

147645 - Ruling on reciting al-Fatihah on special occasions, as is customary among some people

the question

Reciting al-Fatihah is a custom that is practised here, and there has been a great deal of discussion about it among the Muslims. I want to know whether it is prescribed in Islam or not, with reference to a number of Quranic verses and hadiths, and commentary on them.

Detailed answer

Soorat al-Fatihah is the best of the soorahs of the Quran; in fact it is the best of all that Allah, may He be exalted, revealed to the Messengers. Al-Bukhari (4474) narrated from Abu Sa'eed al-Mu'alla (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said to him: "I will surely teach you a soorah that is the greatest soorah in the Quran..." Then he said: "Al-hamdu Lillahi Rabb al-'Aalameen... It is the seven oft-repeated verses and the Glorious Quran that I have been given (cf. al-Hijr 15:87)."

At-Tirmidhi (2857) narrated from Ubayy ibn Ka'b (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "By the One in Whose hand is my soul, nothing like it has been revealed in the Torah or in the Gospel or in the Psalms or in al-Furqaan. Verily it is the seven oft-repeated verses and the Glorious Quran that I have been given."

Classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh at-Tirmidhi.

There is no report from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or from his companions to suggest that they used to recite al-Fatihah at the time of the marriage contract, or when offering condolences, or when engaging in commercial transactions. If that was something good, they would have done it before us.

Al-Haafiz Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Ahl as-Sunnah wa'l-Jamaa'ah describe every deed or word that is not proven to be from the Sahaabah as an innovation (bid'ah), because if it were good, they would have done it before us, for they did not leave any good deed but they hastened to do it. End quote.

Tafseer Ibn Katheer (7/278-279).

If reciting al-Fatihah on such occasions was prescribed in Islam, then the people who preceded us in doing everything that is good, and who were the most knowledgeable of people of all virtues, would have done it before us – namely the Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about the ruling on reciting al-Fatihah at the time of the marriage contract, which some people even call “the recitation of al-Fatihah”, and they do not call it “the marriage contract”, so they might say “I recited my Fatihah over So and so [the bride].” Is this something that is prescribed in Islam?

He replied:

This is not something that is prescribed in Islam; rather it is an innovation. Recitation of al-Fatihah or any other particular soorah should not be done except on the occasions on which Islam prescribes recitation thereof. If it is recited on other occasions as an act of worship, then it is to be regarded as an innovation. We have seen many people reciting al-Fatihah on all kinds of occasions, to the extent that we have even heard people say: Recite al-Fatihah for the dead; and on other occasions and for other purposes. All of these matters are reprehensible innovations. Al-Fatihah and other soorahs are not to be recited in any situation or in any place or at any time except in cases where doing so is prescribed according to the Book of Allah or the Sunnah of His Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Otherwise it is an innovation and the one who does it is to be denounced. End quote.

Fataawa Noor 'ala ad-Darb (10/95)

He also said:

Reciting al-Fatihah when offering condolences is an innovation. The Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) never offered condolences by reciting al-Fatihah or any other passage from the Quran. End quote.

Majmoo‘ Fataawa wa Rasaa’il Ibn ‘Uthaymeen (13/1283)

Shaykh al-Fawzaan said:

The innovations that have been introduced in the field of acts of worship in the current era are many, because the basic principle concerning acts of worship is tawqeef [i.e., they can only be known through divine Revelation and sound texts of Quran and hadith, with no room for personal opinion]. So no act of worship can be regarded as Islamically prescribed except on the basis of evidence. So long as there is no evidence for it, then it is an innovation, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “Whoever introduces something into this matter of ours that is not part of it will have it rejected.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2697) and Muslim (1718).

The acts of worship that are done nowadays, for which there is no evidence, are many indeed. They include: reciting the intention for prayer out loud; reciting dhikr in unison after the prayer; and requesting people to recite al-Fatihah on special occasions, after du‘aa’ and for the dead... End quote.

Al-Bid‘ah ‘Anwaa‘uha wa Ahkaamuha, in Majmoo‘ah Mu’allafaat al-Fawzaan (14/15)

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The Muslim should be keen to follow the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and his companions, and to avoid innovation, in accordance with the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “...you must adhere to my Sunnah and the way of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Hold on to it and cling fast to it. And beware of newly-invented matters...” Narrated by Abu Dawood (4607); classed as saheeh by Shaykh al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood

And Allah knows best.