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Is Bassmala A Quranic Verse? Is It To Be Recited In Prayers?

The Muslim scholars disagreed on this matter. [1](#) Malik and al-Awza'iy thought that it was not a part of the Quran and they prohibited their followers from reciting it in the prayers whether it was in the beginning of sura of Hamd [2](#) or in the beginning of the second sura and whether it was recited loudly or softly but they permitted to be recited in nafilah. [3](#)

Abu Haneefa, ath-Thawri and their followers recited bassmala with sura of Hamd but they said that it must be recited softly even in the loud-recited prayers. [4](#) This showed that they agreed with Malik and al-Awza'iy. We didn't find any evidence justifying that except that they didn't consider it as part of the Quran.

Ash-Shafi'iy recited bassmala loudly in loud-recited prayers and softly in soft-recited prayers and considered it as a verse of sura of Hamd. So was the thought of Ahmed bin Hanbal, Abu Thour and Abu Obayd.

Different sayings were mentioned about the thought of ash-Shafi'iy concerning bassmala; whether he believed that it was a part of every sura except Bara'a [5](#) (9) or it was not a verse except in sura of Hamd. But his companions agreed upon that bassmala was a verse of all the suras [6](#) and justified the two different sayings mentioned about their Imam's thought. [7](#)

As for us-the Shia-we agreed, according to our infallible imams, upon that bassmala was a complete Quranic verse of every sura except Bara'a and whoever left reciting it in the prayer intendedly, his prayer would be vain whether the prayer was wajib (obligatory) or mustahab. It must be recited loudly in loud-recited prayers and it was desirable (mustahab) to be recited loudly in soft-recited prayers. [8](#) It was a piece of a verse in sura of an-Naml. The traditions of our infallible imams were clear in denying the sayings of their opponents. Imam Sadiq (s) said: "What?! They attacked the greatest verse of the Book of Allah the Almighty and they pretended that it was a heresy and then they spread their heresy about the verse (*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*). [9](#)

Our evidence from the Sunni side is the traditions mentioned in their Sihah and how many they are!

1. Ibn Jurayj narrated from his father from Sa'eed bin Jubayr that ibn Abbas when talking about the Quranic verse (***And certainly We have given you seven of the oft-repeated (verses) and the grand Quran*** 15:87) had said: "It is the Fatiha¹⁰ of the Book; ***In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds...etc.***). Ibn Jurayj said: "I asked my father: Did Sa'eed tell you that ibn Abbas had said that (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) was a Quranic verse? He said: Yes!"¹¹

2. Ibn Abbas said: "The Prophet (s), whenever Gabriel came to him and recited ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***, knew that it was a sura."¹²

3. Ibn Abbas said: "The Prophet (s) didn't know that a sura was completed until a new ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*** was revealed to him."¹³

4. Ibn Abbas said: "The Muslims didn't know that a sura was completed until ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*** was revealed. When it was revealed, they became certain that the previous sura was completed."¹⁴

5. Umm Salama said: "The Prophet (s) used to recite (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds...etc.***) and scanned it verse by verse."¹⁵

Umm Salama said in another way: "The Prophet (s) recited in the prayer (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) and counted it as the first verse and then recited (***All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds***) and counted it as the second, then (***The Beneficent, the Merciful***) as the third, (***Master of the Day of Judgment***) as the fourth, then (***Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help***) and gathered his five fingers."¹⁶

6. Na'eem al-Mujamir said: "I was behind Abu Hurayra (in offering the prayer) when he recited (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) then he recited al-Fatiha until he finished it and said amen and the people said amen! When he finished the prayer, he said: "I swear by Him, in Whose hand my soul is, that I am the most similar to the Prophet (s) in offering the prayer."¹⁷

Abu Hurayra said: "The Prophet (s) used to recite (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) loudly in the prayers."¹⁸

7. Anass bin Malik said: "Once Mo'awiya offered a prayer in Medina and he recited (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) loudly for al-Fatiha but he didn't recite it for the second sura. When he finished the prayer, some of the Muhajireen and the Ansar,¹⁹ who heard him, shouted at him: "O Mo'awiya! Did you steal the prayer or forget?" When he offered the prayer after that, he recited bassmala for the second sura." Al-Hakim mentioned this tradition in his Mustadrak and considered it true according to (Imam) Muslim's conditions.²⁰ The tradition was mentioned by others like Imam ash-

Shafi'iy,[21](#) who commented on it. It would be better to quote his comment. He said: "Mo'awiya was a very powerful ruler, so unless reciting bassmala loudly was a certain verdict among all the companions of the Muhajireen and the Ansar, they wouldn't dare to object to him when he didn't recite bassmala."[22](#)

I would like to comment on this tradition to draw the attention of every researcher to the evidence this tradition had that confirmed our thought (the Shia's thought) about bassmala in the prayer and that it was not permissible to recite bassmala with al-Fatiha only and not to recite it with the second sura, otherwise the companions wouldn't have objected to Mo'awiya unless the matter of bassmala had been like the Shia's thought.

8. It was narrated from another way that Anass had said: "I heard the Prophet (s) reciting (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) loudly in the prayer."[23](#)

9. Muhammad bin as-Sariy al-Asqalani said: "I offered Fajr and Maghrib prayers behind al-Mu'tamir bin Sulayman innumerable times. He recited (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) loudly before al-Fatiha and before the second sura. I heard al-Mu'tamir saying: I haven't failed to imitate my father's prayer and my father said: I haven't failed to imitate Anass' prayer and Anass said: I haven't failed to imitate the Prophet's prayer."[24](#)

This tradition and other traditions showed that they (the Sunnis) used to recite bassmala with the second sura after al-Fatiha in the prayers like the Shia. Many other traditions confirmed this matter.[25](#)

Qatada said: "Anass bin Malik was asked that how the Prophet (s) recited in his prayers. He said: "He used to stress his reciting." Then he recited (bismillahir-rahmanir-raheem)[26](#) and he stressed ar-rahman (the Beneficent) and ar-raheem (the Merciful)."

Hameed at-Taweel narrated that Anass bin Malik had said: "I offered prayers behind the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali. All of them recited bassmala loudly."

All the previous traditions were mentioned by Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Hakim an-Nayssaboori in his Mustadrak. He said after the last tradition: "I mentioned this tradition to be evidence for the previous traditions. These traditions showed clear objection to the tradition narrated by Qatada that Anass had said: "I offered prayers behind the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman and I didn't hear any of them reciting (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***)."

Then al-Hakim said: "Many other traditions narrated by Othman, Ali, Talha bin Obaydillah, Jabir bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Omar, al-Hakam bin Omayr ath-Thimali, an-Nu'man bin Basheer, Samra bin Jundub, Burayda al-Aslami and Aa'isha bint Abu Bakr concerning this subject. I didn't mention them in order not to overburden the reader with them. I chose from among what might fit this chapter. Also I mentioned in this chapter those, who recited bassmala loudly in their prayers, of the companions, the successors and the successors' successors."[27](#)

Ar-Razi mentioned in his at-*Tafseer al-Kabeer*²⁸ that al-Bayhaqi had mentioned in his *Sunan* some traditions about reciting bassmala loudly in the prayer narrated by Omar bin al-Khattab, ibn Abbas, ibn Omar and ibn az-Zubayr. Then ar-Razi said: "As for Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be pleased with him), it was proved recurrently that he recited bassmala loudly in his prayers and whoever imitated Ali bin Abu Talib in his religion, would be guided. The evidence for that was the saying of the Prophet (s): "O Allah! Turn the rightness with Ali wherever he turns."

It would be a sufficient evidence for bassmala to be a Quranic verse in the beginning of every sura except Bara'a, that all the companions, their successors and the successors' successors of every generation of the umma had agreed unanimously, since the Quran had been written down until nowadays, upon writing down bassmala at the beginning of every sura except Bara'a.

They wrote it down as they wrote every other Quranic verse without any difference between them whereas they had agreed unanimously upon not writing anything that was not of the holy Quran unless they would put a distinguishing mark in order not to be mixed up with the Quranic words. Didn't you see how they distinguished the names of the suras, the symbols of the sections, the parts...etc. and put them out of the text of the Quran in order to be known that they were not of the Quran so that the Quran would be protected as it had been revealed? You knew well that the umma had never agreed unanimously upon any matter as it had agreed upon this matter and this was enough evidence proving that bassmala was independent Quranic verse coming at the beginning of every sura written by the ancestors and the successors.

It was mentioned that the Prophet (s) had said: "Every important task that doesn't begin with (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) will be amputated."²⁹ and: "Every important task that doesn't begin with (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) will be amputated or mutilated."³⁰

It is certain that the holy Quran is the best of what Allah, the Almighty has revealed to His apostles and prophets and that every sura in it is important and great that Allah has challenged all the people, who failed to produce a sura like the Quranic suras. So would it be possible for the Quran to be amputated? Allah, His Quran and its suras be exalted highly above any raving!

The prayer is the success and the best of doings as it is announced from above the minbars and the minarets. It is known by everyone. Nothing is to be compared with it after believing in Allah, His prophets and the Day of Resurrection. Then is it possible for Allah to legislate the prayer so amputated and mutilated? Neither a pious nor a dissolute one dares to say so but the pious imams Malik, al-Awza'iy and Abu Haneefa (may Allah be pleased with them) were distracted from these necessities; and every mujtahid would be rewarded and not to be blamed whether being right or wrong when trying his best to deduce his conclusion from the legal evidences.

The excuse of our opponents

They justified the matter with some excuses:

First: if bassmala was a verse of al-Fatiha and was a part of every sura of the Quran, then repeating (***the Beneficent, the Merciful***)^{[31](#)} would be necessary to be repeated one hundred and thirteen times throughout the Quran.

The answer: the situation might require repeating if it was to pay much attention to some great affairs in order to be taken in consideration with much carefulness. The holy Quran had many examples of this thing; for example in sura of ar-Rahman (55), al-Mursalat (77) and al-Kafiroon (109). Was there anything of the affairs of this life and the afterlife deserving utmost attention and greatest carefulness like the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful? Were the prophets delegated, the angels sent down and the Books revealed without ***in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful*** or His guidance? Were the heavens and the earths constructed but with ***in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful?***^{[32](#)}

(O men! call to mind the favor of Allah on you; is there any creator besides Allah who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? There is no god but He; whence are you then turned away) 35:3.

Second: the tradition narrated by Abu Hurayra that the Prophet (s) had said: “Allah the Almighty says: I have divided the prayer between Me and My servant into two halves. If the servant says: ***All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds***. Allah says: My servant praises Me. If he says: ***The Beneficent, the Merciful***. Allah says: My servant thanks Me. If he says: ***Master of the Day of Judgment***. Allah says: My servant glorifies Me. If he says: ***Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help***. Allah says: this is between Me and My servant...etc.”

Their evidence in this tradition was that he didn't mention (***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***) with the verses of al-Fatiha. They said that if it was a verse of al-Fatiha, he would mention it.

The answer: this tradition was contradicted by a tradition narrated by ibn Abbas when saying: “Allah says: I have divided the prayer between Me and My servant. If the servant says: ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful***. Allah says: My servant calls me...etc.”^{[33](#)} The tradition was too long but our evidence was that it included bassmala and so it contradicted Abu Hurayra's tradition. In fact Abu Hurayra himself narrated a tradition that the Prophet (s) used to recite bassmala loudly in the prayer and that he himself used to recite it loudly in his prayer. He said: “I am the most of you in imitating the Prophet's prayer.” This tradition was mentioned previously.

Third: the tradition narrated by Aa'isha that the Prophet (s) began his prayer with takbeer^{[34](#)} and reciting (al hamdu lillahi rabbil aalameen).^{[35](#)}

The answer: this couldn't be an evidence for them because Aa'isha made (al hamdu lillahi rabbil

aalameen) as a name for this sura exactly as when one said: "I recited (qul huwal-lahu ahad)"³⁶ to mean that he recited sura of al-Ikhlass or when saying that someone recited (inna fatahna laka fathan mubeena)³⁷ to mean that someone recited sura of al-Fat~h and so on. So the meaning of the tradition was that the Prophet (s) began his prayer with takbeer and reciting this sura, whose beginning was ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***³⁸

Fourth: the tradition narrated by ibn Mughaffal when saying: "My father heard me reciting ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.*** He said to me: "O my son! Beware of changing the Sunna! I offered prayers with the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman. I didn't hear any of them reciting it (bassmala)." ³⁹

The answer: the scholars of jarh and ta'deel⁴⁰ didn't know who ibn Mughaffal was. They didn't mention any of his traditions. Ibn Rushd mentioned him when talking about bassmala in his book Bidayatul Mujtahid⁴¹ and brushed him away when quoting the saying of Abu Omar bin Abdul Birr that ibn Mughaffal was unknown man.

Fifth: Shu'ba narrated from Qatada that Anass bin Malik had said: "I offered prayers with the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman. I didn't hear any of them reciting ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***"⁴² Another one narrated by Hameed at-Taweel that Anass said: "I offered prayers behind Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman. All of them didn't recite ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***"⁴³

The answer: you found in our evidence mentioned previously true traditions narrated by Anass contradicting these two traditions. You might refer to them.

Imam ar-Razi mentioned this tradition of Anass in his *Tafseer* and said: "The answer to this tradition is in many ways;

First: Sheikh Abu Hamid al-Isfarayeeni said: "Six traditions were narrated from Anass in this concern. The Hanafites narrated from him three traditions. One of them was his saying: I offered prayers behind the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman. They began the prayer with (***All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds***).

The other was his saying: ...they didn't mention ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***

The third saying: ...I didn't hear any of them reciting ***in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.***

These three traditions agreed with the thought of the Hanafites and there were three other traditions contradicting this thought;

one of them was his tradition about Mo'awiya, who didn't recite bassmala in the prayer and then the Muhajireen and the Ansar objected to him and this showed that reciting bassmala loudly in the prayer

was a certain matter, which was agreed upon unanimously among them.

The other one: Abu Qulaba narrated from Anass that the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr and Omar used to recite bassmala loudly in the prayers.[44](#)

The third one: that Anass was asked about reciting bassmala loudly or softly and he answered: "I don't know about this matter." Ar-Razi said: "It was clear that Anass' traditions about this matter became so confused and contradictory and hence we had to depend upon other evidences...and also there was another suspicion in his traditions that Ali (s) exaggerated in reciting bassmala loudly but when the Umayyads seized the rule, they exaggerated in forbidding from reciting bassmala loudly in order to remove everything referring to Ali (s).[45](#) Anass might be afraid of the Umayyads; therefore his sayings became confused.

Whatever we doubted about something, we would never doubt about that if there was a contradiction between the sayings of persons like Anass and ibn al-Mughaffal and the sayings of Ali bin Abu Talib (s), who kept on that until the end of his life, certainly depending upon the sayings of Ali would be better. This was a final answer...and whoever took Ali as the imam of his religion, would certainly lay hold on the firmest handle of religion and life...etc."[46](#)

All praise is due to Allah Who guided us to this, and we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us.

- [1.](#) Basmalah is saying (bissmillah~ir rahman~ir raheem: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful).
- [2.](#) It is the first sura in the Quran that must be recited in every prayer. It is also called al-Fatiha.
- [3.](#) Nafila means not wajib (obligatory) prayer. It is (mustahab). Refer to ibn Rushd's Bidayetul Mujtahid, vol.1 p.96. Ar-Razi said in his at-Tafseer al-Kabeer, vol.1 p.100 about bassmala: "Malik and al-Awza'i'y said that it was not a part of the Quran except in sura of an-Naml (27) and that it was not be recited whether loudly or softly except in mustahab prayers in Ramadan.
- [4.](#) In Fajr, Maghrib and Isha' prayers sura of Hamd and the second sura must be recited loudly and in Dhuhr and Assr prayers the two suras must be recited softly.
- [5.](#) Sura of Bara'a didn't begin with bassmala.
- [6.](#) Refer to at-Tafseer al-Kabeer by ar-Razi, vol.1 p.104.
- [7.](#) They said that the disagreement was not about considering bassmala as a verse or not but it was about whether bassmala was a complete Quranic verse or a piece of a verse of each sura.
- [8.](#) Imam ar-Razi, in his at-Tafseer al-Kabeer when talking about bassmala, mentioned many evidences about reciting bassmala loudly. In one of them he said that Imam Ali (s) thought that bassmala was to be recited loudly in all the prayers. He said: "This evidence is strong in my self and deep-rooted in my mind. It will never be removed at all."
- [9.](#) Refer to Majma'ul Bayan by at-Tabarsi when talking about bassmala in vol.1.
- [10.](#) Sura of Hamd; the first sura of the Quran.
- [11.](#) Refer to al-Hakim's Mustadrak when interpreting sura of al-Fatiha and ath-Thahabi's Talkhees, vol.2 p.257.
- [12.](#) Al-Hakim's Mustadrak, vol.1 p.231.
- [13.](#) Al-Hakim's Mustadrak and ath-Thahabi's Talkhees, vol.1 p.231 (printed together as one book).
- [14.](#) Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak, vol.1 p.232 mentioned the tradition and said: "It was a true tradition according to the two sheikhs; al-Bukhari and Muslim." Ath-Thahabi in his Talkhees mentioned it and considered it true according to the two sheikhs too.
- [15.](#) Al-Hakim's Mustadrak and ath-Thahabi's Talkhees, vol.1 p.232.

- [16.](#) Mentioned by al-Hakim in his Mustadrak after the previous tradition.
- [17.](#) The Shia don't recite (amen) after al-Fatiha. They consider it neither a part of al-Fatiha nor a part of the Quran at all. Neither the Shia scholars nor their imams have narrated something of that, whereas the Sunni have depended upon it as a norm of them and they have mentioned many traditions confirming it; one of them is this tradition of Abu Hurayra.
- [18.](#) Al-Hakim mentioned this tradition in his Mustadrak after the previous tradition. Al-Bayhaqi mentioned it in his as-Sunan al-Kabeera. Refer to ar-Razi's Tafseer, vol. 1 p. 105.
- [19.](#) Muhajireen; the first Muslims, who emigrated from Mecca to Medina. Ansar; the people of Medina, who believed in the Prophet (s) and supported him and his companions.
- [20.](#) Ath-Thahabi mentioned it in his Talkhees al-Mustadrak and considered it true according to Muslim's conditions. Al-Hakim and ath-Thahabi considered this tradition to be the contrary of the tradition narrated by Qatada that Anass said: "I offered prayers behind the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman. I didn't hear any of them reciting in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful." This tradition is null as we shall explain that soon inshallah.
- [21.](#) Refer to his Musnad p. 13.
- [22.](#) At-Tafseer al-Kabeer by ar-Razi, vol. 1 p. 105.
- [23.](#) Al-Hakim's Mustadrak and ath-Thahabi's Talkhees. They said that all the narrators of this tradition were reliable and they considered it as contrary to the tradition narrated by Qatada from Anass.
- [24.](#) Al-Hakim in his Mustadrak and at-Thahabi in his Talkhees mentioned this tradition and said that all its narrators were reliable. They considered this tradition as evidence to refute the vain tradition narrated by Qatada from Anass.
- [25.](#) It was mentioned by Imam ash-Shafi'iy in his Musnad p. 13 that ibn Omar hadn't given up reciting bassmala with al-Fatiha and the second sura in his prayers.
- [26.](#) (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful).
- [27.](#) Al-Hakim's Mustadrak, vol. 1 p. 234.
- [28.](#) vol. 1 p. 105.
- [29.](#) Mentioned by Abdul Qadir ar-Rahawi in his Arba'een narrated by Abu Hurayra, mentioned by as-Sayooti in his al-Jami' as-Sagheer, vol. 2 p. 91 and al-Muttaqi al-Hindi in his Kanzul Ommal, vol. 1 p. 193.
- [30.](#) Mentioned by ar-Razi in his Tafseer, vol. 1 when talking about bassmala.
- [31.](#) It was repeated in the third verse of al-Fatiha besides the first verse (in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful).
- [32.](#) The faithful person begins all his/her works with in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. If he/she eats, drinks, stands up, sits down, comes in, goes out, takes, gives, reads, writes, dictates, makes speech or slaughters a sacrifice, he/she will say: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. When the midwife holds the new-born baby during its birth, she says: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. When the faithful person is dying, he/she says: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the merciful and when he/she is put into the tomb it is said: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the merciful and when he/she is resurrected, he/she says: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the merciful and when he/she attends before Allah, he/she says: in the name of Allah, the Beneficent the merciful and is there a shelter or a resort then save Allah?
- [33.](#) Kanzul Ommal by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, vol. 1 p. 320.
- [34.](#) Saying (Allahu akbar; Allah is great).
- [35.](#) All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.
- [36.](#) Say: He is Allah, the One! 112: 1.
- [37.](#) Surely We have given to you a clear victory. 48: 1.
- [38.](#) This was the summary of what Imam ash-Shafi'iy had said when refuting their justification out of this tradition.
- [39.](#) Imam ar-Razi mentioned this tradition in his Tafseer, vol. 1 p. 106 and then said: "Anass and ibn Mughaffal mentioned the three caliphs in their traditions and didn't mention Ali. This showed that Ali recited bassmala loudly in the prayers."
- [40.](#) Jarh means to prove that a narrator of a tradition is not trusty. Ta'deel means to prove that a narrator is trusty and reliable.
- [41.](#) Vol. 1 p. 97.
- [42.](#) mentioned by Muslim in his Sahih, chap. Of bassmala.
- [43.](#) Refer to Malik's Muwatta'.

[44.](#) We mentioned previously the tradition narrated by Hameed at-Taweel that Anass had said: “I offered prayers behind the Prophet (s), Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and Ali. All of them recited bassmala loudly.”

[45.](#) Such was the conduct of the Umayyads towards Imam Ali and his progeny in many of the divine laws until the rightness and falseness were confused. There is no power save in Allah, the Almighty!

[46.](#) Refer to at-Tafseer al-Kabeer by ar-Razi, vol. 1 p. 106–107.

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