

A Maqasid-based Tafsir of Surah Al-Fatihah

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In the name of Allah, the Merciful Sovereign, the Merciful Forgiver بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Systemic Threads of the Surah's Purposes/Maqasid

A "nizam" (system or structure) is a string of beads or pearls held together by a wire or thread. While the beads themselves are valuable, their arrangement in a particular order adds extra value and special meaning. The thread, composed of the sequence of sounds (خ ي ط), conveys the idea of a precise, continuous extension. In Allah's words: "Eat and drink until the white thread (khayt) becomes distinct from the black thread of dawn" (Al-Baqarah 2:187), this means the whiteness of the day becomes distinguished from the darkness of night through the horizontal lines of the horizon. Similarly, in "the eye of the needle (khiyat)" (Al-A'raf 7:40), Allah is referring to the sewing needle.

The sounds (ن ظ م) do not appear in the Quran, but they are mentioned in the Sunnah. Anas ibn Malik relates that the Prophet ﷺ said about the people of Paradise: "The people of the elevated chambers will return to their chambers as a large pearl with no fractures or order (nazm)." ³ This means it's a single, large pearl rather than small pearls strung together in a neatly arranged string.

In the hadith by Fatimah bint Qais: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade us from wearing gold and strings of it (nazm).," ⁴ the reference is to gathering pieces or beads of gold into a structured system. This reflects the Prophet's ﷺ guidance to avoid extravagance among his companions, despite gold being fundamentally permissible as adornment for women, as is well known.

Aishah, the Mother of the Believers, narrated during the incident of false accusation (Ifk): "My necklace broke, so I was detained while retrieving it and its string". ⁵ This refers to the beads strung together in its thread.

Um Ma'bad, the Bedouin woman who described the Prophet ﷺ in a beautiful way, said: "He spoke sweetly, clearly, neither briefly nor excessively. His words were like neatly arranged beads (nazm)."⁶ This means his words and phrases were elegantly coordinated like beads strung together in a string to make a necklace.

The word "nizam" was frequently used by Imam Ali in his speeches. For instance, he said: "The position of the one responsible [i.e., the ruler] is like the thread holding together the beads. If the thread breaks, the beads scatter and never fully regroup." He also stated: "The greatest rights established by Allah are the rights of the ruler over the community and the rights of the community over the ruler. Allah made these a system for their unity and a source of dignity for their religion." Another saying goes: "Allah ordained faith to cleanse from polytheism, and trust as a system for the community."⁷

These metaphors liken a righteous ruler, group commitment, fulfilling governance rights, and upholding trust to the organizing threads (nazm) that unite the individuals of the community into one whole. A narration attributed to the Prince of the Believers Umar says: "The first thing to perish among communities is the locust. When it perishes, they follow like beads strung together on a thread that breaks."⁸ This narration supports the concept of systems and structures we believe in the creation of the universe, including its material and moral components, its visible and unseen aspects. This order is one of Allah's divine principles in all things.

The lesson here is that we approach studying a surah based on the Quran's objectives being arranged like threads, conceptual lines, or comprehensive axes. Keep in mind that our introductions and explanations within surahs are merely maqasidi (objective-based) interpretations derived from studying the surah. We don't claim they are the only possible interpretations or paths for understanding its goals. Various streams flow according to their capacity, and Allah alone guides the path.

While studying Al-Fatihah, we found many connections with the seven methodological objectives we initially derived from the Quran and its explanation in the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, as presented in the introductory section: achieving objectives, correcting concepts, categorizing groups, observing divine laws, adopting values, establishing arguments, and following commands and prohibitions.

However, only Allah encompasses the plethora of meanings that this magnificent surah aims to instill in the conscience of the reader, the listener, and the universe at large. Nevertheless, the overarching objective of this surah, which emerged from our study and connecting its elements, is the following:

“To state and establish the principles of faith in beliefs and actions.”

To achieve this objective, the surah, in its concise wording, encompasses countless connections to foundational issues, comprehensive principles, intellectual positions, and practical outcomes. It covers the foundations of belief such as faith, lordship, creation, prophethood, resurrection, scriptures, and all related matters. It also encompasses the foundational paths to Allah, including praise, hope, fear, worship, seeking assistance, repentance, loyalty, and everything associated with these.

Additionally, it includes foundational concepts, objectives, groups, divine laws, values, proofs, commands, and prohibitions, which will be detailed first in this surah and then in the rest of the Quran. The surah, both directly and indirectly, contains the essentials of Quranic themes, such as beliefs, parables, stories, rulings, and knowledge about this world, the hereafter, and the universe, seen and unseen, and everything connected to them.

Surah Al-Fatihah is the only surah in the Book of Allah that was revealed to the Prophet ﷺ in the form of a direct address from the reciters or listeners to Allah, starting with His name, then praising Him, and then supplicating to Him for guidance to the straight path of goodness and protection from the deviant paths of evil. It is the only surah whose realization of its objectives in the realm of faith is affirmed by the obligation for every Muslim to recite it in every prayer, day and night. This is intended to firmly establish its meanings and renew its connections in the hearts and minds as one repeatedly supplicates with it in every prayer and every unit of prayer.

'Ubadah ibn al-Samit said: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ led us in the Fajr prayer. When he finished, he said, 'Do you recite behind me?' We said, 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'Do not do so except with the Umm al-Kitab (Al-Fatihah), for there is no prayer without it.'"⁹

We have deduced that every word in this surah aims to connect the reader with a central concept of Islam. It begins with the name of Allah, the Lord of all worlds, and the Day of Judgment, and continues with the Straight Path. It mentions lordship, mercy, worship, seeking help, guidance, righteousness, blessings, anger, and misguidance. Each of these terms, and the repetition of some, are meant to solidify their Quranic concepts in the Islamic mind and heart.

The surah also provides the first classification of groups in the Quran: the believers upon whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, those who have incurred Allah's wrath (may Allah protect us), and those who have gone astray (may Allah protect us). With the last ayah of the surah, we discuss how this classification relates to the state of groups among the People of the Book as mentioned in a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ when commenting on this surah, and then to the state of other groups of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The surah also hints at some of the major divine laws (sunan), such as the laws of creation, sustenance, victory, reward, diversity, and pairs. These and other sunan will be further detailed in their respective places throughout the Quran. The surah also broadly references the three types of values we have categorized: morality (vs. immorality), beauty (vs. ugliness), and benefit (vs. harm). It does this through the concepts of mercy, lordship, sovereignty, worship, righteousness, blessings, punishment, and other indirect references to values.

As for the arguments supporting the truth of this message and clarifying the misconceptions of those who reject it, the surah addresses them indirectly through the worshipers' supplication to their Lord, seeking guidance from Him and protection from misguidance. The surah also addresses commands and prohibitions indirectly, indicating rewards for good and accountability for evil, mentioning adherence to the Straight Path, and the reward for believers who surrender with faith and the punishment for the disobedient opponents.

In all of the above ways, which meant to be briefly outlined, these thematic threads of the surah Al-Fatihah combine and integrate to fulfill the surah's higher purpose, as induced in this study, which is: "stating and establishing the principles of faith in beliefs and actions."

In the name of Allah, the Merciful Sovereign, the Merciful Forgiver (1)

The Quran begins in the name of Allah, whether here in Surah Al-Fatihah according to the order of the Mus'haf, or according to the order of revelation: "Read in the name of your Lord who created" (Al-Alaq 1), aiming to establish a foundational knowledge for human conceptual understanding based on the authority of "names". This means believing that the words mentioned in the Quranic Arabic language with specific meanings are all truth from Allah. Knowledge, when expressed in the Arabic language, is fundamentally a knowledge of names (asma') and their intended meanings (ma'ani maqsudah): "And He taught Adam the names of all things" (Al-Baqarah 31).

The first and most important name, central to Islamic understanding, is the name "Allah." This name will be repeated thousands of times throughout the rest of the Quran and in what we have received from the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ. Along with this name are other Beautiful Names, attributes, and actions that further detail the knowledge of Him, Glory be to Him.

Whether the term "Allah" is linguistically a non-derived name or derived from "alaha," which signifies a meaning of servitude, the primary intention of this unique name is to be a unique signifier of Allah Almighty: "Do you know of any who is His namesake?" (Maryam 65). This is directly related to the objective of monotheism, that is, believing in the One and Only God, who is central to the entire Islamic understanding. All of Allah's other names, attributes, and actions are detailed and relate to this name.

Knowledge of Allah's names is not a set of abstract philosophical beliefs but has intentional impacts on perceptions and actions, often referred to as the objectives of beliefs (maqasid al-'aqa'id). Allah Almighty teaches us about Himself and guides us to the intended effect of this knowledge. For instance, when Allah says: "If Allah helps you, none can overcome you; and if He forsakes you, who is there that can help you after Him? So let the believers put their reliance in Allah." (Al-Imran 160), He explains that the objective of knowing Allah as "the Helper and Supporter" (naseer, nasir)¹⁰ is to strengthen the believers' reliance on Him, as the ayah literally advises.

Similarly, when He says: "No disaster strikes upon the earth or among yourselves except that it is in a register before We bring it into being; indeed, that is easy for Allah." (Al-Hadid 57:22), the educational objectives of knowing that He is the one who advances and delays, and that He created everything and predetermined it, is emphasized in the following ayah: "So you do not grieve over what has passed, nor rejoice excessively over what He has granted you." (Al-Hadid 57:23).

When He says: "If you slip after clear proofs have come to you, then know that Allah is Almighty, Wise." (Al-Baqarah 2:209), "Know that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (Al-Ma'idah 5:98), and "Except for those who repent before you apprehend them; then know that Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (Al-Ma'idah 5:34), the purpose of knowing these Beautiful Names in these various contexts is to encourage: heedfulness, righteousness, seeking forgiveness and mercy from Allah when one makes a mistake, and repent entirely from them.

One of the objectives of beliefs regarding all His Beautiful Names is to glorify Allah and recognize that all creation glorifies Him: "He is Allah, there is no deity but Him, Knower of the unseen and seen; He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. He is Allah, there is no deity but Him, the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Peace, the Faithful, the Hogemonic, the Mighty, the Compeller/Mender, the Supremely Great. Glory be to Allah above what they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; to Him belong the most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him" (As-Saff 22-24).

We understand that beginning Surah Al-Fatihah with the name "Allah," followed immediately by His names "Ar-Rahman" (the Merciful Sovereign) and "Ar-Raheem" (the Merciful Forgiver), signifies the central priority of Allah's mercy in knowing Him and in understanding all of Islam. The purpose of the names "Ar-Rahman" and "Ar-Raheem" in this context is to emphasize several fundamental faith concepts in the hearts of believers, foremost among them being mercy as a concept, objective, and value, along with values connected to it like pardon, forgiveness, and compassion for all creatures. Similarly, Allah says: "By the mercy of Allah, you were gentle with them. Had you been harsh or hard-hearted, they would have disbanded from around you, so pardon them and seek forgiveness for them" (Al-Imran 159). He also says: "Let them pardon and

overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (An-Nur 22). When Joseph said: "No blame will there be upon you today. May Allah forgive you, and He is the Most Merciful of those who show mercy" (Yusuf 92). The Prophet ﷺ said: "The merciful are shown mercy by Ar-Rahman. Be merciful to those on Earth, and the One in the Heavens will have mercy upon you."¹¹ He ﷺ also said: "Allah created one hundred portions of mercy. He sent down one portion to the world, through which creatures show compassion to one another, including the jinn, humans, and animals. He kept ninety-nine portions with Him."¹² Thus, mercy is a universal divine law (sunnah ilahiyyah) that permeates all creatures' relationships, whether we recognize its manifestations or not.

I disagree with those who consider "justice" to be the most central and prioritized objective, concept, and value in Islam—despite "Al-Adl" (the Just) being one of Allah's Beautiful Names -as narrated in some narrations, even though it's not explicitly mentioned in the Quran as one of His names-¹³ rather than mercy. This disagreement is based on two reasons:

Firstly, justice has its centrality in the Islamic legislative system, as seen in the detailed legal rulings, which will be elaborated upon later. However, what justice requires is always coupled with mercy, even in legislation and courts of law, and does not take precedence over mercy. Mercy always represents a higher virtue with a special reward from Allah. For example, retribution in cases of murder is justice, while pardoning with compensation is mercy: "O you who have believed, prescribed for you is retribution for those murdered: the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with excellence. This is an alleviation from your Lord and mercy" (Al-Baqarah 178).

Paying the bridal dowry is justice, while a bride's voluntary waiver is mercy: "And give the women their bridal gifts graciously. But if they, of their own accord, give up to you anything of it, then take it and enjoy it with happiness and health" (An-Nisa 4:4). Similarly, the guardian waiving a divorce settlement is mercy: "And if you divorce them before you have touched them and have already specified a dowry for them, then pay half of what you specified, unless they forgo the right, or the one in whose hand is the

marriage contract forgoes it. And to forgo is nearer to piety. Do not forget graciousness between you." (Al-Baqarah 237).

Writing down and repaying debts is justice: "O you who have believed, when you contract a debt for a specified term, write it down. Let a scribe write it between you in justice. Let no scribe refuse to write as Allah has taught him, so let him write, and let the one who has the obligation dictate. Let him fear Allah, his Lord, and not leave anything out of it." (Al-Baqarah 282). However, if repayment becomes difficult, mercy is reflected in the reward from Allah for granting the debtor more time or waiving the debt as charity: "But if the debtor is in hardship, then [let there be] postponement until a time of ease." (Al-Baqarah 280).

Secondly, the prioritization of mercy over justice is due to the fact that the Islamic way of life is much broader than the legislative system, despite its importance and intersection with all forms of human behavior. Islam is a belief system for a comprehensive concepts of worship, morals, and conceptualizations of everything in existence, not just legislation. In these dimensions, the value of mercy transcends that of justice, particularly Allah's mercy: "Say, 'To whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'To Allah. He has decreed upon Himself mercy'" (Al-An'am 12), and "Your Lord is the Forgiving, Full of Mercy. If He were to impose blame upon them for what they earned, He would have hastened for them the punishment. But for them is an appointment from which they will find no escape" (Al-Kahf 58).

As for Allah's justice, He says about humanity's tyranny: "If Allah were to impose blame upon people for their wrongdoing, He would not leave on the earth any living creature." (An-Nahl 61), indicating that if He were to hold us accountable solely by His justice, we would be ruined. Instead, He prioritizes His mercy, forgiveness, and forbearance. The Prophet ﷺ said: "When Allah finished creating creation, He wrote in His book, which is with Him: 'Indeed, My mercy overcomes My anger'"¹⁴.

The Arabic language has its own logic (mantiq) regarding the relationship between the sounds of its letters and their intended meanings. The relationship between sounds and meanings forms the foundation of the entire Arabic language system or "tongue". Therefore, beginning the entire Quran with the letter "B" (ba) in the basmalah aligns with this sound's meaning in the Arabic tongue. "B" is the first letter of

the Arabic alphabet after the glottal stop (hamza), and it is pronounced simply by pressing the lips together and then opening them. In Arabic, its sound at the start of words is associated with the concept of cumulative gathering, which aligns with the meaning of a beginning, as in: bada' (began), bana (built), bada'a (created innovatively), basata (spread out), badara (rushed), bajasa (extracted), baana (became clear), bazagha (appeared), balagha (reached), and bara'a (healed), etc.¹⁵

These three beautiful names—Allah, the Merciful Sovereign, and the Merciful Forgiver—open up the entire Quran for the one who reflects on the other Beautiful Names and all the meanings of revelation and their connections to every component of existence. All the knowledge available to humanity cannot be separated from the knowledge of Allah, the Merciful Sovereign, and the Merciful Forgiver, and His names, attributes, and actions.

As for "the Merciful Sovereign" and "the Merciful Forgiver," we support the view of the higher-tier of scholars who state that differences in the arrangement of sounds that form two words in Arabic certainly imply differences in meaning. In eloquent Arabic, let alone the Quran, there is no such thing as "synonymous" words, i.e. with identical meanings, as some exegetes claimed regarding "Al-Rahman" and "Al-Raheem." Therefore, we sought to uncover the intended difference in meaning between these two forms of mercy (which I ended up translating as: "the Merciful Sovereign" and "the Merciful Forgiver") in the Quran, beyond the structural difference between the forms "fa'lan" and "fa'il," which language scholars have originally differed on as to which form expresses mercy more emphatically.

Some exegetes say that "Al-Rahman" indicates permanence more than "Al-Raheem," and therefore they distinguish between worldly and eternal mercy, but there is no evidence supporting this view, in fact the evidence is to the contrary. Others claim that "Al-Rahman" is a Hebrew word and "Al-Raheem" is Arabic, a perspective that contradicts the purely Arabic roots of both words "R-H-M" and their Arabic conjugations, as well as the contradiction -more importantly- with the linguistic origins of Hebrew itself as a language, which all descended from Arabic, as will be detailed soon.

We explored the two words as compound concepts using our methodology for understanding definitions, as detailed in the introductions. Therefore, we examined the

relationships and contexts of mentioning these two names, both throughout the entirety of the Quran and in all what we know of the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ. We then built a network of meanings connected to both concepts, in order to allow a comprehensive and detailed understanding -or “definition”- to emerge, with Allah’s will.

From this research, it became clear that the distinction lies between two types or dimensions of divine mercy, as we elaborated on in the logical introductions during the discussion of multiple dimensions: one is the mercy that arises from greatness, and the other is the mercy that arises from compassion.

The mention of “Al-Rahman” in the Quran and -authentic and complete- hadith is linked to concepts of His greatness, power, oneness, signs, support, judgment, promises, and warnings. It is also associated with many objectives, foremost among them worship in the comprehensive sense, servitude, seeking His help, fear of Him, heedfulness, and reverence. It relates to specific groups of believers, particularly the “servants of the Al-Rahman” (‘ibadur-Rahman), including humans and angels, who embody the mentioned concepts of faith, worship, reverence, centrism, chastity, and supplication, as noted in the context of the related ayahs in Surah Al-Furqan.

“Al-Rahman” also relates to divine laws (sunan), such as delaying punishment for oppressors and then judging them according to their tyranny when intercession is no longer of benefit, as well as principles of abundant reward and good return for the righteous. It is also linked to values like fear of Allah, hope in Him, and reliance upon Him. Divine commands, such as prostration, supplication, and seeking protection, are also associated with “Al-Rahman” in the ayahs of the Quran.

From all of the above interconnected meanings, and considering their related objectives, concepts, universal laws, values, groups, commands, and prohibitions, it became clear that the name “Al-Rahman” is best rendered as “the Merciful Sovereign”, as it relates to divine mercy while evoking meanings connected to greatness, dominion, and power.¹⁶

As for the name “the Merciful Forgiver,” its mention in the Quran and Sunnah is often associated with Allah’s Beautiful Names “the Forgiving” or “the Compassionate”.¹⁷ It is also densely connected to His acceptance of repentance from the repentant (the name “Al-Raheem” is repeated several times in Surah At-Tawbah in the context of

repentance). It also relates to people's seeking forgiveness, their prayers to Allah, their love for Him, and His forgiveness for their direness and weakness. He invites them -in the name of "Al-Raheem"- to show compassion to themselves and to make amends with each other.

In these contexts, we observed related objectives, principles, values, groups, commands, and prohibitions. From these comprehensive meanings, we understand that the name "Al-Raheem", rendered as "the Merciful Forgiver", also relates to divine mercy but evokes meanings connected to compassion, forgiveness, and friendliness.

Therefore, these are two complementary dimensions of mercy: mercy stemming from greatness and mercy stemming from compassion. Their combination at the beginning of Surah Al-Fatihah aims to achieve a holistic understanding of the worship intended in relation to these two beautiful names: "Al-Rahman: the Merciful Sovereign" and "Al-Raheem: the Merciful Forgiver."

These dimensions include: fear of the Merciful Sovereign and hope in the Merciful Forgiver; reverence for the Merciful Sovereign and trust in the Merciful Forgiver to safeguard faith and righteous deeds; glorifying the Merciful Sovereign above any resemblance to creation and loving the Merciful Forgiver; avoiding sin as commanded by the Merciful Sovereign and repenting to the Merciful Forgiver if a sin or slip occurs; inviting people to the Merciful Sovereign and praying to the Merciful Forgiver.

By integrating these complementary concepts related to the names "the Merciful Sovereign" and "the Merciful Forgiver," the servant advances on the path of Allah like a bird with two wings: mercy derived from Allah's greatness and mercy derived from Allah's compassion.

In the next surah, it will be shown that the key knowledge Allah taught humanity is names: "And He taught Adam the names of all things." (Al-Baqarah 31). Although the name indicates the named entity, it is essential to convey the dimensions of the meanings connected to a name and analyze their relationships, in order to develop a comprehensive definition of the concept, as stated in the introduction.¹⁸ Furthermore, these concepts should be linked with other fields of meaning to clarify the concept expressed by every name/word/concept, as we did here in distinguishing between the

meanings of the names "Al-Rahman: the Merciful Sovereign" and "Al-Raheem: the Merciful Forgiver," and as will be done in understanding many other concepts.

Beginning any work "in the name of Allah" recognizes His supreme authority, and specifically starting the Quran in His name affirms the legitimacy and truth of this book and that it alone holds the highest status of legitimacy and truth.

الحمد لله رب العالمين (2)

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. (2)

Arabic is an amazing language in its expansiveness and ability to capture the subtlest distinctions in the purposes intended by its different expressions. The possible combinations of any Arabic sentence are based on the permutations of word, verb, and particle order, further affected by the potential variations in their grammatical cases, such as nominative, accusative, and genitive, and what those cases mean according to their grammatical structure.

In this Wise Quran, with its unparalleled eloquence, every specific structure is chosen for a deliberate meaning; there isn't a single letter or word placed haphazardly, Allah forbid. For instance, this ayah: "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds" could have been correctly constructed in many different ways: "Al-hamda li-Llahi, Rabbi al-'alamin" (with the "maf'ul"/accusative "hamda"), a reading that is reported but without confirmation that it was directly from the Prophet ﷺ; "Ahmadu-Llaha, Rabbal-'alamin" (I praise Allah, the Lord of the worlds), "Nahmadu-Llaha, Rabbal-'alamin" (We praise Allah, the Lord of all the worlds), "Hamdan li-Llahi, Rabbi al-'alamin" (A praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds), "Lillahi al-hamdu, Rabbi al-'alamin" (To Allah belongs the praise, the Lord of the worlds), "Allah, Rabbi al-'alamin, lahu al-hamdu" (Allah, the Lord of the worlds, to Him belongs the praise), "Rabbu al-'alamin, Allah, lahu al-hamdu" (The Lord of all the worlds, Allah, to Him belongs the praise), "Lil-'alamina Rabb, lahu al-hamdu" (For the worlds there is a Lord, to Him

belongs the praise), and so forth. Thus, the meaning of the sentence changes based on the arrangement of its words.

In Arabic, the grammatical cases, as well as the arrangement of words in these sentences, result in a different meaning for each structure. In the phrase "al-hamda" (with the accusative), it implies an unstated verb such as "Ahmadu" (I praise) or "Atlou" (I recite), which, according to Sibawayh, would mean that the praise is only from the one offering it and not from all creation. Similarly, "Ahmadu-Llaha" and "Nahmadu-Llaha" attribute praise specifically to the speaker or a group with them, as seen in "Iyyaka na'budu" (You alone we worship) and "Ihdina al-sirata" (Guide us to the path). In "hamdan li-Llahi," the word "hamd" (praise) is in an indefinite form, implying a singular praise rather than absolute praise, which is expressed through the definite article "al" (the) in "al-hamd." "Hamdan" also refers to a lesser degree of praise than "Ahmadu-Llaha" or "Atlou al-hamda li-Llahi."

In "li-Llahi al-hamdu," where the phrase "Allah" is placed first, the emphasis is on the word that comes first in the sentence's order of words, as is common in Arabic sentence structure. This is reflected in Allah's words in Surah Al-Jathiyah: "That is because you took Allah's signs in mockery, and the worldly life deceived you. So today, they will not be removed from it, nor will they be asked to appease. So, to Allah belongs all praise, the Lord of the heavens, the Lord of the earth, the Lord of all worlds." (Al-Jathiyah 35-36). Here, "al-hamd" (praise) in "li-Llahi al-hamdu" is an expression with a specific scope directed to Allah for the final outcome of believers and disbelievers, rather than absolute and all-encompassing praise as in the ayah here: "al-hamdu li-Llahi, Rabbi al-'alamin."

Therefore, "al-hamdu li-Llahi," where "al-hamd" is mentioned first and in the nominative case, the meaning is that all-encompassing praise ultimately belongs to Allah, implying universal praise in all its forms, aspects, and dimensions, as well as praise from all things that offer it. Everything praises and glorifies Him, as we know from Allah's words: "There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise" (Al-Isra 44).

"Praise" or "al-hamd" is part of a conceptual field connected to its meaning, like gratitude, remembrance, appreciation, and commendation. This is reflected in Allah's words: "And when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you,

but if you deny, My punishment is severe." (Ibrahim 7), "So remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me and do not deny Me." (Al-Baqarah 152), and "They consider it a favor to you that they have submitted. Say, 'Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to faith if you should be truthful.'" (Al-Hujurat 17).

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah, the Exalted, said: 'I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant. When the servant says, "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds," Allah says, "My servant has praised Me." And when he says, "the Merciful Sovereign, the Merciful Forgiver," He says, "My servant has extolled Me"'¹⁹.

The Prophet ﷺ also said: "I will be permitted to intercede. I will praise Allah in prostration as I praise Him standing. Then I will be told, 'Raise your head, ask and you will receive, intercede and you will be granted intercession'"²⁰.

These concepts, together with "praise," form part of the relationship of gratitude and commendation between the servant and their Lord. However, "al-hamd" encompasses all forms of gratitude and commendation. Al-hamd is directed to Allah for His essence, perfection, majesty, and dominion, and not necessarily tied to a particular event. Opening with "All praise is due to Allah" after mentioning the name of Allah at the start of the Quran signifies the centrality of praising Allah in the journey toward Him and seeking His guidance.

Next follows: "Lord of all the worlds" (rabb-il-'alamin). This describes Allah as the Lord, meaning He manages affairs, guides, governs, and educates His servants through the events that occur to them. Allah says: "Say, 'Do you argue with us about Allah while He is our Lord and your Lord? For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds, and we are sincere to Him.'" (Al-Baqarah 139), "They said, 'Our Lord, why have You decreed fighting for us? Why did You not postpone it for us for a short while?' Say, 'The enjoyment of this world is little.'" (An-Nisa 77), "My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and from my descendants. Our Lord, accept my supplication" (Ibrahim 40).

By His grace and generosity, Allah nurtures and educates His servants and disciplines them through events in this world and with the obligatory acts He has decreed and the prohibitions He has forbidden. The Prophet ﷺ said: "My Lord taught me good manners, and He has perfected my education"²¹. This is in accordance with

how Allah describes him ﷺ: "Indeed, you are of a great moral character." (Al-Qalam 4). Allah nurtures His prophets and those He chooses, purifying and shaping them through events, as He said to Musa ﷺ: "And I bestowed upon you love from Me so that you would be trained under My eye." (Ta-Ha 39). Of Maryam, He said: "And when the angels said, 'O Maryam, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of all the worlds.'" (Al-Imran 42).

Regarding the believers whom He educates through fighting in His cause, He says: "If a wound touches you, a similar wound has touched the opposing people. And such days We alternate among the people so that Allah may make evident those who have believed and may take to Himself from among you martyrs." (Al-Imran 140).

He also says about believers and the law of trials: "Do the people think that they will be left to say, 'We believe,' and they will not be tested? But We certainly tested those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars" (Al-Ankabut 2-3). And so on.

The implication of "lordship" (rububiyah) is that the created beings from among all the worlds should have life, intellect, and will. "Al-'alamin" is the plural of "alam" (world), which Ibn Ashur explains in his exegesis of the ayah as being derived from "ilm" (knowledge) through distinguishing signs that identify a particular kind of being. If a kind of creature shares distinguishing signs, it becomes an "alam." Thus, a 'alam encompasses every category or kind of being, not just humans. Lordship, therefore, encompasses all beings, for every creature belongs to one or more worlds or communities in the broader sense of "species".

It is true that humans and jinn—who were created before humans—are charged with bearing the responsibility of choosing freely between faith and disbelief. However, the rest of the universe is still alive and governed by Allah, and have their own rules and choices, even if the other creatures do not choose between faith and disbelief.

It's incorrect to claim that "al-'alamin" (the worlds) exclusively refers to humans in all its meanings. Allah says, for example: "Indeed, your Lord is Allah, who created the heavens and the earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, chasing it rapidly, and He created the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. Surely, His is the creation and the command.

Blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds." (Al-A'raf 54). Here, He refers to "the worlds" mentioned in the ayah, not just humans.

Allah also speaks through the words of one of Adam's sons: "If you extend your hand toward me to kill me, I will not extend my hand toward you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds." (Al-Ma'idah 28), in their dialogue when people were still a small united group and hadn't yet become "worlds of nations".

When Lot said to his people: "And mention Lot, when he said to his people, 'Do you commit such ugly deed as no one has preceded you with from among all the worlds?'" (Al-A'raf 80), "al-'alamin" in this context refers to the people living during his time, not all creatures or all eras. This will be further discussed in the relevant context of Surah Al-A'raf, inshaAllah.

It is methodologically incorrect to apply the modern material division between "living" and "non-living" beings in the concept of "al-'alamin." The concept of life in the Quran encompasses everything. Allah attributes life to everything, not just the forms recognized by modern science as "alife"; humans, animals, and plants.

For instance, Allah says: "The seven heavens and the earth and whoever is in them glorify Him. There is nothing that does not glorify Him with praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Indeed, He is ever forbearing and forgiving" (Al-Isra 44). "The thunder exalts Allah with praise, and the angels out of fear of Him, and He sends lightning bolts and strikes with them whom He wills" (Ar-Ra'd 13), "And among them are stones that fall due to the fear of Allah" (Al-Baqarah 74), "Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant" (Al-Ahzab 72).

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Everything asks Allah to forgive the teacher of good, even the fish in the sea"²². Note the expression "everything." He ﷺ also mentioned about the tree trunk, which had been cut down, that it groaned because it missed hearing the remembrance of Allah spoken near it.²³ All these "worlds", including thunder, shadows, stones, mountains, fish, and even a "dead" tree trunk, are alive and governed by Allah, even if they do not bear the trust of choosing between faith and disbelief.

It is important, however, to know that creatures in their different worlds are tasked with moral choices other than faith and disbelief. They have responsible choices

regarding their words and actions, which they have the will to speak and perform according to the natural laws of their creation and their inherent nature. Every creature has its own set of commands and prohibitions that govern rights and duties within the limits of those laws assigned for them, not just humans and jinn.

One of the clearest proofs is that rights will be upheld on the Day of Judgment among all creatures, not just among humans. Allah says: "And when the wild beasts are gathered" (At-Takwir 5), meaning for accountability on Judgment Day, when every soul will know what it has presented. The Prophet ﷺ explained some interesting details about the Day of Judgment: "Rights will certainly be paid to their owners, even to the extent that a hornless sheep will get its claim from the one with horns that struck it".²⁴ This implies that divine justice regarding rights in the world of sheep dictates that no two goats should butt heads if one lacks horns to defend itself. If a horned sheep violates the rights of a hornless sheep, it has wronged it, and justice will be served on the Day of Judgment to restore the right and establish justice.

This concept of rights is not just limited to sheep but is a universal law across all worlds. The Prophet ﷺ said in another narration: "All creatures will be gathered on the Day of Judgment: beasts, animals, birds, and everything. Such is the justice of Allah that He will give the claim to the hornless from the horned and then will say, 'Become dust,' at which point the disbeliever will say, 'Would that I were dust'".²⁵ Notice here the comprehensiveness of Allah's justice in his statement "beasts, animals, and birds," not just sheep, meaning that they also have rights like the aforementioned sheep. Furthermore, the narrators report that the Prophet ﷺ said: "And everything," meaning that "everything" falls under Allah's justice and the laws of rights and retribution on the Day of Judgment, in ways that only Allah knows.

This ultimately means that everything that has a name possesses life and awareness in the Islamic concepts of life and awareness. Furthermore, life and awareness are not confined to one level of consciousness/existence, but they are rather active across different levels of consciousness/existence, as Allah says about humans: "They will say to their skins, 'Why have you testified against us?' They will say, 'Allah, who made everything speak, has made us speak.'" (Fussilat 21). This indicates that humans have consciousness, life, speech, and their own awareness, but also indicates

that each human's skin has an independent consciousness, life, speech, and awareness. The tongues, hands, and feet also have their own consciousness, life and speech. Likewise, mountains have consciousness, life and speech, and every stone on every mountain also has its own unique consciousness, life and speech, as will be mentioned about the stones that "fall due to the fear of Allah". This is life and consciousness at the highest levels of these concepts.

The lordship of all the worlds, with these meanings, broadens the understanding of the fundamental idea that life encompasses everything. This principle from divine revelation expands the horizons of contemporary material science, which has reached quite a narrow perspective due to its foundation in materialist philosophy. According to this philosophy, life and will—or the scientific term "consciousness" (*conscientia* in Latin)—are not attributed to what they call "inanimate" objects, plants, terrestrial or marine animals, or even humans in some cases. Instead, based on materialist philosophy, the movement of cellular creatures like humans, animals, and plants is considered merely a causal result of chemical reactions in the brain or in organic or plant limbs, evolving over centuries. The movement of what is scientifically classified as inanimate objects is seen as merely causality governed by inert "natural laws", like the movement of clock hands, without life or the will to choose at any level among inanimate objects.

Thus, scientists in the fields of natural sciences, biology, and chemistry are often puzzled when, during their research, they see firsthand that certain "irrational" or "material" creatures, despite lacking a "brain" or "nervous system", choose paths of movement or growth with unmistakable will and obvious awareness and direction to achieve specific and smart goals. They retain memory -obviously in an unknown location other than "memory cells"- which is even inherited in their structure and from past experiences, whether in the same creature or across generations.

Moreover, scientists are often puzzled when they observe that material particles considered inert, particularly at the quantum level (i.e. in the world that is smaller than electrons), are influenced by the observer's choices, as if they possess intellect, awareness, and memory! They interact with human observers and change their "behavior" or "reaction" based on the observer's actions and intents! These scientific challenges in the realm of contemporary experimental research can be resolved if

modern scientific methods simply accept the Quranic concept that all matter, whether animal, plant, or “inanimate”, possesses consciousness, life and choice—not through a human brain or human reasoning, and within the limits of their inherent choices and unique logic that Allah gave them. Further details about the forms of life and will in creatures and the associated conceptual elements will be presented with the relevant Quranic ayahs, inshaAllah.

الرحمن الرحيم (3)

The Merciful Sovereign, The Merciful Forgiver (3)

Repetition, or reiteration, is an Arabic rhetorical technique used for various purposes, which will appear in many contexts throughout the Quran. One instance is repeating a ayah or complete phrase multiple times within the same surah to emphasize a certain meaning previously mentioned or to create an additional one, such as the repetition in Surah Ash-Shu'ara: "Indeed, in that is a sign, but most of them were not believers. And indeed, your Lord is the Almighty, the Merciful." Or in Surah Ar-Rahman: "So which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?" Or in Surah Al-Qamar: "And We have certainly made the Quran easy to remember, so is there anyone who will be mindful?"

Another example is repeating a ayah in a different context to emphasize a meaning or create a new one in the new context, such as the ayah repeated in both Surah Hud 110 and Surah Fussilat 45: "And We certainly gave Musa the Book, but it was differed over. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord, it would have been judged between them. And indeed, they are in uncomfortable doubt about it."

There is also the repetition of creed or legislative principles for emphasis, like: "No bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (Al-An'am 164, Al-Isra 15, Fatir 18, Az-Zumar 7, An-Najm 38), and "Allah does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear" (Al-Baqarah 286), which is repeated in Surah Al-An'am 152, Surah Al-A'raf 42, Surah Al-Mu'minun 62, and Surah At-Talaq 7.

Similarly, 'Isa, peace be upon him, repeated: "Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path." (Al-Imran 51, Maryam 36, Az-Zukhruf 64), which has a special significance for the principles of creed.

Repetition of a word with the same meaning is also found, as in: "Far-fetched, far-fetched (hayhat hayhat) is what you are promised." (Al-Mu'minin 36), "And vessels of crystal (qawareer), crystal (qawareer) made of silver." (Al-Insan 15-16), and "No! When the earth has been pounded and pounded (dakkan dakkan)." (Al-Fajr 21).

Repetition of the same word with different meanings can also occur, like the word "hour" in: "On the Day the Hour comes, the criminals will swear they did not remain but an hour." (Ar-Rum 55), following the rhetorical style of "jinas" (Arabic for wordplay). Repetition of letters within the same word is another example, as in: "kubkibu" (Ash-Shu'ara 94), "zuhziha" (Al-Imran 185), and "has-hasa" (Yusuf 51).

There is also the repetition of scenes from a story, viewed from different angles for various purposes, which is a feature of all of the Quranic stories. And so on. All of these techniques have their own objectives and purposes, which will be discussed in detail in their respective places.

It is reported that the Prophet ﷺ would repeat certain ayahs for reflection and contemplation. For example, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated: "The Messenger of Allah ﷺ lead us in collective prayers one night, repeating an ayah: 'If You should punish them, indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them, indeed it is You who is the Almighty, the Wise'" (Al-Ma'idah 118).²⁶ Abdullah ibn Umar narrated that the Prophet ﷺ recited this ayah while on the pulpit: "And the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand." (Az-Zumar 67). He said: "Allah says: 'I am the Compeller, I am the Proud, I am the King,' glorifying Himself." The Prophet ﷺ continued to repeat it until I feared he would collapse.²⁷

Repetition was one of the Prophet's ﷺ methods to emphasize and encourage good, as well as to clarify different aspects with each repetition. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri said the Prophet ﷺ stated: "Whoever has excess mounts, let him offer them to those without mounts. Whoever has surplus food, let him share it with those without food." He then repeated the same statement while mentioning different categories of wealth until we felt that none of us had any right to surplus.²⁸

The repetition in this ayah of the names "the Merciful Sovereign" and "the Merciful Forgiver" (Al-Rahman Al-Raheem) appears in several places in the Book of Allah: (Al-Baqarah 163, An-Naml 30, Fussilat 2, Al-Hashr 22). Here, however, they are in a separate ayah as attributes of the "Lord of the worlds". This repetition supports the various purposes/maqasid we mentioned earlier. It aims to emphasize these attributes so that the reader's heart feels assured of Allah's mercy, to encourage contemplation, reflection, and to consider their dimensions, meanings, and linguistic beauty.

Finally, this repetition here of "the Merciful Sovereign, the Merciful Forgiver" (Al-Rahman Al-Raheem) in a different ayah in the surah is intended to create an additional meaning in the ayah's context, especially coming after the ayah that describes Allah as "Lord of all the worlds" (rabb al-'alameen).

The purpose of this ayah is to establish a balance between fear and hope in the reader and listener's heart, and also demonstrates that mercy is a vital principle of the Islamic creed. This is particularly true with the complementarity of the dimensions of mercy from greatness ("the Merciful Sovereign"), and mercy from compassion ("the Merciful Forgiver"), as previously noted.

مالك يوم الدين (4)

King/Owner of the Day of Judgement (4)

This ayah here is evidence of the importance of remembering the afterlife when journeying toward Allah and of the centrality of the Day of Judgment in the Islamic perception of life. After attributing all praise to Allah and describing Him as the Lord of all the worlds, the Merciful Sovereign, and the Merciful Forgiver, the surah immediately reminds us of death and the people's resurrection before their Lord of all the worlds on the Day of Judgment.

This is the day when Allah will judge people for their deeds and hold them accountable. Here, and in the ayah of Az-Zariyat: "And indeed, the Judgment ("al-din") is

inevitable." (Az-Zariyat 6), "al-din" means "accountability." It is one dimension of the word "din," which is a multifaceted and complex concept.

"Al-din" will also be used in other contexts in the Quran to mean faith: "There shall be no compulsion in matters of faith ("al-din")" (Al-Baqarah 256), way of life: "Indeed, the true way of life ("al-din") with Allah is Islam." (Al-Imran 19), allegiance: "Thus did We plan for Yusuf. He could not have taken his brother according to the king's alliance ("din") unless Allah willed it." (Yusuf 76), public order: "Fight them until there is no more oppression and the way of life ("al-din") is entirely for Allah." (Al-Anfal 39), and legislation: "He has not placed upon you in the way of life ("al-din") any undue hardship." (Al-Hajj 78).

These dimensions of meanings overlap and share interrelated objectives/maqasid, but differ in nuance based on context and their connection with what precedes and follows. Therefore, it is methodologically incorrect to insist on interpreting or translating a single Arabic word like "al-din" with only one meaning in every context, as we see in some exegeses and translations, even if they were labeled as "simplified." A single Arabic word has multiple meanings by definition, even if linked through a single linguistic root, with "al-din" being one of the clearest examples. This is the nature and richness of Arabic language expression, and that is why I am not abiding by one particular, singular or "standard" translation of the Quranic words in this translation of the Arabic edition of this tafsir.

It is also characteristic of the Arabic language that dialects and expressions vary within it. Some Arabs pronounce words like "al-'arham" (wombs), "ta'kulun" (you consume), or "al-nabie'" (prophet) with a glottal stop (hamzah "'"), while others do not and pronounce them as "alarham," "takulun," and "alnabii." Some say "'alayhim" (on them) and "fihim" (in them) with a kasrah (i vowel), others pronounce the same words as "'alayhum" and "fihum" with a dammah (u vowel), and yet other Arab tongues add a waw or ya for "'alayhimo" and "fihimo," or even "'alayhimi" and "fihimi."

Some Arab tongues say "jannah," (paradise) "fiddih," (silver) and "marrih" (instant) with a kasrah (i vowel), while others say "jannah," "fiddah," and "marrah" with a fathah (a vowel). Some emphasize the "r" in "khabira" (all-knowing) and "ma adraka" (and what will make you know), while others soften the "r" voice.

Some may find a word like "tathabbatu" (confirm) unfamiliar but are familiar with "tabayyanu," (clarify) or use "yarta" (leasing) and "yartayi," (shepherding) or "is'aw" (walk fast) and "imdu" (go). Some use "al-milk" (with a kasrah on the meem) to denote possession, while others use "al-mulk" (with a dammah).

In addition, the sounds of the "alif" (the sound "a") vary: the alif sound (in bold here) is inflected (imala) in "Musa," "al-duha," and "majraha," elongated in "al-akhirah," "arayta," and "a-antum," or thickened in "al-salah" and "al-talaq."

Thus, a single word in the Quran can be read in many different forms while maintaining the same original Arabic writing (keeping in mind that the original high Arabic does not use diacritical marks or vowel markings), and differing only in secondary meanings while connected to an original meaning derived from the original letters/sounds. Examples include readings like "farraqu" (divide) and "faaraqu," (depart) "lil-'alamin" (for the worlds) and "lil-'alimin," (for the knowledgeable) and "tabayyanu" (clarify) and "tathabbatu" (confirm).

Now, in this ayah, we can read: "Maaliki yawmi-din" (Owner of the Day of Judgement) and "Maliki yawmi-din" (King of the Day of Judgement), and both words: "Maalik" and "Malik" are based on the root word of ownership/kingship/possession: "mulk" or "milk" (M-L-K), conveying slightly different meanings of authority, although they share the same root. Both are Arabic, correct and legitimately-narrated readings of the ayah after the Prophet ﷺ.

It is essential to note that any acceptable Quranic recitation must be authentically traced back to the Prophet ﷺ, because Allah says about him and the Quran: "Nor does he speak from his own desire. It is only a revelation revealed." (An-Najm 3-4), i.e. the Quran. Regarding the replacement/alteration of words by the Prophet ﷺ himself, as falsely claimed by some in the context of discussing multiple readings, Allah says: "But those who do not expect to meet Us say, 'Bring us a Quran other than this or change/alter it.' Say, 'It is not for me to change/alter it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me.'" (Yunus 15).

Therefore, all the authentically-narrated readings of the Quranic ayahs are revelation and all of them are divinely taught to the Prophet ﷺ, not to be altered by any human, including the Prophet ﷺ.

A testimony to this is narrated by Umar ibn Al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him: "I heard Hisham ibn Hakim ibn Hizam recite Surah Al-Furqan differently than the way the Prophet ﷺ had taught me. I wanted to confront him during prayer, but when he finished, I asked, 'Who taught you this recitation?' He replied, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ.' I said, 'You are lying; the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not teach you that way.' So, I took him by the hand and led him to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you taught me to recite Surah Al-Furqan, but I heard this man recite it differently.' The Prophet ﷺ said, 'Recite, Hisham.' Hisham recited as he had before, and the Prophet ﷺ said, 'It was revealed this way.' Then he said, 'Recite, Umar.' I recited, and the Prophet ﷺ said, 'It was revealed this way.' Then the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'The Quran was revealed in seven modes (aḥruf)'"²⁹.

There are most-famously narrated successive reports (mutawatir) that the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, as well as the Mothers of the Believers, recited "Malik yawmi-din" in two ways: "Malik yawmi-din," which is the reading of the majority of the reciters to whom authentic narrations have been attributed, and "Malk yawmi al-din," which is the reading of Asim, Al-Kisai, Yaqub, and Khalaf only. However, it has also been successively reported from Ali, Uthman, Ibn Masud, Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Talhah, and Al-Zubayr, may Allah be pleased with them.

The prevailing view in the Science of Quranic Recitations is that a recitation is only accepted if it is authenticated through successive chains that trace back to one or more of the Ten Most Renowned Reciters in different regions: Nafi' al-Madani, from his narrators Qalun and Warsh; Ibn Kathir al-Makki, from Al-Bazzi and Qunbul; Abu Amr al-Basri, from Al-Duri and As-Susi; Ibn Amir ash-Shami, from Hisham and Ibn Dhakwan; Asim al-Kufi, from Shu'bah and Hafs; Hamzah al-Kufi, from Khalaf and Khallad; Al-Kisai al-Kufi, from Abu al-Harith al-Layth and Al-Douri; Abu Ja'far al-Madani, from Isa ibn Wardan and Ibn Jammaz; Yaqub al-Hadrami, from Ruways and Rawh; and finally, Khalaf al-'Ashir, from Ishaq ibn Ibrahim and Idris al-Haddad. Any reading (qira'ah) that is not: a) authenticated through these ten reciters, or: b) written in a way that conflicts with the

script approved by the committee that was appointed by the third Caliph, Dhu al-Nurayn Uthman ibn Affan, famously known as the Uthmani Mus-haf - is considered anomalous (shaadh), and not to be relied upon or recited.

The Quran Reciters amongst the companions, may Allah be pleased with them, had a different approach than the two criteria mentioned above, i.e. successive chains and adherence to the Uthmanic script. This implies that it is conceivable that the Prophet ﷺ recited other valid readings besides those authenticated through the mentioned chains or confirmed by the Uthmani script. However, the significance of these two criteria is that they resolved the problem of some companions' "anomalous" readings (qiraqat shadhah).

These companions might have genuinely heard their readings from the Prophet ﷺ, as verified through authentic hadith reports. However, it is possible that the Prophet ﷺ presented them as explanations rather than as text of the Quran itself, so the companion preserved them -in memory or writing- thinking they were part of the Quran. Therefore, adhering to the criteria of successive chains and the authorized Uthmanic text is the best way to resolve disputes over those parts of the Book of Allah while maintaining intentional diversity and avoiding rigid adherence to a single reading.

There is a possibility that a valid reading from the Prophet ﷺ may not have been passed down through the ten reciters and their students, or may have differed from the script that was later approved by the Committee. The clearest example of this is the reading "fa-mdu ila dhikri-Llah" from Surah Al-Jumu'ah, which was authentically-narrated as a recitation by the companions: Ali, Umar, Ubayy, Ibn Masud, Ibn Abbas, Ibn Umar, and Ibn Zubayr, may Allah be pleased with them all, as well as a group from Ahl al-Bayt (Prophetic household) and the Tabi'un (followers of the companions). And since it is confirmed by many authentic hadiths, this reading is not "anomalous."

Not adhering rigidly to one reading is intentional (maqsud), but avoiding disagreements over the Book is another aim (maqsud). The Prophet ﷺ said, as reported from Jundub ibn Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him: "Recite the Quran as long as your hearts are united, but if you disagree, then stand up from it."³⁰

And Allah warns against disagreements over the Book that lead to injustice: "And He sent down with them the Book in truth to judge between the people concerning that

over which they differed. And none differed over it except those who were given it—after the clear proofs came to them—out of injustice among themselves." (Al-Baqarah 213) Regarding those who oppose this, He says: "That is because Allah sent down the Book in truth; and indeed, those who differed over the Book are in extreme dissension." (Al-Baqarah 176)

Thus, the policy decision to unite people under one authorized script/mushaf and burning the rest of the scripts, aimed to prevent disagreements that could lead to division among the community and compromise the greater public interest, even if it meant losing some parallel readings from the original recitations, as I believe.

If anomalous additions are authenticated through a sound methodology of hadith authentication, even if they don't reach the level of successive chains among well-known reciters or diverge from the Uthmanic text, we consider them true but only in being "interpretive." This means they were heard from the Prophet ﷺ for interpretation and explanation purposes, not as Quranic recitations in their own right.

For instance, reading: "Guard strictly the prayers and the middle prayer" (Al-Baqarah 238), with the addition of: "and the Asr prayer."³¹ This addition is not part of the Quran but is merely the Prophet ﷺ emphasizing the Asr prayer in a separate talk from the Quranic script. Another example is "So for those of them you enjoy to a specified term, give them their wages" instead of "So for those of them you enjoy, give them their wages" (An-Nisa 24).³² This addition is not part of the Quran but refers to mut'ah/temporary marriage, which was a step in the gradual prohibition of adultery and the establishment of proper and legitimate Islamic marriage, as will be explained later. Another is the addition: "Five known breastfeedings make [the child] unlawful [for marriage]."³³ This relates to the ruling on prohibiting marriage between breastfeeding siblings in Surah An-Nisa (ayah 23). It gives an example of a criterion that makes a woman a "breastfeeding mother", but it is not part of the Quranic script.

Numerous recognized and anomalous readings will be discussed in their appropriate contexts throughout this tafsir. It is to be noted that the seven or ten canonical readings/readers (quraa') should not be confused with the seven modes (aḥruf). The differences between the canonical readings are just one aspect of the seven modes, and a single reciter doesn't necessarily represent a single mode.

In terms of purposes, the Prophet ﷺ asked Allah to allow the Quran to be recited in different modes (aḥruf) for the ease of his community. Abdullah ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Jibreel recited the Quran to me in one mode, and I kept asking him for more until he reached seven modes."³⁴ Another narration explains the purpose: "Allah commanded me to recite the Quran in one mode. I said, 'O Allah, my Lord, make it easier for my community.'"³⁵ In another narration: "I seek Allah's forgiveness and mercy. My community cannot endure that."³⁶ This is unique to the Quran compared to previous scriptures, as Ibn Masud, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Quran was revealed to your Prophet ﷺ through seven doors (of heaven) and seven modes, while the previous scriptures were revealed through one door and one mode."³⁷

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (5)

You alone we worship, and You alone we seek help from. (5)

This is the first occurrence of the rhetorical style of "iltifat" (diversion or a shift in perspective) in the Quran. Here, it is a type of "iltifat" agreed upon by scholars of rhetoric, as it transitions from a non-addressing form to direct address. The non-addressing form is usually referred to as the "absent" form, as some exegeses suggest, but this does not apply to Allah since the Witness (Al-Shahid) is never absent!

"Iltifat" is a rhetorical device in the Arabic language and has been defined by some scholars as a shift from direct to indirect address or vice versa, as seen in this ayah. Others, whose definition we adhere to, broaden "iltifat" to include a shift from any dimension of the meaning to another within the context of the speech. This is how it was defined by Abdullah ibn al-Mu'tazz al-Abbasi, who was the first to define it.³⁸

Therefore, we include in "iltifat" shifts within the same context between tenses (past, present, and future), from singular to dual and plural, or even changing the subject matter before returning to the original or moving on to something new. Various forms of "iltifat" serve different purposes, and, in this broader definition, it is a style that

appears quite frequently in the Quran. We will highlight the instances where we understand a specific purpose behind the "iltifat."

The purpose of "iltifat" here, from talking about Allah indirectly to addressing Him directly—as Zamakhshari noted—is to diversify the speech, rejuvenate the reader and listener's interest, and awaken them to pay closer attention. These are the usual and general purposes of "iltifat." However, if we consider the difference between the meanings mentioned before this ayah and how they connect with the meanings in this ayah, we find additional purposes for "iltifat" here beyond mere rhetorical enhancement.

The first purpose is to exalt the One being addressed after speaking of His praise, the dimensions of His mercy, His lordship over all the worlds, and His dominion on the Day of Judgment. This is especially emphasized by starting the ayah with "You alone" (Iyyaka), indicating exclusivity—meaning, "We dedicate our worship to You alone." Repeating "You alone" with "we seek help" (nasta'in) adds further exaltation.

The second purpose is to introduce the speaker reciting the Quran within the context of the recitation. Here, the speaker uses the plural form—"we worship" (na'budu) and "we seek help" (nasta'in)—with a purpose to reinforce the Islamic concept of collective worship and collective reliance, rather than isolated individual worship or reliance, as commonly known in other religions invented by humans. In the regular prayer, where this Surah is regularly recited, the default is for worshipers to pray together and line up in rows.

The third purpose is that the shift to directly addressing Allah and acknowledging worship and reliance serves as a prelude to the following supplication. Thus, in the hadith, "I have divided the prayer between Me and My servant into two halves," the Prophet ﷺ said: "When the servant says: 'You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help,' Allah says: 'This is between Me and My servant, and for My servant is what he asks.' When he says: 'Guide us on the Straight Path, the path of those who have received Your grace; not those who have incurred Your wrath or have gone astray,' Allah says: 'This is for My servant, and for My servant is what he asks.'"³⁹

Worship (‘ibadah) is a central concept and a major objective of Islam. In fact, it's the very purpose of human creation, as Allah says: "And I did not create jinn and humans

except to worship Me." (Az-Zariyat 56). This is why it is mentioned here, at the heart of Surah Al-Fatihah at the start of the Quran.

The linguistic definition of worship (A-B-D) as submission, humility, and obedience is merely an introduction to a comprehensive and necessary understanding of worship. This understanding requires developing a network of concepts around it, studying their interrelationships, and deriving the meanings they generate. This approach moves us away from an incorrect, individual, and passive definition—which is common—to a correct, collective, dynamic, and transformative one, which is intended.

Worship is one of the concepts that have been distorted in our era. In the contemporary Muslim mindset, it has been reduced to the concept of rituals (sha'a'ir) alone. This is what a Muslim reader or listener would typically think of when reading this ayah "You alone we worship." However, the true concept of worship in Islam encompasses far more than rituals. Rituals are a means to achieve worship in reality; they don't define worship. In the Islamic, Quranic understanding, worship includes all of Islam's objectives, morals, and rulings:

"Indeed, prayer restrains from immorality and wrongdoing." (Al-Ankabut 45) "Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah, establish prayer, and spend from what We have provided them, secretly and openly, expect a transaction that will never perish." (Fatir 29) "O you who have believed, fasting has been prescribed upon you as it was prescribed upon those before you, so that you may become righteous." (Al-Baqarah 183) "Those who establish prayer, give zakah, fulfill their promises when they make them, and are patient in poverty, hardship, and in battle—these are the truthful ones, and they are the righteous." (Al-Baqarah 177) Thus, rituals lead to heedfulness, righteousness, and justice in all their possible forms, levels, and dimensions, which is the true definition of worship ('ibadah).

When the prophets called their people to worship Allah alone: "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him" (Al-A'raf 59, 65, 73, 85; Hud 50, 61, 84; Al-Mu'minun 23, 86; and others), they were not referring to rituals alone. They coupled worship in the same invitation with all its forms of establishing justice, cultivating the earth, and purifying souls, starting with the priority issues among each nation. These were the major phenomena that contradicted the true meaning of worship of Allah and

prevailed in their time, society, and reality, which were direct results of straying from the correct concept of worship.

The people of Nuh, when they abandoned the worship of Allah and worshiped idols, saw the strong among them oppressing the weak, demeaning them, transgressing, and rebelling. They subverted the standards of goodness and honor into standards of tribalism and wealth. They strayed from following truth and its people to following those whose wealth and offspring increased them in loss, the Quran says.

The people of 'Ad, when they abandoned the worship of Allah, denied Allah's blessings upon them: strength, abundance in creation, construction, livestock, many children, gardens, and springs. They corrupted the earth, ruthlessly overpowered others, and wrongfully attacked. They boasted, saying, "Who is mightier than us?" They indulged in luxury, building beautifully adorned landmarks solely for entertainment. They excelled in industry with the false goal of achieving immortality in this world, straying like the people of Nuh, following the command of every stubborn tyrant.

The people of Thamud, the people of Salih, abandoned the true worship of Allah after nearly being guided. They also denied Allah's blessings upon them, like knowledge of construction, carving mountains, building palaces, and planting gardens, springs, and crops. The strong oppressed the weak and wanted to expel the messengers and believers from the land they falsely claimed. They were excessive, corrupted the earth, defied Allah's commands, and arrogantly refused to follow a mere human even if he was on the right path.

For the people of Lut, the concept of worship was inseparable from good conduct, so did Lut teach. He commanded the men to abandon forbidden desires by not approaching men lustfully instead of women, to give up committing ugly acts, to stop hating purity, and to stop indulging in excessive wicked deeds and blocking the path of the innocent through assault. When they rejected Lut's message to worship Allah, they also denied the words, actions, and values encompassed in that worship.

Musa, peace be upon him, called Pharaoh and his people to "worship" Allah, which included refraining from political tyranny in the land and corrupting the earth by oppressing a specific group and killing their innocent children. He called for an end to dividing people into factions for the sake of exalting oneself on earth, the mentality of "I

only show you what I see," which Pharaoh boasted, to dominate and oppress Allah's creation, and the alliance with tyrants like Qarun, who hoarded major wealth, and Haman, the priest who boasted in construction. He opposed employing agents in cities who spread false propaganda and distort facts. They misled people who were dominated by immorality by reversing the true values of worship, sustenance, and dignity into delusional values of gold, treasures, money, and luxury, deceiving them with the allure of speech.

‘Isa, peace be upon him, called the Israelites to worship Allah, not in the sense of their falsely claimed monotheism while corrupting the earth. Instead, it was through embodying true worship in their beliefs and all of their actions, to stop dividing and fighting after the clear proofs had come to them, to cease their usury and unjustly usurping people's wealth, distorting and forgetting the words of Allah or concealing them, betraying the covenant, and inciting war among people to benefit from it.

The concept of worship that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad ﷺ, called for did not deviate from the ways of the prophets mentioned above. It comprehensively addressed the negative phenomena affecting all people, and was not restricted to changing convictions or establishing rituals only. And Quraysh understood well the comprehensiveness of the concept of “worship” (‘ibadah) in the Prophet's message, even those who disbelieved in him. This understanding is evident in Abu Sufyan's conversation with the Roman Emperor Caesar -before the conquest of Mecca- during the Hudaibiyah Truce. Describing the Prophet Muhammad's message from outside the circle of Islam in response to Caesar's question, "What does he command you?" Abu Sufyan said: "He commands us to worship Allah alone and not associate anything with Him, and he forbids us from worshipping what our forefathers worshiped. He commands us to pray, be truthful, be chaste, fulfill promises, and return trusts." Caesar replied to this description by saying: "This is the quality of a prophet."⁴⁰

However, the misconception of the Quranic concept of worship (‘ibadah) and the term "acts of worship" (‘ibadaat) distanced the Muslim Ummah from this comprehensive understanding over the ages, distorting the meaning of Islam from the ways of the prophets and from being a comprehensive, human, and civilizational project, wherein people establish justice in this world. Instead, Islam has been portrayed as a

"religion" like the man-made religions known to people, limited to ritual practices, philosophical debates, and marriage customs, without translating into an integrated lifestyle that includes economic, political, and social aspects. This is the secular view of religion that the invading military forces have successfully spread in Muslim lands over the past four centuries through an "intellectual invasion" that accompanied their military assaults and has remained alive until today.

Therefore, reciting "You alone we worship" (Iyyaka na'budu) in the Fatihah today must go beyond mere ritual practices to include a comprehensive understanding and application of the requirements of true "worship" (ibadah) in our era. This involves addressing the negative phenomena that contradict worship on both individual and collective levels. The reciter should intend to worship Allah by changing these negative aspects, while also supporting and nurturing the positive phenomena.

In addition to "You alone we worship" ritually, we should recite, understand and practice "You alone we worship" politically, economically, educationally, legally, administratively, artistically, technologically, militarily, architecturally, medically, culturally, etc. "You alone we worship" through ablution, prayer, fasting, Hajj, and Umrah, and "You alone we worship" by combating poverty, ignorance, injustice, tyranny, murder, dividing the Ummah, severing family ties, altering Allah's creation, and corrupting the earth socially and environmentally. In this way, the recitation of the ayah would align with the correct Islamic and Quranic understanding.

And "You alone we ask for help" (Iyyaka nasta'in) is another key to a correct understanding. Humans become tyrannical when, in their ignorance, they believe they are self-sufficient without divine assistance: "No! Indeed, man transgresses/becomes a tyrant, because he sees himself self-sufficient" (Al-Qalam 6-7). "You alone we ask for help" reminds the reciter of their dependence on Allah and their need for His assistance in all matters, whether in fulfilling the requirements of worship signified by "You alone we worship" or in addressing other needs, whether worldly or spiritual. Seeking help from the Generous Lord requires hope in His mercy and bounty. Instead, as the servant becomes increasingly aware of their own weakness, shortcomings, faults, and lack of power, their hope should grow, and their reliance on Allah should be strengthened, not the opposite. However, this hope should not turn into complacency regarding Allah's

plan, reckoning, and reward. Rather, hope in seeking help is balanced with the fear of reckoning, as reminded by the previous ayah: "Master of the Day of Judgment."

اهدنا الصراط المستقيم (6)

Guide us to the Straight Path (6)

Here comes the supplication intended for Muslims to say morning and evening, seeking guidance on the Straight Path. Guidance, path, and straightness/uprightness are comprehensive Quranic concepts encompassing many dimensions.

As for the meaning of guidance, there is no need in our era to revive the debates among exegetes over this ayah and similar ayahs or their questions on whether guidance means either instruction, clarification, assistance, facilitation, or inspiration. Disagreements among the-scholars-of-the-past strong stances stemmed from their adherence to different sects, or political parties of the time, regarding the issue of free will and predestination.

On one side, those who focused on human freedom formulated the concept of "acquisition" (kasb) in creed-sciences discourse to support their view. On the other side, those who centered their views on Allah's creation of everything formulated the concept of "destiny" (qadar) in creed-sciences discourse to support theirs.

Both principles are valid and have evidence from the sacred texts. We can actually and correctly accept both perspectives at the same time, as long as we don't deviate into extremes on either side. Belief in human freedom is an authentic and accurate Islamic perspective as long as it does not lead one to diminish the power of Allah, for Allah is the Creator of all choices humans may or may not make, whether we call them acquisition (kasb), as in: "Then every soul will be fully compensated for what it earned (kasabat)" or creation (khalq), as in: "And you fabricate/create (takhluqun) lies" and "So blessed is Allah, the best of creators (khaliqin)." Using the words "kasb" or "khalq" in this sense is mere terminology. I have never found anyone from the scholars of this Muslim Ummah, including "rationalists" like the Mu'tazilah, who diminished Allah's power by believing in human freedom. It is incorrect to misrepresent the issue and accuse them of

what is known as the heresy of predestination (qadariyyah). A mature study of history will show that “qadariyyah” was primarily a politically motivated accusation unrelated to core beliefs. This is a complex topic, and different aspects will surface in discussions related to the tyranny of some rulers, past and present, and also related to how victors manipulate history, even the history of prophets and rectifiers.

As for those whose views are centered on the principle that Allah created everything and who desire to humble human intellect, denying that reason can independently discern good or evil except through divine scripture and Allah's command, or that humans can "create" anything even metaphorically, they too hold a genuinely Islamic viewpoint. I do not see these principles as inherently contradictory to the first viewpoint at all. Rather, they are simply different focal points in different theories, each striving to exalt Allah and honor humans.

However, this remains true only as long as the principle of attributing all creation and authority to Allah does not deviate into fatalism or predestination, denying human freedom to choose the better and more beneficial, or the ability to change evil and promote good. It is important to note that this deviation was exploited politically to impose submission on the oppressed masses during the thwarting of the project of the Prophet's Caliphate, replaced by absolute monarchy starting from the second half of the first Islamic century, and relying on narratives of predestination.

Therefore, caution should be exercised here to avoid confusing belief in predestination, knowing that everything is written by Allah, with the deviation into believing that humans are compelled, without agency or choice, and must live under oppressive conditions imposed by those in power, as proponents of predestination have claimed, both in the past and today.

There is no need for disputes about what some interpreters have called the “interpretation (ta’wil)” of the Straight Path, i.e., determining its exact meaning. Questioners have asked what the Straight Path specifically is: Is it the Quran, the Prophet ﷺ, Islam, the religion, the path to paradise, or something else? This obsession of some interpreters with definitively specifying meanings that are all correct and were not meant to be exclusive or precisely defined is a strange and alien approach to the Quranic

methodology and the Arabic language. It is influenced by ancient philosophies and their rigid, binary classifications and misconceptions.

In any case, the Straight Path is not a tangible road but a metaphorical expression. Metaphors, like other rhetorical devices such as similes, metonymy, and figurative language, aim to depict the meaning in a way that affects the heart and frees the mind to ponder its significance.

Narrating after Abdullah ibn Mas'ud: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ drew a line with his hand and said, "This is Allah's Straight Path." Then he drew lines to its right and left and said, "These are paths; upon each of them is a devil inviting to it." Then he recited: "And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way" (Al-An'am 153).⁴¹ Here, the noble Messenger ﷺ clarifies this metaphor with an illustrative drawing and refrains from defining the essence of this Straight Path except by indicating that deviation from it is a call of the devil.

And if we want a detailed explanation of the meanings of guidance, what the Straight Path entails, and the nature of the devil's invitations to deviate from it, the rest of the Quran provides abundant knowledge on that. This is what the reader of "Guide us to the Straight Path" should keep in mind. Regarding the meanings of Allah's guidance to people in general, it is mentioned that the Generous Lord provides them with signs, which are beacons, markers, and landmarks by which they are guided. The sound, believing heart will seek out these landmarks and find guidance in them, unlike the obstinate, disbelieving heart that follows its desires and takes the devils of humans and jinn as allies. These are wrongdoers to themselves and others, and the signs of guidance will not benefit them; rather, they will increase them in misguidance: "A group He guided, and a group deserved to be in error. Indeed, they had taken the devils as allies instead of Allah while they thought that they were guided" (Al-A'raf 30), "Say, 'It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure.' And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness. Those are being called from a distant place" (Fussilat 44), "And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoers" (Al-Qasas 50).

The beacons of guidance on the Straight Path include the sending of the scriptures: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those heedful of Allah" (Al-Baqara 2). The Quran is guidance: "Indeed, this Quran guides to that which is most straight" (Al-Isra 9), "And when we heard the guidance, we believed in it" (Al-Jinn 13). Guidance includes revelation in general: "So there will surely come to you guidance from Me; then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray nor suffer" (Al-Baqara 38). Knowledge is a beacon on the Straight Path by which Allah guides His servants: "And We gave them clear proofs of the matter of religion. And they did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. Indeed, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ. Then We put you, O Muhammad, on an ordained way concerning the matter of religion; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know" (Al-Jathiya 17-18).

The Sacred House, protected by Allah from the scheming of schemers, is one of the beacons of guidance: "Indeed, the first House of worship established for mankind was that at Makkah - blessed and a guidance for the worlds" (Al-Imran 96). Likewise, the Torah and the Injil - before their distortion - contained guidance and light: "Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted to Allah judged by it for the Jews" (Al-Ma'ida 44), "And We sent, following in their footsteps, 'Isa, the son of Maryam, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Injil, in which was guidance and light" (Al-Ma'ida 46). The role models among the believers are also beacons of guidance for people: "Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, so from their guidance take an example" (Al-An'am 90), "There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was it the Quran a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance" (Yusuf 111). Guidance also includes what the Creator has instilled in His creation, the innate knowledge of the fundamentals of truth and falsehood, benefit and harm, good and evil: "Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided it" (Taha 50).

Guidance, as with all these meanings, is in degrees and ranks, and the more a believer strives to attain guidance, the more Allah increases him in favor: "And Allah

increases those who were guided, in guidance" (Maryam 76). All that will come in this journey with the Noble Quran is a form of guidance to and on the Straight Path.

As for the "Straight Path" upon which these beacons and signs are found, it is the way or methodology that the followers take to reach the highest goals, which are success in this world and the Hereafter. This methodology encompasses comprehensive concepts, which in the Book of Allah include:

- Worship of Allah: "Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path" (Al-Imran 51).
- Holding fast to Him: "And whoever holds firmly to Allah has indeed been guided to a straight path" (Al-Imran 101).
- Belief in Him: "So as for those who believed in Allah and held fast to Him, He will admit them to mercy from Him and bounty and guide them to Himself on a straight path" (An-Nisa 175).
- Following His commands and prohibitions: "And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity. And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except with that within its capacity. And when you speak, be just, even if it concerns a near relative. And fulfill the covenant of Allah. This He has instructed you that you may remember. And, moreover, this is My path, which is straight, so follow it" (Al-An'am 152-153).

Some may find it surprising to hear about a "Straight Path" that a person cares about, strives to find its landmarks and signs, and constantly prays to Allah to guide them to and protect them from deviations due to personal whims or Shaytanic whispers. This surprise stems from the fact that the general cultures of Muslims - including their linguistic and social customs - have significantly distanced themselves from the language of the Quran and the concepts of revelation, which are, in essence, absolute truths. Consequently, the criteria for benefit, goodness, success, and happiness have become materialistic, and the true standards for benefit, goodness, success, and happiness, including a "Straight Path" that a Muslim is keen to adhere to and seeks to follow to achieve success in this world and the Hereafter, have shrunk in the general consciousness and culture.

These concepts have become, in the general awareness, as if they are not real or do not lead to “practical” results, even though, fundamentally, they are the truths, the real interests, and the motivations for action, while material desires are best described as mere illusions of worldly life: "And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion" (Al-Imran 185), "And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the real life, if only they knew the truth" (Al-Ankabut 64).⁴²

صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين (7)

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked Your anger or of those who are astray (7)

Categorizing groups is one of the methodological objectives of the Quran and a feature of the Islamic worldview, as mentioned in the introductions. It is a direct application of Quranic concepts to the groups and classifications that embody these concepts in their various dimensions. And here is the first categorization of groups in the Quran, among the followers of these three paths: a group that adhered to the Straight Path by the grace and favor of Allah, a group that adhered to the paths of corruption that incur the wrath of Allah, and a group that went astray and does not know their way, and in Allah we seek refuge.

As for those upon whom Allah has bestowed favor, the reference here is to the elite or the cream of the crop amongst humans whom Allah has guided: "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs, and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions" (An-Nisa 69).

The blessings of Allah are countless, but the greatest blessing upon humans, which He has granted to some of His creation, is the guidance to believe in Him and worship Him: "They consider it a favor to you that they have accepted Islam. Say, 'Do not consider your Islam a favor to me. Rather, Allah has conferred favor upon you that He has guided you to the faith, if you should be truthful'" (Al-Hujurat 17). To achieve this

guidance, Allah bestows signs upon people: "Ask the Children of Israel how many a sign of evidence We have given them. And whoever exchanges the favor of Allah for disbelief after it has come to him - then indeed, Allah is severe in penalty" (Al-Baqara 211). This is the path of those upon whom Allah has bestowed favor from among the guided by His signs, including the prophets and their followers, which the reader of Al-Fatiha asks his Lord to guide him to.

As for those who have evoked Allah's anger, the reference here is to those who do what incurs Allah's wrath, such as disbelieving after having believed: "Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief except for one who is forced while his heart is secure in faith. But those who willingly open their breasts to disbelief, upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment" (An-Nahl 106). And Allah's anger due to tyranny after being provided for: "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress or oppress therein, lest My anger should descend upon you. And he upon whom My anger descends has certainly fallen" (Taha 81). And Allah's anger towards those who disbelieve, argue, and procrastinate from joining the faithful after the truth has been made clear to them: "And those who argue concerning Allah after He has been responded to - their argument is invalid with their Lord, and upon them is His wrath, and for them is a severe punishment" (Ash-Shura 16).

Allah has given us examples of the actions of the disbelievers from the Children of Israel that incurred His wrath, such as disbelief in the signs of Allah, killing the prophets, disobedience, and transgression: "And they were covered with humiliation and misery, and they drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah. That was because they repeatedly disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and habitually transgressed" (Al-Baqara 61). And objecting to Allah's favor upon His servants: "How wretched is that for which they sold themselves - that they would disbelieve in what Allah has revealed through their outrage that Allah would send down His favor upon whom He wills from among His servants. So they returned having earned wrath upon wrath. And for the disbelievers is a humiliating punishment" (Al-Baqara 90). And worshiping idols after witnessing miracles: "Indeed, those who took the calf for worship will obtain anger from their Lord and humiliation in the life of this world. And thus do We recompense the inventors of falsehood" (Al-A'raf

152), and other destructive sins. This is the path of those who have evoked Allah's anger, which readers of Al-Fatiha ask their Lord to guide them to avoid.

As for those who are astray, the reference here is to their loss of the path and wandering in the ways of life. These people are also disbelievers, but it is a different kind of disbelief. Among them are those who followed Shaytan, who said, "And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them sinful desires" (An-Nisa 119). They followed the desires of misguided and misleading leaders: "Say, O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many and have strayed from the soundness of the way" (Al-Maida 77), "They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah" (At-Tawba 31), "Until, when they have all overtaken one another therein, the last of them will say about the first of them, 'Our Lord, these had misled us, so give them a double punishment of the Fire.' He will say, 'For each is double, but you do not know'" (Al-A'raf 38), "And when it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has revealed,' they say, 'Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing.' Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?" (Al-Baqara 170). Among their misguidance is referring to false deities for judgment: "They want to refer legislation to Taghut/tyranny, while they were commanded to reject it; and Shaytan wishes to lead them far astray" (An-Nisa 60).

The category of those who are astray, from which the believer seeks refuge, includes the hypocrites: "So what is with you that you are two groups concerning the hypocrites? Allah has made them fall back into error for what they earned. Do you wish to guide those whom Allah has sent astray? And he whom Allah sends astray - never will you find for him a way" (An-Nisa 88), "Wavering between them, belonging neither to these nor to those. And he whom Allah sends astray - never will you find for him a way" (An-Nisa 143).

Then the Quran affirms a settled fact that most people fall into the category of those who are astray and even mislead others: "And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah. They follow not except assumption, and they are not but misjudging" (Al-An'am 116). May Allah protect us from this.

It is established from the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ, narrated by Adi bin Hatim al-Ta'i, may Allah be pleased with him, that he said: "Jews evoked Allah's anger, and Nazarenes are misguided".⁴³ This hadith has two methodological observations. The first is that this does not mean that there are no others who have evoked Allah's anger besides the Jews, nor others who are misguided besides the Nazarenes. Anger and misguidance are not exclusive to the Jews or the Nazarenes, as another narration of this hadith might suggest, which begins with "those who have evoked Allah's anger" and then "are the Nazarenes": "Those who have evoked Allah's anger are the Jews, and the misguided are the Nazarenes".⁴⁴ However, it is a well-known fact that there are others besides these two groups who have evoked Allah's anger and are misguided, including those who claim to be Muslims but have gone astray and misled others, ranging from committing sins to apostasy from the worship of Allah: "And whoever of you reverts from his religion to disbelief and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally" (Al-Baqara 217).

Also, among those who claim to be Muslims, there are those upon whom Allah's anger has descended, as mentioned in His saying: "But whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment" (An-Nisa 93). And there are many such murderers, especially among the tyrannical ruling classes today.

The second observation is that the category of the People of the Book is complex, and not everyone who belongs to them must necessarily be among the disbelievers, those who have evoked Allah's anger, or the misguided. Indeed, some among them are Muslims, even if they are identified with the Jews or the ones who say, "We are Nazarenes" as the Quran states. This matter requires detailed explanation, which will come in the context of interpreting the related ayahs, such as Allah's saying: "Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Nazarenes or Sabeans - those who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve" (Al-Baqara 62).

In the lengthy hadith narrating the story of Salman al-Farisi's conversion to Islam, may Allah be pleased with him, there is a clear illumination of those categories. He recounted his conversation with the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at the beginning of his new life as a Muslim, saying: "One day, I asked him about the religion of the Nazirite, and he said, 'There is no good in them.' This greatly troubled me because of those whom I had accompanied and the righteous Nazirite man who had been with me in Jerusalem, and it caused me great concern .. Then the Prophet ﷺ said, 'O Salman, those people you were with and your companion were not Nazarenes; they were Muslims.' I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, by the One who sent you with the truth, he instructed me to follow you. So, I said to him, 'If he instructs me to leave your religion and what you are upon, should I leave it?' He said, 'Yes, leave it, for the truth and what pleases Allah is in what he instructs you.'"⁴⁵

So, Salman, may Allah be pleased with him, heard from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that there is no good in the religion of the Nazarenes. When he was alarmed that those who had been the cause of his guidance called themselves Nazarenes, the Prophet ﷺ explained to him that they were "Muslims," even if they attributed themselves to neither Nazirism nor Christianity category in popular language. Further detailed and analytical interpretation and historical analysis will be provided in its appropriate contexts.

There are objectives behind the categorization of groups in the Islamic worldview, starting with this categorization in Surah Al-Fatiha. One of these objectives is to build a sound identity, where the believer affiliates with the guided groups and disassociates from the groups that have deviated from the straight path. Another objective is to develop an awareness of reality so that Quranic classifications govern over newly devised classifications of people. Additionally, it aims to build historical awareness and provide a correct assessment of groups and communities in their rise and fall.

In its contexts, it will be shown how the categorization of groups in the Quran is not limited to human groups. The Quran methodologically corrects the perspectives that adopt the centrality of humans - anthropocentrism - in the human worldview, and rather builds a vision of existence based on the centrality of monotheism (tawhid). There are also Quranic categories beyond human beings, such as jinn, angels, devils, etc. besides

humans. Furthermore, there are classifications for categories of animals, birds, mountains, stars, planets, and other conscious beings, as will be detailed in the appropriate contexts.

Ameen آمين

It is from the Sunnah that the reader of Al-Fatiha concludes with the word "Ameen," which means "respond" or "accept." Its root is (أ م ن), where the sound of the hamza at the beginning expresses pressure and emphasis. The sound of the meem signifies external cohesion, and the sound of the noon denotes internal extension. Together, these sounds convey a sense of inner firmness, hence the meanings of security against fear, as well as trustworthiness and faith, which all signify a sense of strong belief in the inner heart. The word Ameen, meaning a sincere request for response, shares these connotations of firmness and solidity.⁴⁶

The origin of the word is from the primal human language, which is the Mother Arabic language. This explains its presence in most known languages with the same sounds and meaning. It is known from the Quran that humanity was initially one community before they differed, and with their differences came variations in languages, races, and peoples. The primal human language was not "ape-like" or "proto" as some contemporary language theories suggest. These theories claim it was a rudimentary language composed of primitive sounds, allegedly close to ape-language, which evolved over history into human languages. However, Allah taught Adam "the names of all things", and these names were not "primitive sounds" but a complete language with a complex system, as will be explained in its proper context.

Arabic, as concluded by language scholars and thinkers,⁴⁷ is the oldest and most extensive of the known languages today and the closest relative to that primal language, the Mother Arabic. The word "Ameen" originated from the Mother Arabic and spread to all ancient languages like Coptic, Aramaic, ancient Yemeni and Himyaritic languages, Old Hebrew, and others. It is not originally a Hebrew word as some exegetes claimed but existed in all those languages that predated ancient Hebrew without dispute. Further analysis of the relationship between ancient languages and the Mother Arabic language will be detailed later.

Surah Al-Fatiha itself is a means of spiritual healing when recited with the intention of seeking cure, and by Allah's permission, the sick can be healed. It is narrated by Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ sent him on an expedition. They passed by a village where the chief had been bitten by a snake. The companions asked the villagers for food, but they were neither fed nor given hospitality as the customs dictate. Then a man from the village came and said, "O group of Arabs, is there anyone among you who knows how to perform ruqyah (healing prayer)? The chief is dying." Abu Sa'id said, "I went to him and recited Surah Al-Fatihah over him, and he recovered and was cured. The chief sent us provisions and a lamb as a gift. We ate the food, but my companions refused to eat the lamb until we came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and told him what had happened." The Prophet ﷺ said, "How did you know that it is a ruqyah?" I said, "O Messenger of Allah, it was something that came to my mind." He said, "Eat and give us some of the lamb."⁴⁸ It is also narrated that Surah Al-Fatiha was used to heal a mentally disturbed person. It was recited over him by Alaqah bin Sahar Al-Tamimi for three days, morning and evening, and he was cured.⁴⁹

The practice of ruqyah with Al-Fatiha and other recitations relates to the concept of illness. The prevailing positive theory of illness and recovery involves a materialistic and chemical understanding of the human being, where illness is identified through external agents like bacteria or viruses, or internal factors such as genetic disorders, cell generation irregularities, or blood components, among others. This definition has validity and is part of the truth for sure. However, the texts of divine revelation regarding illness and healing indicate that the chemical definition of illness is partial and does not encompass all dimensions of illness and healing, as proved by many lived and tangible phenomena, including ruqyah.

The interaction between the healer (raqi) and the one being healed (marqi) occurs on a different dimension from the material and even psychological-emotional dimensions of a human being. The healing here is not a "psychological" suggestion, as claimed by theories that deny the creation of non-material dimensions. Rather, evidence points to a direct therapeutic effect of Al-Fatiha and other ruqyahs on the patient. The foundational principles of these theories will be discussed in more detail in their respective contexts, Allah willing.

ENDNOTES

1. Refer to the detailed account of this journey in a full lecture series: Jasser Auda, Al-Manhajiyah Al-Maqasidiyyah: Towards a Contemporary Reformation of Islamic Ijtihad, Maqasid Institute and Dar Al-Maqasid, Cairo and Istanbul, 2022. This is a later stage in a methodological journey that began three decades ago, culminating in my book: Jasser Auda, Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Legislation: A Systems Approach, translated by Abdul Latif Al-Khayyat, Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2012.
2. Their website is titled: Al-Bahith Al-Hadithi - Instant Search in the Hadith Encyclopedia by Al-Dorar Al-Sunniyah - sunnah.one.
3. Al-Dhahabi said in Al-Uluw 30: "Well-known and with numerous chains of transmission," Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah 2/150, Al-Bazzar 7527, Al-Tabarani in Al-Awsat 2084.
4. Al-Tabarani said in Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat 3/244: "This hadith was not narrated from Al-Sha'bi except by Harith, and not from him except by Yazid ibn Ata."
5. These words are mentioned in weak hadith narrations, while the authentic narrations state: "Then a necklace of mine made of onyx broke, and I searched for my necklace, which detained me..." - Al-Bukhari 4750, Muslim 2770, among others.
6. From the hadith narrated by Hisham ibn Habib ibn Khuwailid, Al-Hakim said in Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn 3/543: "Its chain of transmission is authentic."
7. Nahj Al-Balagha Sermon 146, then 216, then the chapter on "Al-Hukm."
8. Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Mizan Al-I'tidal 3/677, saying: "It includes Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Kaysan, who has been criticized." Abu Ya'la also narrated it as mentioned in Al-Matalib by Ibn Hajar 2375, with trustworthy narrators except for him. Al-Daraqutni said: "He is weak," though some considered him reliable. Muslim ibn Ibrahim and Sahl ibn Hammad narrated from him.
9. Ibn Hibban 1792, Abu Dawud 2999, Ibn Khuzaymah 3/91. Ibn Hazm cited it as evidence in Al-Muhalla 3/236, stating in his introduction: "We only accept a hadith that is authentic and narrated by trustworthy sources."
10. From the hadith of Al-Miswar ibn Makhramah about the Prophet ﷺ: "I am the Messenger of Allah, and I do not disobey Him, and He is my helper" - Al-Bukhari 2731.
11. From the hadith of Abdullah ibn Amr, Sunan Abi Dawud 4941, Al-Tirmidhi 1924, Ahmad 6494.

12. From the hadith of Jundub, Al-Hakim said in Al-Mustadrak 5/353: "Its chain of transmission is authentic."

13. Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said: "Indeed, Allah has ninety-nine names, one hundred minus one. He is Witr (Odd) and loves Witr. Whoever enumerates them will enter Paradise. He is Allah, the One besides whom none has the right to be worshiped, the Most Merciful, the Beneficent, the King, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Giver of Faith, the Guardian, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner, the Forgiver, the Subduer, the Bestower, the Provider, the Opener, the All-Knowing, the Withholder, the Expander, the Abaser, the Exalter, the Giver of Honor, the Giver of Dishonor, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the Judge, the Just, the Subtle, the All-Aware, the Forbearing, the Magnificent, the Forgiving, the Appreciative, the Most High, the Most Great, the Preserver, the Sustainer, the Reckoner, the Majestic, the Generous, the Watchful, the All-Embracing, the Wise, the Loving, the Glorious, the Responder, the Originator, the Witness, the Truth, the Trustee, the Strong, the Firm, the Guardian, the Praiseworthy, the Enumerator, the Originator, the Restorer, the Giver of Life, the Causer of Death, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting, the Finder, the Illustrious, the One, the Unique, the Eternal Refuge, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful, the Expediter, the Delayer, the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden, the Exalted, the Benefactor, the Acceptor of Repentance, the Avenger, the Pardoner, the Compassionate, the Sovereign of Sovereignty, the Possessor of Glory and Honor, the Equitable, the Preventer, the Enricher, the Enricher, the Gatherer, the Afflicter, the Benefactor, the Light, the Guide, the Originator, the Everlasting, the Inheritor, the Righteous, the Patient" - Sahih Ibn Hibban 808. The first part of the hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others, and it is authentic. However, the detailed enumeration of the ninety-nine names here is not authenticated in hadith. Several hadith scholars doubted their authenticity, considering them likely additions by narrators, and some scholars confirmed this view. Refer to their arguments in Al-Busiri in Al-Zawaid, Al-Bayhaqi in Al-Asma, Ibn Taymiyyah in Majmu' Al-Fatawa, Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir, Ibn Hajar in Al-Fath, Al-San'ani in Subul Al-Salam, and others.

14. From the hadith of Abu Huraira - Muslim 2751, Al-Bukhari 3194.

15. Hasan Muhammad Jabal, Al-Mu'jam Al-Ishtiqaqi Al-Mu'assal Li-Alfaz Al-Qur'an Al-Karim, Maktabat Al-Adab, Cairo, 2010, under the letter B.

16. Examples include the following ayahs, which can be used as analogies for similar ayahs that mention "Al-Rahman": "Your God is one God; there is no god but He, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate" - Al-Baqarah 163, "They deny Al-Rahman, say: He is my Lord; there is no god but He" -

Al-Ra'd 30, "Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon Al-Rahman'" - Al-Isra 110, "She said, 'I seek refuge in Al-Rahman from you'" - Maryam 18, "O my father, I fear that a punishment will touch you from Al-Rahman" - Maryam 45, "When the ayahs of Al-Rahman are recited to them, they fall in prostration and weeping" - Maryam 58, "Then We will extract from every group those who were most rebellious against Al-Rahman" - Maryam 69, "Or has he taken a covenant from Al-Rahman?" - Maryam 78, "Except for those who come to Al-Rahman as servants" - Maryam 93, "Al-Rahman rose over the Throne" - Ta-Ha 5, "Say, 'Who will protect you by night and by day from Al-Rahman?'" - Al-Anbiya 42, "Our Lord is Al-Rahman, the One whose help is to be sought" - Al-Anbiya 112, "And when it is said to them, 'Prostrate to Al-Rahman'" - Al-Furqan 60, "And the servants of Al-Rahman" - Al-Furqan 63, "If Al-Rahman intends harm for me" - Ya-Sin 23, "This is what Al-Rahman promised, and the messengers spoke the truth" - Ya-Sin 52, "But whoever turns away from the remembrance of Al-Rahman, We assign a devil to him" - Al-Zukhruf 36, "Who feared Al-Rahman unseen and came with a heart turned in devotion" - Qaf 33, "The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, Al-Rahman, they have no power to address Him" - Al-Naba 37, "Except for those to whom Al-Rahman has granted permission and who speak the truth" - Al-Naba 38. Abdullah ibn Amr narrated: "The merciful ones are shown mercy by Al-Rahman. Be merciful to those on earth, and the One in the heavens will have mercy on you. The womb is a connection from Al-Rahman. Whoever maintains it, I will maintain ties with him, and whoever cuts it off, I will cut him off" - Shu'ayb Al-Arna'ut (d. 1438), Tahqiq Al-Musnad 6494 - Sahih lighayrih. From Nawwas ibn Sam'an Al-Ansari: "There is no heart except it is between two fingers of Al-Rahman's fingers" - Al-Suyuti said in Al-Jami' Al-Saghir 8065: Sahih. From Jabir ibn Abdullah: "The Throne of Al-Rahman trembled at the death of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh" - Narrated by Muslim 2466 and others.

17. Examples include the following ayahs: "Then He turned to him with forgiveness; indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 37, "Indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 54, "And accept our repentance; indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 128, "And Allah would not let your faith go to waste; indeed, Allah is Kind and Merciful to the people" - Al-Baqarah 143, "But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 173, "Then whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is with Allah; indeed, He does not like the wrongdoers" - Al-Baqarah 182, "Then if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 192, "They hope for Allah's mercy, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 218, "But if they return, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" - Al-Baqarah 226, "But if they repent and amend, then leave them alone;

indeed, Allah is Ever Accepting of repentance, Most Merciful" - Al-Nisa 16, "Except for what has already occurred; indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" - Al-Nisa 23, "And if you are patient, it is better for you; and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Nisa 25. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful - Al-Nisa 29. They would have found Allah to be Accepting of repentance and Merciful - Al-Nisa 64. Then, when death approaches one of you, We give his reward to him, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Nisa 100. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Nisa 106. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin—then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Ma'idah 3. So will they not repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Ma'idah 74. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-A'raf 167. So let them go their way; indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Tawbah 5. They mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Tawbah 102. Then He turned to them in forgiveness. Indeed, He is to them Kind and Merciful - Al-Tawbah 117. In the name of Allah will be its course and its anchorage. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful - Hud 41. And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth unless by His permission. Indeed, Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful - Al-Hajj 65. And rely upon the Exalted in Might, the Merciful - Al-Shu'ara 217. There is no discomfort for you in that; and ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Ahzab 50. A provision from a Forgiving, Merciful - Fussilat 32. But if you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful - Al-Taghabun 14. Abdullah ibn Umar narrated: "I was sitting with the Prophet ﷺ and heard him seek forgiveness one hundred times, saying, 'O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, and accept my repentance. Indeed, You are the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.' Ahmad Shakir said in his commentary on Musnad Ahmad 7/190: 'Its chain of transmission is authentic.'" Abdullah ibn Abbas narrated: "Indeed, your Lord, blessed and exalted, is Merciful. Whoever intends to do a good deed but does not do it, a good deed is recorded for him. If he does it, it is recorded as ten to seven hundred times." Ahmad Shakir commented on it in Musnad Ahmad 4/179: "Its chain of transmission is authentic".

18 Additionally, the original meaning of the word is based on the meanings of the sounds that make up the word. Refer to the meanings of the sounds (R H M) in order in: Hassan Muhammad Jabal, Al-Mu'jam al-Ishtiqaqi al-Mu'assal li-Alfaz al-Qur'an al-Karim, Maktabat al-Adab, Cairo, 2010, R H M.

19 From the hadith of Jabir ibn Abdullah, Ibn Majah 3/329 with a sound chain of transmission.

20 From the hadith of Abdullah ibn Amr, Al-Mundhiri said in Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib 4/322: "Its chain is good," Al-Tabarani 13/455, 14315.

21 Ibn al-Athir narrated in the introduction to "Al-Nihayah" that Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ addressing the delegation of Banu Nahd. He said, "O Messenger of Allah, we are the sons of one father, yet we see you speaking to the delegations of the Arabs in a way that we do not understand much of it." The Prophet ﷺ replied, "My Lord disciplined me, and He disciplined me well, and I was raised among Banu Sa'd." A similar narration was reported in a conversation with Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, by Ibn Asakir through Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Zuhri, from his father, from his grandfather in Al-Durar al-Muntathirah. However, it was authenticated by only a few, including Abu al-Fadl ibn Nasir al-Baghdadi the Hafiz, while most others have classified it as weak, acknowledging that the meaning is sound. Shia Ja'fari scholars often narrate it without scrutinizing the chain of transmission, as far as I know.

22 Authenticated by Al-Mundhiri in Al-Targhib 1/80, and narrated by Al-Bazzar 169 with his wording.

23 Ibn Kathir said in his commentary 8/104: "It is established."

24 From the hadith of Abu Huraira, narrated by Ibn Hibban 7363, and recorded by Muslim.

25 From the hadith of Abu Huraira, Ibn Kathir said in his commentary on the Quran 3/276: "It is very rare." Shakir in Umdat al-Tafsir 1/772: "Its chain is sound."

26 From the hadith of Abu Dharr, authenticated by Al-Iraqi in Takhreej al-Ihya 1/375, Al-Nasa'i 1010, Ibn Majah 1350, Ahmad 21328.

27 From the hadith of Ibn Umar, authenticated by Ibn Khuzaymah in Kitab al-Tawhid 172/1.

28 From the hadith of Abu Sa'id, Muslim 1728.

29 From the hadith of Umar, Al-Bukhari 2419, Muslim 818, Abu Dawood 1475, Al-Tirmidhi 2943.

30 From the hadith of Jundub ibn Abdullah, Al-Bukhari 5060, Muslim 2267.

31 From Amr ibn Rafi, who said: "I was writing a Quran for Hafsa, and she said, 'When you reach this verse, inform me,' and she dictated to me: Guard strictly your prayers, especially the middle prayer, and the Asr prayer." Ibn Hajar said in Fath al-Bari 8/45: "It is narrated through another sound chain."

32 From Ata ibn Abi Rabah: Ibn Abbas said: "In Ubayy's recitation: to an appointed term." Ibn Abd al-Barr said in Al-Tamheed 10/113: "It is authentic."

33 From Aisha, Mother of the Believers: "In the Quran, it was revealed: Ten distinct breastfeedings, then it was revealed: Five distinct breastfeedings." Al-Arna'oot said in his commentary on Mushkil al-Athar 4568: "Its chain is sound according to the conditions of the two Shaykhs (Bukhari and Muslim)." I noted that the term "Quran" here refers to the ruling of the Quran and not the established text.

34 From the hadith of Abdullah ibn Abbas, Al-Bukhari 3219, 4199, Muslim 819.

35 Narrated by Al-Tabari in his commentary 1/37.

36 Abu Dawood 1478: "Sound."

37 From the hadith of Ibn Mas'ud, Shakir said in his commentary on Musnad Ahmad 6/126: "sound."

38 Refer to: Abu al-Abbas Abdullah ibn al-Mu'tazz, *Kitab al-Badi'*, published by Mua'sasat al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyyah, Beirut, n.d.

39 From the hadith of Abu Huraira, Muslim 395.

40 This is the narration of Ahmad, Al-Arna'oot said in his commentary on Musnad 2370: "Its chain is sound according to the conditions of the two Shaykhs (Bukhari and Muslim)," and it is found in: Al-Bukhari 2941, Muslim 1773, Al-Nasa'i in Al-Sunan al-Kubra 11064, Abu Dawood 5136, Al-Tirmidhi 2717.

41 Al-Arna'oot stated in Takhrij al-Musnad 4437: "Its chain is good," Al-Nasa'i in Al-Sunan al-Kubra 11174, Ahmad 4437.

42 Readers who wish to delve deeper can follow the references to the related ayahs mentioned and read our commentary on them.

43 Narrated by Al-Tirmidhi 2954, Ahmad 19400, Al-Tayalisi in his Musnad 1135. Ibn al-Qayyim said in *Ighathat al-Lahfan* 2/417: "It is established."

44 Narrated by Ibn Hibban 6246.

45 Part of a long hadith narrated by Ibn Kathir in *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya* 2/292. He said: "It contains many strange elements, and the chain of Muhammad ibn Ishaq is stronger and more accurate in its narrative, and closer to what Al-Bukhari narrated."

46 Hassan Muhammad Jabal, *Al-Mu'jam al-Ishtiqaqi al-Mu'assal li-Alfaz al-Qur'an al-Karim*, Maktabat al-Adab, 2010, A M N.

47 See, for example: Saad al-Din Abu al-Hab, *Roots of Modern Arabic Writing: From Musnad to Jazm*, published in English in two parts in the quarterly journal *Sawt Dahesh*, New York, issues 50-51, 2009. Ibrahim Farshukh, *Arabic: The Oldest Language and the Most Resilient*, Forum for Scientific Miracles in the Quran and Sunnah, Beirut ijazforum.org, and refer to the foundational research: *Classic Arabic as the Ancestor of Indo-European Languages and Origin of Speech* by Dr. Tahia Ismail, with particular attention to the topic of Arabic as the original language.

48 Al-Arna'oot stated in Takhrij Sunan al-Daraqutni 3037: "Sound."

49 Al-Arna'oot stated in Takhrij Sunan Abi Dawood 3901: "Its chain is sound."