

## THE ROLE OF PRAYER IN SEEKING MERCY AND GUIDANCE: LESSONS FROM THE *TAFSIR* OF SURAH AL-FATIHAH

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### ABSTRACT

This research underscores the paramount role of prayer in believers' lives, emphasizing its significance as a direct means of communication with the Creator. Focused on Surah Al-Fatihah, the "Mother of the Quran," the study delves into prayer for seeking guidance and mercy. Rooted in the Quranic command to invoke Allah and highlighted by various scholars, prayer, according to tafsir, encompasses worship, seeking help, supplication, and ritual prayer. The research employs a literature review method to explore interpretations of Surah Al-Fatihah, contributing nuanced perspectives on prayer's role. Emphasizing spiritual needs over worldly matters, the study offers valuable insights for enriching worship and deepening understanding. Because Surah Al-Fatihah is so important in Islamic worship and its ending is all about supplications, the study concludes that it was successful in giving a deep understanding of prayer in this basic Surah, which had an effect on daily life and spiritual connections.

**Keywords:** Prayer, Mercy, Rahmat, Hidayah, Guidance, Al-Fatihah

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Prayer holds a significant position in the lives of believers, serving as a means of communication and connection with the Creator. All life's necessities, in this world and the Hereafter, are sought from Allah alone. Thus, Allah is the only rightful source for such requests. As intelligent Muslims, spiritual needs should take precedence, even when seeking from Allah. This reflects the exemplary character that Allah wishes to instill in His chosen servants. It is deemed inappropriate for a Muslim to seek worldly matters more than seeking Allah's pleasure.

The term "prayer" or *دوَعَا*, according to Al-Munjid dictionary, stems from the root word *دعا*, signifying calling, desiring, and seeking assistance. When associated with someone's death, it can also mean lamenting or mentioning that person's demise.<sup>1</sup> Al-Wasith dictionary explains that *دوَعَا* originates from *دعا*, meaning calling, demanding the presence of something in a

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Ma'luf, *al-Munjid fi al-Lughah wa al-'Alam* (Beirut: Dar al-Masyriq, t.th), 216

particular state, or directing and bringing something into a particular state, needing something, desiring something, or directing someone to do and believe in something.<sup>2</sup>

Praying is a direct command from Allah, as emphasized in the Quran in Surah Al-A'raf verse 180, which means, "To Allah belong the best names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing." Allah's command to pray is also found in Surah Al-Isra' verse 110, which means, "Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call - to Him belong the best names.'"

While there have been numerous studies on Surah Al-Fatihah and prayer, this research uniquely emphasizes the concept of prayer for seeking guidance and mercy. It delves into the interpretation of Surah Al-Fatihah and explores its practical application in daily life. Much research has been done on Surah Al-Fatihah. Some of them are research by La Adi (2023) which discusses the wisdom of the surah Al-Fatihah<sup>3</sup>, Ahmad Gunawan (2020) which discusses the essence of the surah Al-Fatihah<sup>4</sup>, and Edy Saputra (2021) which discusses the value of education stated in the surah al-Fatihah<sup>5</sup>. This study aims to deepen the understanding of the meaning of prayer in seeking guidance and mercy, with a specific focus on the teachings of Surah Al-Fatihah.

The research will employ a literature review method, examining the tafsir (interpretations) of Surah Al-Fatihah by various *mufasssir* and exploring their perspectives on the role of prayer in seeking guidance and mercy. Textual analysis of key verses will be conducted. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of prayer in the context of guidance and mercy.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research will employ a literature review method with the primary objective of investigating the concept of prayer for seeking guidance and mercy, specifically focusing on Surah Al-Fatihah. The study will delve into existing literature, including classical and contemporary interpretations (*tafsir*) of Surah Al-Fatihah by renowned scholars and researchers, along with relevant scholarly articles and research studies.

Key verses from Surah Al-Fatihah related to prayer, guidance, and mercy will be selected for in-depth textual analysis. The research will examine various interpretative perspectives on these verses from different *mufasssir*, identifying common themes and nuanced viewpoints.

<sup>2</sup> Ibrahim Madkur, al-Mu'jam Al-Washit, Juz 1 (t.tt, Maktabah Shuruuq ad-Dauliyyah, t.th), 286

<sup>3</sup> Adi, L. (2023). Nilai Pendidikan Yang Terkandung Dalam Qur'an Surat Al-Fatihah Ayat 1-7 (Telaah Tafsir Tahlili). *Jurnal Pendidikan Ar-Rasyid*, 8(1), 1-22.

<sup>4</sup> Gunawan, A., Supriadi, I., & Wisnu, M. (2020). Menyingkap Rahasia Surat Al-Fatihah. *Madinatul Qur'an*, 1(1), 87-98.

<sup>5</sup> Saputra, E. (2021). Nilai Edukatif Dalam Surat Al-Fatihah Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Karakter. *Basha'ir: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 49-58.

The findings will be synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of prayer in Surah Al-Fatihah. The research aims to contribute insights into the significance of prayer in the context of seeking guidance and mercy, offering implications for theoretical and practical applications.

By delving into the teachings of Surah Al-Fatihah, the study seeks to enhance the understanding of prayer's role in the spiritual life of a believer. Limitations encountered during the literature review and textual analysis will be acknowledged, and recommendations for future research in Islamic studies related to prayer, guidance, and mercy will be proposed. Through this methodology, the research endeavors to provide valuable contributions to the understanding of prayer within the specific framework of seeking guidance and mercy, as outlined in Surah Al-Fatihah.

### 3. PRAYER ACCORDING TO TAFSIR

Prayer, in religious terminology, is the expression of a servant's request to Allah SWT.<sup>6</sup> According to Indonesian *mufassir* Quraish Shihab, prayer is the plea of a servant to receive the grace and assistance of God, originating from the deepest sincerity, submission, and reverence.<sup>7</sup> It can be illustrated through a scenario where a believer, facing a challenging situation in life, turns to Allah in prayer. Let's consider a person going through financial difficulties, unsure of how to make ends meet. In a moment of deep sincerity and submission, this individual engages in prayer, seeking Allah's grace and assistance to overcome the financial hardships. The prayer is characterized by genuine humility and reverence, acknowledging the dependency on Allah for guidance and support. In this example, the act of prayer serves as a heartfelt plea for divine intervention and reflects the believer's unwavering trust in Allah's mercy and benevolence.

According to Hasbi As-Shiddiqy, prayer encompasses the meanings of worship, *istighasah* (seeking help), supplication, invocation, and *Salah* (ritual prayer). Prayer, as an act of worship, is emphasized in the Quran (Surah Yunus, verse 106), indicating that worshipping other than Allah is futile.<sup>8</sup>

Ibnu Qayyim explains that the mentioned prayers in the Quran for the polytheists' idols are prayers of worship, including requests for assistance. However, these prayers are more appropriately applied to visible acts of worship rather than mere requests.<sup>9</sup>

In the Quran, prayer is also given the meaning of *istighasah*, as seen in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 23, emphasizing seeking assistance from the All-Powerful Allah.

Supplication, as a form of requesting, is elucidated in Surah Al-Mu'min, verse 60, as a means to obtain Allah's assistance. The Lord emphasizes the importance of prayer, and sincere prayers will gain His approval.

<sup>6</sup> Sasetyo dan Zubair, *Rahasia Agar Doa Mustajab*, (Cet. I; Kaysa Media: Jakarta: 2010), 2

<sup>7</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Alquran Tentang Zikir dan Doa*, (Cet. I; Lentera Hati: Jakarta, 2006), 179

<sup>8</sup> Teungku Muhammad Hasbi al-Shiddiqi, *Tafsir Alquran al-Majid*, Jilid 4, (Cet, II; Semarang: Pustaka Rizki Putra, 1995), p. 3510

<sup>9</sup> Ibnu Qayyim al-Jauziyyah, *Al-tafsir al-Qayyim*, Translated by: Kathur Suhardi, titled: *Tafsir Ibnu Qayyim*, (Cet,I; Jakarta: Darul Falah, 2000), p. 286.

The concept of prayer as a means of calling upon or invoking Allah is mentioned in Surah Al-Isra, verse 110. The Prophet emphasizes the significance of lowering one's voice and maintaining a balanced tone during prayer.

Prayer as a form of worship is outlined in Surah At-Taubah, verse 103, where Allah emphasizes the importance of zakat and prayer to purify and sanctify oneself.

In his tafsir, Quraish Shihab highlights the virtue of prayer and seeking from Allah in Surah Al-Mu'min, verse 60. These verses demonstrate that Allah favors humble servants actively seeking assistance, not just during times of hardship.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, prayer holds dimensions of worship, seeking, and cultivating a sincere relationship with Allah. Understanding the profound meanings and purposes of prayer enhances the quality of worship. Prayer serves as a conduit strengthening the bond between the servant and the Lord, expressing humility, and reaffirming complete dependence on Allah SWT.

#### 4. SURAH AL-FATIHAH

The article revolves around Surah Al-Fatihah, meaning "The Opening," and emphasizes its significance. Referred to as the "Mother of the Quran" and the "Mother of the Book," this surah is considered the key to understanding the purpose of the entire Quran. With its seven verses recited in every unit of prayer (rakaat), it holds a crucial position in Islamic worship.

The hadith in Al-Bukhari (No. 4703) confirms that Surah Al-Fatihah is the greatest and most noble revelation, as conveyed by Prophet Muhammad to Abu Sa'id bin al-Mu'alla.

The surah is hailed as the highest form of praise, characterized by its exclusion of narratives about previous nations or disbelievers. This uniqueness, coupled with the special features of its conclusion, adds to the grandeur of Al-Fatihah.

The distinctive feature of Surah Al-Fatihah lies in the manner of its revelation and its unparalleled nature within the Quran. The hadith illustrates that reciting it brings forgiveness and fulfills one's needs, particularly those mentioned in Al-Fatihah and the concluding verses of Surah Al-Baqarah.

Furthermore, Surah Al-Fatihah is an integral part of the prayer, established by a hadith stating that the prayer is incomplete without its recitation (Al-Tirmidhi, M. I., 1998: 247).

#### 5. PRAYER IN SURAH AL-FATIHAH

Al-Suyuti highlights the uniqueness of Surah Al-Fatihah in its conclusion. The conclusion of a chapter is akin to the beauty found at the beginning, as it represents the last words heard by the listener. Concluding statements are crafted with beautiful meanings, notifying the listener that

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<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Nasib al-Rifa'i, "*Taisiru al-Aliyyil Qadir Li Ikhtishari tafsir Ibnu Katsir*" Translated by: Syihabuddin titled: *Kemudahan dari Allah Ringkasan Tafsir Ibnu Katsir*, Jilid. 4 (Cet. I; Depok: Gema Insani, 2012), p. 130.

the conversation has concluded, so their soul does not anticipate what will be mentioned next. Concluding statements often revolve around supplications, bequests, obligations, praises, declarations of God's greatness, advice, promises, threats, and more.

Al-Suyūṭī, in *al-Itqān fī „Ulūm al-Qur‘ān*, provides examples of concluding statements (*khawātim al-suwār*), including those found in Surah Al-Fatihah. These phrases encompass the highest form of supplication, addressing matters of faith that safeguard individuals from disobedience leading to God's anger and misguidance.<sup>11</sup>

In the context of seeking mercy and guidance, the concept of mercy in Surah Al-Fatihah is discussed. Although the term "rahmat" is not explicitly mentioned, it is inferred from the words "rahman" and "rahim." Scholars like Syekh Abdul Qadir Al-Jaelani interpret "al-Rahman" as denoting the essence of Oneness, emphasizing God's manifestation from the highest to various levels, abstract and concrete, and its immersion in true reality.

The second term, "al-Rahim," signifies God's Oneness post-multiplicity, unity after separation, density after dispersion, elevation after descent, and emptiness after fulfillment. While "al-Rahman" applies universally, "al-Rahim" is specific to believers. This distinction aligns with the understanding that Surah Al-Fatihah serves as a prayer that encompasses all of creation, emphasizing God's mercy for all and His specific mercy for the Muslim community.

According to Misbah Mustofa, the two terms, "ar-Rahman" and "ar-Rahim," convey different meanings related to God's mercy. "Ar-Rahman" has a broader sense, representing God's mercy to all creatures in the world, while "ar-Rahim" has a more specific sense, signifying God's mercy specifically to Muslims.<sup>12</sup>

The hadith mentioned in Al-Tirmidhi underlines the significance of seeking both "ar-Rahman" and "ar-Rahim," emphasizing that these names serve as an abundant source of blessings. The idea is that anyone reciting even a single letter from both names will have their requests granted by Allah.

The subsequent virtue of Surah Al-Fatihah lies in its role as a pillar of prayer. It is the only Surah considered a mandatory recitation in Salah. The hadith in Al-Tirmidhi states, 'There is no Salat for the one who does not recite Fatihatil-Kitab,' emphasizing the pivotal role of this Surah in prayer.

This research has successfully achieved its objective of delving deeper into the understanding of the prayer within Surah Al-Fatihah. The findings pave the way for a more profound contemplation of the meaning of the prayer, providing a foundation for Muslims to enrich their worship. The religious implications arising from this research can have a positive impact on daily religious practices, strengthen spiritual connections, and contribute to a richer understanding of Surah Al-Fatihah in the context of worship.

### 3. CONCLUSION

<sup>11</sup> Jalaluddin Al Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān fī „Ulūm al-Qur‘ān* (Solo: Indiva Pustaka, 2009), p. 617

<sup>12</sup> Misbah Mustofa, *Taj Al-Muslimin*, Juz I, (Bangilan: Majelis Ma'rif wa Khotot, tth), p.

In conclusion, the article emphasizes the profound significance of prayer in the lives of believers, considering it a direct means of communication and connection with the Creator. The focus is on the concept of prayer for seeking guidance and mercy, with a specific emphasis on the teachings of Surah Al-Fatihah.

The term "prayer" is explored, emphasizing its roots in calling, desiring, and seeking assistance. It is highlighted that as intelligent Muslims, spiritual needs should take precedence over worldly matters, reflecting the exemplary character that Allah wishes to instill in His chosen servants.

The article delves into the command from Allah to pray, as emphasized in verses from Surah Al-A'raf and Surah Al-Isra'. It underscores the importance of invoking Allah by His best names and leaving the company of those who deviate concerning His names.

The literature review method is introduced as the chosen approach for the research, with a focus on exploring various interpretations (tafsir) of Surah Al-Fatihah. The goal is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of prayer, specifically in the context of seeking guidance and mercy.

The article provides insights into prayer according to tafsir, illustrating it as the expression of a servant's request to Allah. It encompasses worship, seeking help, supplication, invocation, and ritual prayer. Different interpretations of prayer from scholars like Quraish Shihab and Hasbi As-Shiddiqy are presented, enriching the reader's understanding of the multifaceted nature of prayer.

Surah Al-Fatihah, acknowledged as the "Mother of the Quran" and the key to understanding the entire Book, is explored in detail. Its unparalleled nature, distinctive revelation, and the special features of its conclusion are highlighted. The hadith confirming its greatness and significance in prayer is referenced.

The uniqueness of Surah Al-Fatihah lies in its concluding statements, which often revolve around supplications. The discussion delves into the interpretation of mercy in Surah Al-Fatihah, inferred from the terms "rahman" and "rahim." The significance of seeking both "ar-Rahman" and "ar-Rahim" is underlined, emphasizing their abundant blessings.

The article concludes by affirming that the research has successfully achieved its goal of providing a deeper understanding of prayer within Surah Al-Fatihah. The implications extend to enriching worship, impacting daily religious practices, strengthening spiritual connections, and contributing to a richer understanding of this foundational Surah in the context of worship.

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