

[Home](#) > [Commentary On Kumayl Supplication](#) > [Commentary of: “Bismillah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim”](#) >
Connotations of Bismillahi

Commentary of: “Bismillah, ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

There are some reasons why *du'a'* Kumayl begins with such an illuminating phrase.

Amir al-Mu'min (as) narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) who narrated from Allah that the Almighty that He stated:

كُلُّ أَمْرٍ ذِي بَالٍ لَا يُذْكُرُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ فِيهِ فَهُوَ أَبْتُرٌ.

Any important job which is done without Allah's remembrance, is tarnished and useless. [1](#)

The late Tabarsi narrates Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (as) in his book '*Makarim Al-Akhlaq*':

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ نَدَمَهُ أَمْرٌ يَعْمَلُهُ أَوْ كَرِيْبُهُ كُرِيْبٌ فَرَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ قَالَ ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ إِلَّا فَرَجَ اللَّهُ كُرِيْبٌ وَأَذْهَبَ غَمَّهُ، إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى

There's no grief-stricken individual who says 'bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim' three times while looking up to the sky, where in return Allah eliminates his grief, if He wills. [2](#)

We read in an important tradition:

لَا يُرَدُّ دُعَاءُ أَوْلَاهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*A du'a' which begins with bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim will not be rejected by Allah.*³

The Messenger of Allah (S) counted the guards of hell as nineteen and said,

مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُنْجِيَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الزَّبَانِيَةِ التِّسْعَةَ عَشَرَ فَلْيَقُرُّأْ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ، فَإِنَّهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ حَرْفًا لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ حَرْفٍ مِنْهَا جُنَاحًا مِنْ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمْ.

*One who wants Allah to save him from these guards should recite bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim which consists of nineteen letters, so that Allah will set each letter as a guard from the fire.*⁴

It is narrated from the Messenger of Allah (S):

إِذَا قَالَ الْمُعَلِّمُ لِلصَّبِيِّ: قُلْ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ، فَقَالَ، كَتَبَ اللَّهُ بَرَاءَةً لِلصَّبِيِّ وَلَأَبْوَيْهِ وَلِلْمُعَلِّمِ

*When a teacher teaches ‘bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim’ to a child, the Exalted God sets the child, his parents and his teacher free from the fire.*⁵

It is narrated from the Prophet (S): “My people are accounted for their deeds in the Hereafter, and their good deeds are superior to the bad deeds. The past nations will cry out, ‘Why do their minute good deeds exceed their mountain of bad deeds?’ The prophets of those nations will answer, ‘Because their speech has begun with three of Allah’s names: Allah, the All-beneficent (*rahman*), and the All-merciful (*rahim*). These three names are greater in weight than all the virtues and vices of mankind.”

It is narrated from Imam al-Ridha (as):

إِنَّ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ تَقْرِبُ مِنَ الْإِسْمِ الْأَعْظَمِ اقْتِرَابَ سَوَادِ الْعَيْنِ مِنْ بَيَاضِهَا

*The ‘bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim’ is as close to Allah’s chief name as is the blackness of eye to its whiteness.*⁶

Certainly, if *du'a'* begins with Allah’s principal name, the supplicant is more likely to be answered.

Connotations of Bismillahi

Great Arab grammarians believe that the Arabic word ‘*ism* (name)’ is derived from ‘*sumuw*’ meaning greatness. The All-Compassionate connected the preposition ‘*bi* (in)’ to ‘*ism* (name)’ in this phrase to connote that by reciting the phrase, the supplicant wants to beseech Allah. The supplicant should be aware that calling Allah is not sufficient; rather the soul should be purified through seeking forgiveness from the Almighty.

In fact calling Allah without purity of mind and sincerity of intention is considered disrespectful. The Almighty is in the highest and the most holy position, while man is in the lowest place and cannot promote his position, except by making a strong connection with Allah. That's why the Merciful has set '*bismillahi* (in the Name of Allah)' as the mediator between Himself and the human being.

An attentive mystic has stated that the Arabic letter '*ba*' (B) connotes the *beginning* of mystical treading onto the path to Allah, and from '*ba*' to '*sin*' (S) which connotes the *secret* of knowing Allah, there is an endless desert of ignorance. Hiding of '*alif*' (A) in this vast desert⁷ implies that if the seeker does not dissolve his *egotism* in the light of Allah's Unity, he will not reach '*mim*' (M) which connotes the ultimate intention.

Some believe that '*ba*' (B) implies Allah's *Beneficence* to all the people and especially to the ordinary people; '*sin*' (S) implies the *secret* of His kindness to the noble, and '*mim*' (M) is indicator of His *Mercy* to the most special nobles.

In the invaluable books 'Al-Kafi', 'Tawhid Saduq', 'Ma'ani Al-Akhbar' and 'Tafsir Ayyashi', it is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as): "Each of these three letters (in the word '*bism*') implies one of the Glorious names of Allah; '*ba*' is Allah's *Brightness*, '*sin*' is Allah's *Eminence*, and '*mim*' is His *Magnificence*.

It is also stated that '*ba*' implies *the Observant*, '*sin*' implies *the All-Hearing*, and '*mim*' implies *the Counter*. It is as if Allah makes the supplicant aware that: I am the Observant; I can observe your visible and invisible deeds, so avoid hypocrisy in your action, I am the All-Hearing; I can hear the result of your deeds and supplications, so avoid useless speech, and I am the Counter; I can even count your breaths, so beware of every moment.

The glorified word '*Allah*' is a comprehensive name for the Almighty, which is a combination of all the attributes of Allah. It is believed that three meanings are present in Allah:

1. Allah is the Eternal Being.
2. Human mind is astonished of knowing and seeking Him.
3. The return of all beings is towards Him.

It is said that the Arabic word 'الله (*Allah*)' is the Chief name of God and is the basis of His Unity, to that extent that if a disbeliever calls this name sincerely, his belief will be proved. This name is the beginning and end of everything, which is to be upright. Also the strength of *risalat* (prophet hood) and *wilayat* is based on this name, as it exists in the Arabic phrase 'محمد رسول الله' (*Muhammad is Allah's Messenger*)' and 'علي ولي الله' ('*Ali is Allah's Intimate Servant*).

Furthermore, if the first letter of the Arabic word '*Allah* (الله)' is omitted, what remains is '*lillahi* (للله)', which means 'for Allah,' as in the following Verse:

لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ.

Allah's is the command before and after. (30:4)

If the first two letters are dropped, what remains is 'Iahu (ا)', which means '(His) remains, as in the following Verse:

لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ.

To Him belongs the kingdom, and to Him is all due praise. (64:1)

If the first three letters are dropped, what remains is 'huwa (هُوَ)', which means 'He' implying Almighty Allah, as in the following Verse:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ.

Say: He, Allah, is One. (112:1)

As a result, the name, which has so many features, is definitely Allah's Chief name.

The word "رحمٌ" (the Beneficent) is derived from "رحمت" (Mercy). Renowned Arab grammarians believe that it is a hyperbole. To Islamic scholars, the word means "the giver of universal mercy to all the creatures, apart from their service record". "رحمٌ" also implies that Allah is inclined to assist all creatures and remove detriment from them. Examples of Allah's blessings are presented in the holy Qur'an, chapter Al-Rahman (55).

Arab grammarians that believe that the word "رحيمٌ" (the Merciful) is an adjectival simile, hence it implies continuity; that is the Mercy of Allah is permanent. This kind of Mercy is specific to the believers, as their virtues and appreciation of Allah's blessings makes them worthy. We read in Islamic works that Mercy of the first kind involves Allah's granting sustenance to all the creatures and humans either believer or disbeliever. The second kind of Mercy involves Allah's granting spiritual blessings to human beings and also His forgiving the believers in this world and in the Hereafter.

In "رحمانیت" (Beneficence) and "رحیمیت" (Mercifulness) the meaning of soundness is involved; one is worldly soundness, the other is heavenly soundness. The second kind of Mercy includes the obedient whose prayers Allah accepts, and the disobedient whose sins He forgives.

Ibn Mubarak has stated: "رحمٌ" is the One who responds if you ask Him, and "رحیمٌ" is the One who becomes wrathful if you don't ask Him.

An ascetic has said: “The Almighty is رَحْمَن “Rahman” in giving sustenance to the creatures and رَحِيم “Rahim” in forgiving the believers’ sins. For making a living, trust Him, not your own trading; but don’t give up trading which is unwise. For forgiveness of sins, trust Him, not your own deeds; but don’t give up deeds which is against Allah’s will.”

The servant is said to have three states: First, the state of a nonexistent creature who needed existence; second, the state of state of a living creature who desires to be permanent; third, the state of one in the Hereafter who needs Forgiveness. The servant in these three states needs Allah and His attributes, as reflected in these three names:

“الله”, who brings the servant from nonexistence to life;

“رَحْمَن”, who provides the means for the servant to continue life;

“رَحِيم”, who will forgive the servant’s sins in the Hereafter.

Human being is composed of heart, body, and soul. Human heart finds knowledge and belief from “الله”, his body finds sustenance from “رَحْمَن”, and the soul finds Mercy from “رَحِيم”. One whose heart, body and soul is associated with these three names of God, is free from everything and everyone except Allah, and contributes his mercy to other servants of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah (S) is narrated as saying: “One who says بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ and لا حول و لا قوه الا بالله العلي العظيم ten times a day, is forgiven by Allah, and Allah saves him from seventy diseases, such as leprosy, black leprosy, and paralysis.” The Prophet (S) is also narrated to have said: “One who recites بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، Allah will record four thousand virtues for him for each letter, and forgive four thousand sins of him.”

It is narrated that one who recites بِسْمِ اللَّهِ before eating, Satan will not become his mate in eating; but if he begins eating and forgets reciting it, Satan becomes his mate.”⁸

1. Tafsir Imam Asgari: 25, Al-Iftitah bil-tasmiah...; Wasa'il Al-Shi'ah: 7/170, Bab 17, tradition 9032.

2. Makarim al-Akhlaq: 346, fil Muhimmat; Bihar al-Anwar: 92/ 159, Bab 15.

3. Mustadrak al-Wasa'il: 5/ 304, Bab 16, tradition 5929.

4. Jami' Ahadith al-Shiah, Sayyid Borjerdi, 15:150.

5. Kashf al-Ghita', Shaykh Kashif al-Ghita', 2:299.

6. The traditions 4 to 7 are presented in the exegesis of fatihat ul-kitab the first chapter of holy Quran.

7. Hiding here implies the position of ‘alif’ in ‘bismillahi’ which is not pronounced in English, or is hidden.

8. See “Al-Kafi”, “Ma'ani Al-Akhbar”, “Tawhid Saduq”, “Wasa'il Al-Shi'ah”, “Bahr I-Haqa'iq”, “Mafatih Al-Ghayb” and “Exegesis of Fatihat Al-Kitab”.

URL di origine:

<https://www.al-islam.org/it/commentary-kumayl-supplication-husayn-ansariyan/commentary-bismillah->

ar-rahman-ar-rahim#comment-0