

Surah 1. Al-Fatiha

1.1 In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful. ¹⁹

1.2 Praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds. ²⁰

1.3 Most Gracious Most Merciful.

1.4 Master of the Day of Judgment.

1.5 Thee do we worship and Thine aid we seek. ²¹

1.6 Show us the straight way. ²²

1.7 The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace Those whose (portion) is not wrath and who go not astray. ^{23 24}

Author Comments

19 - The Arabic words "Rahman" and "Rahim" translated "Most Gracious" and "Most Merciful" are both intensive forms referring to different aspects of God's attribute of Mercy. The Arabic intensive is more suited to express God's attributes than the superlative degree in English. The latter implies a comparison with other beings, or with other times or places, while there is no being like unto God, and He is independent of Time and Place. Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinner needs and God Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from God Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting the, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life. For this reason the attribute Rahman (Most Gracious) is not applied to any but God, but the attribute Rahim (Merciful), is a general term, and may also be applied to Men. To make us contemplate these boundless gifts of God, the formula: "In the name of God Most Gracious, Most Merciful": is placed before every Sura of the Qur-an (except the ninth), and repeated at the beginning of every act by the Muslim who dedicates his life to God, and whose hope is in His Mercy.

20 - The Arabic word Rabb, usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity. God cares for all the worlds He has created.

21 - On realizing in our souls God's love and care, His grace and mercy, and His power and justice (as Ruler of the Day of Judgment), the immediate result is that we bend in the act of worship, and see both our shortcomings and His all-sufficient power. The emphatic form means that not only do we reach the position of worshipping God and asking for His help, but we worship Him alone and ask for His aid only. For there is none other than He worthy of our devotion and able to help us. The plural "we" indicates that we associate ourselves with all who seek God, thus strengthening ourselves and strengthening them in a fellowship of faith.

22 - If we translate by the English word "guide," we shall have to say: "Guide us to and in the straight Way." For we many be wandering aimlessly, and the first step is to find the Way; and the second need is to keep in the Way: our own wisdom may fail in either case. The straight Way is often the narrow Way, or the steep Way, which many people shun (xc.11). By the world's perversity the straight Way is sometimes stigmatized and the crooked Way praised. How are we to judge? We must ask for God's guidance. With a little spiritual insight we shall see which are the people who walk in the light of God's grace, and which are those that walk in the darkness of Wrath. This also would help our judgment.

23 - Note that the words relating to Grace are connected actively with God; those relating to Wrath are impersonal. In the one case God's Mercy encompasses us beyond our deserts. In the other case our own actions are responsible for the Wrath, the negative of Grace, Peace, or Harmony.

24 - Are there two categories? - those who are in the darkness of Wrath and those who stray? The first are those who deliberately break God's law; the second those who stray out of carelessness or negligence. Both are responsible for their own acts or omissions. In opposition to both are the people who are in the light of God's Grace: for His Grace not only protects them from active wrong (if they will only submit their will to Him) but also from straying into paths of temptation or carelessness. The negative gair should be construed as applying not to the way, but as describing men protected from two dangers by God's Grace.

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