, and also that we are His servants.
- Moreover man is so bound to none save God, that none but He, may be the subject of man's worship and total devotion, of man's unreserved obedience, of man's absolute subjection and servitude.
- 7. Not only do we worship God, but our relationship with Him is such that we turn to Him alone for help and succor. We know that He is the Lord of the whole universe and that He alone is the Master of all blessings and benefactions.
- Hence, in seeking the fulfillment of our needs we turn to Him alone. It is towards Him alone that we stretch forth our hands when we pray and supplicate. It is in Him that we repose our trust. It is therefore to Him alone that we address our request for true guidance.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Sixth verse

- إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
- **(1:6) Direct us on to the Straight Way⁸,**
- 8. We beseech God to guide us in all walks of life to a way which is absolutely true, which provides us with a properly-based outlook and sound principles of behavior, a way which will prevent our succumbing to false doctrines and adopting unsound principles of conduct, a way that will lead us to our true salvation and happiness.
- This is man's prayer to God as he begins the study of the Qur'an. It is, in short, to illuminate the truth which he often tends to lose in a labyrinth of philosophical speculation; to enlighten him as to which of the numerous ethical doctrines ensures a sound course of conduct; to show which of the myriad ways and by-ways is the clear, straight, open road of sound belief and right behavior.

Translation and Tafseer of Surah Fatiha: Seventh verse

• صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ □ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

• (1:7) The way of those whom You have favored⁹, who did not incur Your wrath, who are not astray¹⁰.

• 9. This defines the 'straight way' which we ask God to open to us. It is the way which has always been followed by those who have enjoyed God's favors and blessings. This is the way which has been trodden from the beginning of time by all those individuals and communities that have unflinchingly enjoyed God's favors and blessings.

• 10. This makes it clear that the recipients of God's favor are not necessarily those who appear to enjoy worldly prosperity and success; these people are often among those whom God has condemned because they have lost sight of the true path of salvation and happiness.

• This explanation makes it quite clear that in'am (favor) denotes all those real and abiding favors and blessings which one receives in reward for righteous conduct through God's approval and pleasure, rather than those apparent and fleeting favors which the Pharaohs, Nimrods and Korahs (Qaruns) used to receive in the past, and which are enjoyed even today by people notorious for oppression, evil and corruption.

Translations Comparison: Surah Al-Asr (103)

MAS Abdel Haleem	Ayub Hamid	Ansari/Mawdudi	Yusuf Ali	Surah text
By the declining day,	As evidenced by rapidly passing time	By the time!	By (the Token of) Time (through the ages),	وَالْعَصْرِ
man is [deep] in loss,	human beings are in grave loss	Lo! Man is in a state of loss;	Verily Man is in loss,	إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ
except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness.	unless they are those who believe in the Truth, perform righteous deeds, exhort each other to Truth and exhort each other to patient perseverance.	except those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other to hold on to truth and counsel each other to be steadfast.	Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.	إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

Example of comparative translations: Verses 35:3, 5-6

Translation by The Study Quran:

O mankind! Remember God's Blessing upon you. Is there a creator other than God who provides for you from Heaven and earth? There is no god but He. How, then, are you perverted?

O mankind! Surely God's Promise is true. So let not the life of this world delude you, nor let the Deluder delude you concerning God.

Translation by Ayub Hamid:

O human beings! Consider Allah's favor on you; is there any creator besides Allah who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? There is no god except Him; from where are you then being deluded (to believe in mythical gods)?

O human beings, certainly the promise of Allah is true; therefore, do not let the life of this world deceive you, nor let the arch-deceiver (Satan) deceive you about Allah.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ
اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ
خَالِقٍ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ
يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنْ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَى
تُؤْفِكُونَ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ
وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا
تَغُرَّتْكُمْ الْحَيَاةُ
الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّتْكُمْ
بِاللَّهِ الْعُرُورُ

Role of Prophet in Tafseer

- The Qur'an was revealed to prophet Muhammad not only to convey it to others, but to educate them about it
 - *“Surely Allah conferred a great favor on the believers when He raised from among them a Messenger to recite to them His signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and Wisdom. For before that they were in manifest error.” (3:164)*
- The prophet was specifically assigned to explain the Qur'an
 - *“We have sent down the message to you [Prophet], so that you can explain to people what is sent for them, so that they may reflect.” (16:44)*
- The Qur'an repeatedly orders the believers to obey and follow the prophet
 - *“..., and obey the Messenger so that you may be given mercy” (24:56)*
 - *“Whoever obeys the Messenger, he has indeed obeyed Allah, ...” (4:80)*

Role of Prophet in Tafseer

- Why so much emphasis on following the prophet ?
 - *“He does not speak from his own desire. It is but revelation/inspiration revealed (to him)” (53:3-4)*
- The prophet implemented every teaching of Qur’an in his life to become a walking Quran
 - *“The character of the prophet was the Qur’an” (Hadith, as narrated from wife of prophet)*
- Therefore, correct and complete understanding of Qur’an cannot be achieved without understanding of the prophet’s life and teachings

Science of Recitation (Tajweed)

- There are specific rules for reading/recitation of the Qur'an
- Proper recitation is emphasized because even a minor mispronunciation could sometimes change the meaning of the words
- With proper recitation, it generates exceptional and potent sound

Makkan vs. Madinan Surahs

- **Difference of focus in each period**
- **Makkan Focus:**
 - **Articles of Faith**
 - **Logical reasoning**
 - **Stories**
 - **Parables / examples**
 - **Moral teachings**
- **Madinan Focus:**
 - **State requirements**
 - **Rulings and Commands**
 - **Interactions (within and outside) and confrontations**
 - **Social and legal implications of guidance**
 - **Moral teachings**
 - **Topics of Makkan period touched briefly**

Mohkam and Mutashabih

- Mohkam (firm): Verses with a clear, straight, and firm meaning
 - Verses related to very important topics, such as faith, commands, rulings, and main message
- Mutashaabih (resembling): Verses with resembling or allegorical meanings
 - Usually includes verses related to descriptions of unseen
 - Facts that determining their exact nature are beyond human comprehension
 - Their real and exact nature are known only to God
- This division based on following verse:

“He is the One who has revealed to you the Book (the Qur’an). Out of it there are verses that are Muhkamat , which are the principal verses of the Book, and some others are Mutashabihat . But those who have perversity in their hearts go after such part of it as is mutashabih, seeking (to create) discord, and searching for its interpretation (that meets their desires), while no one knows its (exact) interpretation except Allah; and those well-grounded in knowledge say: “We believe therein; all is from our Lord.” Only the men of understanding observe the advice.” (3:7)