

Mercy in the Qur'an

وَمَا رَّسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds (Qur'an, 21:107)

{ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ }

In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful.

For comment of Bismillah, Kashani's comment is excellent. Here is the link

In terms of allusion and in keeping with the tasting of the lords of recognition, the bi of bism ["In the name"] alludes to the "splendor" [bahāʾī] of Unity, the s to the "brilliance" [sanāʾī] of the Self-Suffi- cient, and the m to the "kingship" [mulk] of the Divinity. His splendor is self-standing, His brilliance self-sustaining, and His kingship everlasting. His splendor is eternal, His brilliance generous, His kingship tremendous. His splendor is with majesty, His brilliance with beauty, His kingship without decline. His splendor steals the heart, His brilliance increases love, His kingship has no annihilation.

O You whose majesty runs before all that is beautiful!

O You whose perfection is far from deficiency's blight!

Venus rejoices on hearing Your music,

the sun is jealous on seeing Your beauty.

B is His kindness [birr] to His servants, s His secret [sirr] with His friends, m His favor [minna] toward His yearners. If not for His kindness, how could the servant make ready for His secret? If not for His favor, how could the servant reach union with Him; how could the servant find a place at the threshold of His majesty? If not for the beginningless affection, how could the servant be endlessly familiar?

How could water and clay have the gall to love You

had You not chosen them with Your beginningless gentleness?

Love is Your Essence, O God, this is the friends' belief-

remembering Your description, O Lord, dispels the sorrow of the sorrowful! [DS 211]

This world is goodly only through His name, the afterworld goodly only through His pardon, and the Garden goodly only through His vision. If not for the message and name of God in this world, how could it be the servant's home? If not for His pardon and generosity in the afterworld, the servant's work would be difficult. If not for the heart-brightening vision of Him in paradise, what would make a poor man happy?

One of the pirs of the Tariqah said, "O God, we see through Your marks, we live in Your recogni- tion, we flourish through Your name, we are happy in Your remembrance, we are

joyful through finding You. It is we who are drunk with love from Your cup, we who are prey to passion in Your snare.

"

Your perfumed chain is my heart's snare, Your ambergris breeze enslaves my heart.

Since the sermon of Your passion was read in my name, you'd say the whole world follows my heart's pleasure.

In the name of God. It has been said that name [ism] derives from "brand" [sima]. In other words, he who says "In the name of God" receives that stamp and is marked by that brand.

Be the elect servant of the king-with his brand

you're safe from police by day and patrols by night.

He who finds a name finds it from His threshold.

Be one of His, brother-don't worry about anyone else.

‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḏā said, "When the servant says, 'In the name of God,' its meaning is 'I have branded myself with the brand of my Lord.' O Lord, I have Your brand and am happy with it, but I lament at my own being. O Generous One, remove my being from before me, so that Your being may set all my work aright."

The Pir of the Tariqah said, "O God, when Your light lit the lamp of recognition, my heart increased. When Your testimony became my spokesman, my voice increased. When Your proximity lit the lamp of ecstasy, my aspiration increased. When Your desire put my work in order, my effort increased. When Your being set my work aright, my being increased. O God, what have I seen from my own being other than trial and trouble? From Your being all is bestowal and loyalty. O You who are apparent in kindness and plain in generosity, take what I have done as not done. Do as is fitting for You!"

Someone may say, "In the texts of the Book and the Sunnah God's names are many, and all of them are great, beginningless, pure, and beautiful. What wisdom is there in beginning the tremendous Qur'an with these three? Of all of them, why did He choose these and not add any others?"

The answer is that He chose these three names and confined Himself to them for the sake of two meanings: First so that His servants' work in His names would be easy and their reward would in no way be decreased. He knew that they do not have the capacity to remember and memorize all of His many names.

Even if there are some who can do that, most cannot, and they would remain in regret at not doing it. Hence He combined the meanings of those names in these three names. Their meanings are of three sorts: one sort belongs to majesty and awe, another to blessing and nurture, and the third to mercy and forgiveness. All that is majesty and awe is placed in the name God, all that is blessing and nurture is in the name All-Merciful, and all that is mercy and forgiveness is in the name Ever-Merciful. Thus it is easy for the servant to say them. His rewards will be many, and God's clemency and mercy are boundless.

The second reason is that the Lord of the Worlds sent Muṣṭafā to the creatures, and at that time the creatures were three groups: idol-worshippers, Jews, and Christians. The idol-worshippers knew something of the Creator's name God and this name was famous among them. That is why He says, "If thou wert to ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?', they would say, 'God'" [31:25]. Among the Jews, the name All-Merciful was recognized. That is why 'Abdallāh ibn Salām said to God's Messenger, "I do not see a name in the Qur'an that we were reading in the Torah."

He said, "And what is that?" He said, "The All-Merciful."

Then God sent down, "Call upon God or call upon the All-Merciful" [17:110].

Among the Christians the recognized name was the Ever-Merciful. Since these three groups were being addressed and these three names were recognized among them, God sent down these three names at the beginning of the Qur'an in keeping with their knowledge and perception, and He did not add any to them.

As for the wisdom in beginning with God, then the All-Merciful, then the Ever-Merciful, it is this: He sent this down in keeping with the states of the servants, who have three states- first creation, then nurturing, and finally forgiveness. God alludes to creation at the beginning through power, All-Merciful alludes to nurturing through the continuity of blessings, and Ever-Merciful alludes to forgiveness at the end through mercy. It is as if God said, "First I created through power, then I nurtured through blessings, and at last I forgave through mercy."

The Pir of the Tariqah said, "O God, Your name is our permit and Your love our equipage. You are our security and we see Your gentleness face-to-face. O God, Your bounty is our banner and Your embrace our refuge. O God, You are the shelter of the weak and await the strivers at road's end. You witness the faithful-what if You add and do not take away? O God, exalted is he whom You want! If he flees, You come into the road for him. Blessed is he to whom You belong-will You indeed ever be ours?"

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Fatiha verse 3 1:3

{ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ }

Kashf Al-Asrar Tafsir. Kashani

The All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful.

He is the All-Merciful inasmuch as He vivifies, the Ever-Merciful inasmuch as He displays.
The

vivification is through acts of kindness, the display through lights.

He is the All-Merciful who eases the road of wage-earning, the Ever-Merciful who lights up the candle of friendship in the road of the friends. The wage-earner is always toiling in hope of hours and palaces, the friend is inundated by light in the sea of face-to-face vision.

The day I reach union with You

I will disdain the state of the paradise-dwellers.

He is the All-Merciful who gives the strivers the success of struggle, and the Ever-Merciful who gives the finders the realization of contemplation. The former is the state of the desirer, the latter the state of the desired. The desirer goes forth with the lamp of success and reaches contemplation, the desired goes forth with the candle of realization and reaches face-to-face vision. Contemplation is the lifting of the barriers between the servant and the Real, face-to-face vision seeing each other such that the servant does not become absent for a moment: He gazes at love with the eye of response, he gazes at the Present with the eye of presence, he gazes at the Solitary with the eye of solitude. Through distance from himself he becomes near to His nearness, through losing himself he becomes familiar with His apparentness, through absence from himself he becomes present with His generous presence. For He is not far from the strivers, nor lost by the seekers, nor absent from the desirers.

Have mercy on the creatures' hearts and come out from the veil so that the seventy-two creeds may end their disputes.

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Al-Qushayri

The Compassionate the Merciful Both names are derived from [the word] mercy *rahma*. Mercy is an eternal attribute and it is the [divine] desire for blessing *iradat al-ni'ma*. According to the [scholarly] experts *ahl al-tahqiq* these are two nouns denoting intensification with no distinction between the two [in terms of the recipients of the mercy]. [Others have] said the Compassionate *al-rahman* is the more emphatic and more complete in expressiveness. Nothing other than the Real *سبحانه* is called *rahman* without restriction whereas the Merciful *al-rahim* can be used to describe others. By means of His mercy the servant comes to know that He is the Compassionate. If not for His mercy no one would know that He is the Compassionate. Whether mercy is the desire for blessing or the blessing itself as some would have it the blessings themselves are varied and their degrees are different for one blessing is a blessing for bodily forms and outward circumstances *al-ashbah wa-l-zawahir* and the other blessing is a blessing for spirits and inner secrets of the heart *al-arwah wa-l-sarair*. In the system of those who distinguish between the two the compassion-ate *rahman* is a specific term with a general meaning while the merciful *rahim* is a general term with a specific meaning. As the Compassionate He provides comfort for all people in the circumstances of their external lives *zawahir* whereas the Merciful grants success to the believers for the life found in the inner secrets of their hearts *sarair*. He is the Compassionate by that which He gives in comfort *rawwaḥa* and the Merciful by that which He gives in glimmers *lawwaḥa*. Giving comfort *tarwih* is through acts of beneficence *mabarr* and the giving of glimmers *talwih* is through lights *anwar*. [He is] the Compassionate

through the unveiling of His manifestation tajallī and the Merciful through the kindness of His being a friend and protector tawallī. [He is] the Compassionate through what He gives in faith īmān and the Merciful through what He confers in deep knowledge ‘irfān. Or [He is] the Compassionate through what He grants in deeper knowledge ‘irfān and the Merciful through what He undertakes in forgiveness ghufrān. Or [He is] the Compassionate through what He gives in blessing in forgive- ness ghufrān and the Merciful through what He bestows in good pleasure riḍwān.

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At-Tabari Tafsir on bismillah and Fatiha p 53 and onward. Look at verse 1 and 3

In the name of God,
the Merciful, the Compassionate

THE INTERPRETATION OF *BI-SMI* ¹

GOD, exalted is His mention, and sanctified are His Names, educated His Prophet, Muḥammad, teaching him to preface his actions with the mention of His Most Beautiful Names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*), and commanded him to attribute them to Him before every important matter. He made what He had educated him to do, and what He had taught him, a normative precedent (*sunna*) to which all mankind were to conform, a path along which they were to follow him; and they were to commence their utterances, their letters, their writings, and their requests with it, in such a way that the explicit utterance of 'the formula' *bi-smi 'llāh* would even suffice to signify what the speaker implicitly intended to do, something which is left unsaid. That is to say, the preposition *bi-* in *bi-smi 'llāh* requires a verb to introduce it; but there is no explicit verb with it 'in the formula', so it is the hearer's knowledge of the intention of the person who says *bi-smi 'llāh* which enables him to do without the speaker having to announce explicitly what he intends. . . .

The purpose and intention behind the *basmala*

Hence it is understood, when someone says *bi-smi 'llāhi 'l-raḥmāni 'l-raḥīm* and then subsequently starts 'to recite' a sura, that his very following of the formula with the recitation itself imparts the signification of his saying *bi-smi 'llāhi 'l-raḥmāni 'l-raḥīm*, i.e., that his intention is: 'I recite in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.' Similarly, someone's saying *bi-smi 'llāh* when he starts

to get up or sit down, or do anything else, imparts the signification of his utterance, which is: 'I stand in the name of God', 'I sit down in the name of God', etc. [⇒ Ibn 'Abbās, 138]

OBJECTION: 'How can the interpretation of *bi-smi 'llāh* be as you say,¹ . . . when you know that everyone who recites the Book of God succeeds in doing so only with the help of God, and likewise with getting up, sitting down, and everything else? And, since this is the case, should one not also rather say *bi-'llāhi 'l-rahmāni 'l-rahīm* (=through God, the Merciful, the Compassionate), rather than *bi-smi 'llāh*? For the meaning would be clearer for the hearer if one were to say 'I stand up through God, the Merciful, the Compassionate', or 'I recite through God', than if one were to say '. . . in the name of God', since this latter might lead him to suppose that one got up or sat down through something other than God², i.e., through the intermediary of His name³?'²

REPLY: The purpose behind this is not what you imagine. The meaning of *bi-smi 'llāh* is 'I begin by naming³ God and invoking Him before anything else', or 'I recite with my naming God', or 'I stand up, or sit down, with my naming God and invoking Him.' One does not mean by *bi-smi 'llāh* 'I stand up through God', or 'I sit down through God.'

(...)

⇒ Ibn 'Abbās:

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When first Gabriel was sent down to Muḥammad, he said: 'O Muḥammad, say: "I seek refuge from Satan, the stoned, in the All-hearing, the All-knowing."'⁴ Then he said: 'Say: "*Bi-smi 'llāhi 'l-rahmāni 'l-rahīm*."'⁵ (...) 'By this he meant:¹ 'O Muḥammad, recite with the invocation of God, your Lord. And stand and sit with the invocation of God.' [139, see 137]

(...)

THE INTERPRETATION OF *ALLĀH* ⁵

The interpretation of *Allāh* is, according to the meaning narrated to us from 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās: He is the One Whom everything takes as its god (*ya'lahu*), Whom all creatures worship (*ya'budu*).

⇒ Ibn 'Abbās:

Allāh is He Who possesses 'the attributes of' divinity (*al-ulūhīya*) and 'of' being worshipped (*al-ma'būdīya*) with respect to all His creatures. [141]

(..)

'There is no dispute among the Arabs that the verb *ta'allaha* exists and means 'to be worshipped', and there is no doubt that 'this is the Vth form of the possible 1st form verb *alaha*' which, if it were employed, would mean 'to worship Allāh'.⁶ ...

⇒ Ibn 'Abbās recited 'the variant reading of 7: 127': «... *wa-yadhara-ka wa-ilāhata-ka* ...», 'the second half of' which he said 'meant the same as': ... '*ibādaha-ka* ...' (= 'and leave you and' worship of you) 'instead of «... *wa-yadhara-ka wa-ālihata-ka* ...» (= «... and leave you and your gods»)⁷. It is also said: 'He', Pharaoh, was worshipped but did not worship.' [142 and 143; see also ⇒ Mujāhid, 144]

... What Ibn 'Abbās said shows that, if it existed, the verb *alaha* would mean 'to worship', and that *ilāha* is the verbal noun derived from it.

(...)

(...)

Now the word *Allāh* in the Arabic language is originally from *ilāh*, which is also derived from the possible verb *alaha*. ... As in other cases of elision, the first letter of the noun, the *hamza* ('), 'together with its vowel *i*' drops out, and the letter *lām* (l), which is the second letter of the noun, contracts with the first *lām*, which is part of the definite article *al-*, and which carries no vowel, and they become a double *lām* (ll), and so *al-(i)lāh* becomes *Allāh* ...

THE INTERPRETATION OF *AL-RAḤMĀNI* 'L-*RAḤĪMI*

Both *al-raḥmān* and *al-raḥīm* are derived nouns, of the forms *fa'lān* and *fa'īl* respectively, from the verb *raḥima* (=to have mercy, to be compassionate), and they both have the sense of 'one who has mercy'. 'However, they do not have exactly the same meaning.'⁸ ...

[L]: Those who have expert knowledge of Arabic are agreed that the form of *al-raḥmān* denotes a stronger quality than the form of *al-raḥīm*.

...

I: 2

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

al-rahmāni 'l-rahīmi

the Merciful, the Compassionate,

THE interpretation of *al-rahmān al-rahīm* was given in the exegesis of the *basmala*, so there is no need to repeat it here. Nor is there any need to explain why 'this phrase' is repeated here, since we did not consider the *basmala* to be a verse^f, and so there is no repetition¹. . . . 'The erroneous suggestion that it is repeated' . . . with one verse being so near the other . . . is proof for us of the error in supposing the *basmala* to be a verse. For if it were, there would indeed be a repetition of a single verse 'within the same sura' with the same meaning in precisely the same formulation, twice, with no separation. Such a thing does not exist in the Book of God, . . . and there is no space between God's pronouncement of His Names, 'the Merciful', 'the Compassionate', in the *basmala* and His pronouncement of them 'afterwards in the first sura'.

Is this an
example of
repetition in
the Qur'ān?

OBJECTION: But «Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds» separates them.

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REPLY: A number of commentators denied this, saying that here it is a case of reversed word order, and that the meaning is: Praise belongs to God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Lord of the worlds, the Sovereign over the Day of Reckoning. They cited His words «*maliki yaumi 'l-dīn*» (= Sovereign over the Day of Judgement) as evidence for the correctness of what they claimed, and said that by 'this' . . . God teaches His servant to ascribe sovereignty—according to the recitation of those who recite *malik*—, or possession—according to the recitation of those who recite *mālik*—, to Him. They said that the most appropriate thing to which His Attribute of sovereignty, or possession, could be adjacent was that Attribute which is similar to it, and that is «Lord of the worlds», which informs about His possession of all the species of creatures. 'They also said' that the most appropriate thing to which His Attribute of greatness and divinity could be adjacent is the praise of Him which is similar to it, and that is «the Merciful, the

Compassionate». So they claimed that this was a proof for them that «the Merciful, the Compassionate,» comes prior in meaning to «Lord of the worlds», although ostensibly it follows it. They argued that similar cases of this 'kind of inversion' . . . are widespread in Arabic speech, quite beyond count.

§ Ṭabarī gives further examples of inversion; one is from poetry, and another is from the Qur'ān (18: 1), where one word («*qaiyiman*») has been put after the position dictated by the meaning.

This is further evidence for the correctness of the opinion of those who deny that the '*basmala*' . . . of the first sura 'counts as' a verse.

I: 3