



NEW MUSLIM  
ACADEMY

**THE MOST  
IMPORTANT**  
*Prayer*

By: Sheikh Jaafar Idris

[www.newmuslimacademy.org](http://www.newmuslimacademy.org)





The following seven short verses form the first chapter of the Qur'an; hence called the Opening. It is also called um (literally mother) of the Qur'an, in the sense that it is an expression of its quintessence, a summary of its message. This sura (chapter) is described by the Prophet as containing the most important Divine words ever revealed by God to human beings. There is nothing like them in any holy scripture, including the Qur'an. Because its words are so important for the spiritual as well as the practical life of people, it has been ordained by God to be recited in every unit of the Muslim prayers \_ that is seventeen times in the obligatory five daily prayers and in as many voluntary prayers as one can perform. By sincerely uttering these words you profess your belief in the most important facts about your Creator, and ask him to grant you the most important things you need to be a true servant of His

Many scholars have written hundreds of pages by way of commentary on these few verses. What we are giving here is only a glimpse of its rich meanings. A glimpse that we hope will be of some help to the readers of this translation.





**001.002**

**All praise is due to God, the Lord of the worlds**

**001.003**

**The Beneficent, the Merciful.**

**001.004**

**Master of the Day of Judgment,**

**001.005**

**You (alone) we worship, and you  
(alone) we ask for help.**

**001.006**

**Guide us to the straight path,**

**001.007**

**The path of those whom You have  
favored, those who did not incur your  
wrath and did not go astray.**





# *The Commentary*

001.002

## **All praise is due to God,**

The Arabic word, hamd, translated here as 'praise, also means thankfulness and gratefulness. The expression 'due to God', or "is to God' is a statement of fact, but it is also a prayer, an acknowledgement of this fact. All praise is to God because He alone has all the attributes of perfection for which a being is to be praised. All thankfulness is due to Him because only He is the bestower of every bounty that any creature enjoys. To acknowledge this is also to acknowledge the fact that only He should be worshipped since all mental and physical acts of worship are in their essence expressions of gratefulness to the worshipped.



## Lord of all the worlds

All thankfulness is due to God because He alone is the Lord of all the worlds. The Arabic word here translated as Lord is rub. A rub of something is one who is its master and one who takes care of it. A human being can be a rub of something in a limited sense, but only God is rub in the widest sense. He is the rub of every individual existent that belongs to the world of Angels, or humans, or jins, or animals or the inanimate. He is the rub of planets, of stars and of all the galaxies. It is He who causes every thing to come into existence, who gives it the special nature it has, who sustains it, and who causes it to go out of existence. It is He who designs individual entities of all these types into systems that serve special purposes. What we now call natural or social laws are His ways or habits of running the universe.

The only relationship between Him and every other existent is therefore only that of the Creator to the created. He cannot be the father of anyone in any real sense; Creator and father is a contradiction in terms.





You don't create your child, you beget it. It is because of this that the Qur'an keeps reminding those who claim that God has children \_\_ the Arabs who used to say that the angels are the daughters of God, the Christians who say that Jesus is the son of God, and a Jewish sect who used to believe that Ezra is the son of God \_\_ that God is the creator and owner of everything, including those that they call His children.

001.003

## **The Beneficent, the Merciful.**

The two Arabic words for which these English words stand are, consecutively, rahman, and raheem, two intensive forms of a root which conveys the meaning of mercy. rahman is more intensive than raheem, and refers to God's all-encompassing mercy, His mercy to all His creation in this life and the life to come. raheem refers to His special mercy to the faithful. This means that God's lordship of the world is primarily that of mercy.



001.004

## Master of the Day of Judgment,

The Arabic words used in the original are either *maalik* (literally owner) or *malik* (literally king), both of which convey the fact that on that day there will be no owners, rulers or kings even in the limited or nominal sense that they have in this world. The Lord, ruler, of all people will then be the only one who judges their deeds and adjudicates among them and rewards or punishes them accordingly. On that day God will ask all of His creation: "To whom is sovereignty today?" And the answer will be "To God, the One, the Subduer". This reminds us of the fact that this world is only a transient station on the road to the final abode where we shall either be rewarded or punished for what we do here. This in turn reminds us of the important fact that this world is a place of test and that it is run according to a moral law to which the natural and social ones are only subservient. We should not therefore allow the apparent natural to blind us to the moral that is behind it.





001.005

**You alone do we worship and  
you alone do we ask for help.**

Having acknowledged the fact that only God is the rub of all the worlds, and hence the only one who deserves to be grateful to in any absolute sense, and having acknowledged the fact that it is only He as rub of all being that manages the affairs of the world, we now declare that we will act accordingly and worship none but He, and ask for help to worship Him none but He. We acknowledge the fact that every thing other than Him is His creation, and under His control. We do not therefore turn in prayer to any angel, or any human being even if they be God's chosen prophets like Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, let alone minor and impotent creations like idols. Prophet Muhammad used, in compliance with this fact, to always pray to God " O God, help me to always be mindful of you, to be grateful to you and to worship you in the best of ways."





This verse emphasizes the fact that what is important is not only that you worship God, but that you worship none besides Him, because none except Him deserves to be worshipped. To worship none but God entails \_\_ among other things\_\_ that you obey none but Him in any absolute sense, love no one as or more than you love Him and pray to no one except Him. To seek help from none but God does not mean that you don't extend or accept any help from any of God's created beings in matters in which they have the power to help. It only means that you believe that even when you give or receive such help you believe that it is ultimately coming from God because nothing in this world happens without His will and power. So it is to Him alone that you are ultimately turning for help, and it is on Him alone that you ultimately and absolutely depend.





001.006

## **Guide us to the straight path.**

Having acknowledged all those truths about God, and having declared to Him that it is He alone that we worship and ask for help, we now go on to ask Him to grant us what we need the most: knowing and taking the shortest road that leads to Him. Having known who God is we are convinced that such guidance (a) cannot come except from Him, that (b) it must be available to all who want to follow it, and that (c) there must be clear evidence in it that it is from Him. We conclude therefore that that guidance is no where to be found except in God's words, the words that He revealed to His chosen Prophets, people like Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. But we also know for sure now that none of the books that contain that guidance is now at our disposal except one\_\_ the Qur'an. It is to this Divine book that we must thus turn for a detailed description of the straight path that leads to our Lord. That straight path is necessarily one path; it does not change with the change of time or place.





The words that describe it must therefore have the same basic meaning they had to the man to whom they were first revealed, and to the men who first heard them from him. With the increase of our knowledge, the richness of our experience, the depth of our study and pondering we can continuously learn more from that basic meaning. However, only the understanding and interpretation consistent with it is the correct one; all others must necessarily be false.

“Guide us to the straight path” This is the most important help we need for worshipping God and earning His pleasure. We ask Him to show us the shortest and easiest way to Him and to give us the will and power to take it. Why does one need such a prayer if one is already a Muslim who worships none but God, who believes that Muhammad is His true and final Prophet, and who believes that the Qur'an is His word? Isn't this the straight path? Indeed it is, but even such a person is still in great need for this prayer.





”

Firstly because he needs God to help him to continue to walk on this path, and not deviate from it as many people do. Secondly, because even if he knew this path in the general sense, he still needs to have knowledge of it in some detail. He needs to know how to take the straight path in the details of his five daily prayers, in the way he fasts or makes hajj or gives alms; he needs to know how to treat people, how to defend the truth, how to enjoin what is good and forbid what is bad; he needs to know the best way to strive for the promotion of truth, and so on.





001.007

**The path of those whom You favored,  
those who did not incur your wrath and  
did not go astray**

The straight path that you ask God to guide you to is described by Him in the Qur'an and in the words of His Prophet, Muhammad. But you do not want to depend on your own personal understanding of these texts because it might be faulty. You know that this path is not a theoretical one; but is an actual path that many people before you have taken. To be sure that you had a good understanding of it, and are following it and not any other way, you must see to it that you are following in their footsteps. If your destination is a well-known city to which hundreds of people go every day, and you find yourself alone on what you thought was the road to it, you know you must be mistaken

Similarly for the path that leads to God; you want to be sure that you are taking the path of those whom God assured you had taken it before you and who had thus been endowed with His absolute bounty.





Most important among these are the Prophets, and those of their followers that were praised by them. Of special importance for among the latter, for people of our times, are the Companions of Prophet Muhammad. That is why he described those of his followers that would be saved when others deviate, as those who would keep to his and his companions' path.

Those are the ones who did not incur God's wrath neither did they go astray. The ones who incur God's wrath are those who know the truth of Muhammad's prophethood, but who choose to deny it; the ones who go astray are the ones who do not have knowledge of the truth even of God, let alone the path that leads to Him. They thus make a god of their own invention and then worship it according to their own whims.

Prophet Muhammad tells us that some followers of earlier prophets followed these deviant ways. Some Jews who knew Muhammad and were sure that he was the Prophet described in the Torah nevertheless rejected him. Some Christians gave themselves the freedom to make as many religious inventions as they wanted so much so that their religion became an almost man-made religion.





While some Jews and Christians did this, others acknowledged the truth of Muhammad's message and were among the best Muslims.

Muslims have to be warned that they are not immune from those deviations as the Prophet assured us; hence the importance of this prayer.

Deviations can be total or partial. Total deviations are the ones which take the person out of the fold of true revealed religion. Partial deviation occurs every time a person denies a religious fact that he or she knows to be true, and every time a person invents something as an act of worship that has no basis in true religion.

There are in the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet detailed descriptions of these deviations that a faithful should be keen to be aware of to avoid. Major deviations include the ascription to God qualities and attributes of imperfection, the distortion of His words at will to make them suit people's own wishes or preferences or the prevailing culture of their time or place, the betrayal of the faithful by siding with the enemies of their true religion and the committing of immoralities and grave injustices in the name of religion.