

# The Lord's Prayer of Islam

The first chapter of the Koran is named *Al-Fatihah*, and it has been referred to as the *Lord's Prayer of Islam*. It consists of only seven verses:

1. *In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
2. *All praise and thanks are Allah's, the Lord of the 'Alamin (mankind, jinn, and all that exists).*
3. *The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*
4. *The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection).*
5. *You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).*
6. *Guide us to the Straight Way.*
7. *The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray.*

Muhammad said this was the "greatest" chapter in the Koran, and he referred to it as the "Mother" of the Koran. Muhammad said that any prayer that did not include *Al-Fatihah* was "invalid," and so the recitation of *Al-Fatihah* is still included in each cycle of the five daily, obligatory Muslim prayers. Muslims also include *Al-Fatihah* in a number of their other prayers, such as the Friday Prayer, the *Eid* Prayer, and the Funeral Prayer.

And on April 7, 2014, as state employees and elected officials stood with their heads bowed in reverence, *Al-Fatihah* was recited by Imam Muhammad Khan as the opening prayer in the State Senate of Iowa.

So this first chapter of the Koran is a pretty important prayer that can also be used outside the mosque. For our purposes, let's focus on Verses 6 and 7.

In Verse 6, Muslims ask to be guided to the *Straight Way*. Muhammad said the *Straight Way* (or Path) was Islam. The modern *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan* explained the meaning of the *Straight Path*:

*The Straight Path here means the religion of Islam as enshrined, enunciated and explained in the final Revelation, the Qur'an, and the authentic sayings and acts of Allah's Messenger, called hadeeth.*

*Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan*, Vol. 1, p. 23

In Verse 7, Muslims state that the *Straight Way* is the way of those on whom You [Allah] have bestowed Your Grace. So on whom has Allah bestowed his grace? The answer is found in this verse of the Koran:

Chapter 4, Verse 69

*And whoso obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad), then they will be in the company of those on whom Allah has bestowed His Grace, of the Prophets, the Siddiqun (those followers of the Prophets who were first and foremost to believe in them, like Abu Bakr As-Siddiq), the martyrs, and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are!*

So it is the believing Muslims upon whom Allah has bestowed his grace.

Muslims then ask not to be guided to the way of those who have earned Allah's anger or to the way of those who have gone astray. So who are those who have earned the anger of Allah? Muhammad said,

*Verily, the Jews have earned the anger (of Allah)...*

*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 410

And the Muslim scholar al-Qurtubi pointed out that this anger was not passive:

*The meaning of anger when it is attributed to Allah is the desire to punish...*

*Tafsir Al-Qurtubi*, Vol. 1, p. 128

So Allah wants to *punish* the Jews.

And who has gone astray or become misguided? Muhammad said,

*...the Christians are misguided.*

*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 4, p. 410

The authoritative scholar Ibn Kathir explained these two deviations from the *Straight Way*:

*These two paths are the paths of the Christians and Jews, a fact that the believer should beware of so that he avoids them. The path of the believers is knowledge of the truth and abiding by it. In comparison, the Jews abandoned practicing the religion, while the*

Christians lost the true knowledge. This is why 'anger' descended upon the Jews, while being described as 'led astray' is more appropriate of the Christians. Those who know, but avoid implementing the truth, deserve the anger, unlike those who are ignorant. The Christians want to seek the true knowledge, but are unable to find it because they did not seek it from its proper resources. This is why they were led astray. We should also mention that both the Christians and the Jews have earned the anger and are led astray, but the anger is one of the attributes more particular of the Jews.

*Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 1, p. 87*

So according to Ibn Kathir, both the Jews and the Christians have been led astray, and Allah is angry with both of them.

Ibn Kathir sees *Al-Fatihah* as telling Muslims that Islam is the true religion and warning them against following the two misguided paths, because the Jews and Christians will be gathered up with the sinners on the Day of Resurrection:

*Al-Fatihah directs the believers to invoke Allah to guide them to the straight path, which is the true religion, and to help them remain on that path in this life...The Surah [chapter] also warns against following the paths of misguidance, so that one does not end up being gathered with those who indulge in sin, on the Day of Resurrection, including those who have earned the anger and those who were led astray.*

*Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 1, p. 89*

A similar admonition can be found in the modern *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan*:

*Hence, those who want to follow the Straight Way should avoid the errors of both Jews and Christians, the Jews because they deliberately followed the wrong way, tampered with the verses of their Book, played tricks, called prophet 'Uzair a son of God, and gave their rabbis the authority to prohibit or permit. And the Christians, because they elevated 'Isa [Jesus] to the level of "son of God" and "the third of three."*

*Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 24*

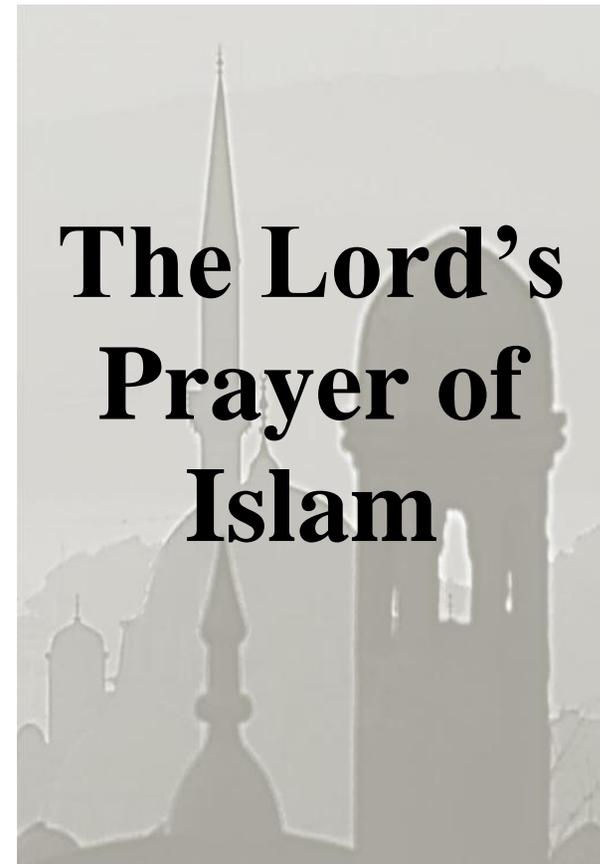
Our other modern *tafsir* explained:

*...not the path "of those who have incurred Your wrath" ...such as the Jews...and not the path "of those who have gone astray" ...such as the Christians...*

*Tafsir As-Sa'di, Vol. 1, p. 29*

With the Muslim recitation of *Al-Fatihah*, not only are differences between religions being proclaimed and reinforced, but Judaism and Christianity are also being maligned, multiple times a day. So in the State Senate of Iowa on April 7, 2014, Jews and Christians stood with their heads bowed in reverence as they and their religions were being maligned.

Dr. Kirby is the author of six books on Islam. His latest book is *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*. His books are available on Amazon.com.



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