



Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2024

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## Study 2:

# Humanity-wide approach of *Surah Fatiha* — “Beneficent” and “Merciful”





## الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

“The Beneficent, the Merciful.” — 1:2



- After describing Allah as *Rabb-ul-`Ālamīn* or “Lord of the worlds”, this opening chapter of the Quran then tells us that He is *Raḥmān* (“Beneficent”) and *Raḥīm* (“Merciful”).
- Of course it is possible to translate *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* by other similar words in English.
- These two words *Raḥmān* (رَحْمَن) and *Raḥīm* (رَحِيم) are obviously similar. They both convey the ideas of love and mercy.



- There is a word *raḥim* (رَحِم) which means the “womb”, and it is used also to mean ties of physical relationship *between human beings*. The Holy Prophet Muhammad has said that the ties of relationship between people, or *raḥim*, are a consequence of God being *Raḥmān*.
- This shows that God, as presented in the second verse of the Quran (1:2), is One Whose overwhelming love and mercy for His creation is reflected in the close bond of affection which exists between relatives.
- There is a difference in meaning in God being *Raḥmān* and being *Raḥīm*.



- The name *Raḥmān* signifies that love is so predominant in God that He bestows His favours and shows His mercy freely, even though the recipient of His favours has done nothing to earn them. He acts as *Raḥmān* towards all human beings. It is His broader mercy.
- God being *Raḥīm* means that when man uses what God has given him to help the development of his physical and spiritual life, God rewards every effort made by man. This applies both in the spiritual and the material fields of life. So this is a mercy that is dependent on man's own actions.



- It is not only the attribute of *Raḥmān* by which God’s mercy is open to all human beings, regardless of their nation or religion. In case of the attribute of *Raḥīm* also, God’s mercy helps all those who make an effort.
- Allah’s mercy towards all is mentioned several times in the Quran in different ways. According to the following verse, when *all* are gathered before Allah, He will deal with them mercifully.

كَتَبَ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لِيَجْزِيَكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ

“He (Allah) has ordained mercy on Himself. He will certainly gather you on the day of Resurrection — there is no doubt about it.” — 6:12



- Mercy was open to those who rejected the Holy Prophet, as the Quran says:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

“But if they reject you, then say: Your Lord is the Lord of all-encompassing mercy; and His punishment cannot be averted from the guilty people.” — 6:147

- They are told here that their Lord is the Lord of extensive mercy (*dhū raḥmah wāsi`ah*). This is why He is not quick to punish and keeps on giving people more and more chances for reform. If they persist in wrong-doing beyond all measure, then His punishment comes upon them.



- But that punishment is also a mercy because it saves the innocent people from their mischief and offers the guilty ones a further opportunity for reform.
- Of all those who can show mercy, Allah is the most merciful of them. No one can outdo Him in showing mercy. For example, Moses prayed thus:

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

“My Lord, forgive me and my brother (Aaron), and admit us to Your mercy, and **You are the most Merciful of those who show mercy.**” — 7:151



- Prophets Jacob, Joseph and Job also described God as:  
*arḥam-ur-rāḥimīn* — “the most Merciful of those who show mercy”  
(12:64, 12:92, 21:83).
- Joseph’s brothers had abandoned him in a well in the wilderness out of jealousy when he was a youth, so that he and his father would never see each other again. After years of separation, by chance they became reunited when Joseph had risen to become the King of Egypt’s right-hand man. The brothers asked him to forgive them. Joseph said to them:





قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْيَوْمَ ۖ يَغْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

“He said: There is no reproach (i.e., reprimand or blame) against you this day. Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.” —

12:92

- The Holy Prophet Muhammad used the same words, “There is no reproach against you this day”, at the conquest of Makkah to forgive his enemies.

