

حكمة فريضة الصلاة

The Rationale  
and Benefits of  
**SALAT**  
[Islamic Prayers]

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## Introduction

Islam, which means complete and peaceful submission to the Will of Allah (God) and obedience to His Law, is the perfect religion and the complete way of life for all mankind. One of the very significant Ayat (Qur'anic verses) that Allah finally revealed to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), clearly states that Islam is perfect. Allah, the (only) God in heaven and on earth (43:84) and our Creator (2:21), says in the Glorious Qur'an:

"...This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion..." (5:3)

Islam provides us complete guidance for every aspect of our life. It solves all sorts of problems facing humanity now and in the future, be it physical, material or economic, socio-cultural, political, legal, religious and spiritual, and the like. Everything it enjoins us to do is for our own benefit. An example of this is the performance of Salat (Islamic prayers) particularly the five compulsory daily prayers. Allah commands us to perform Salat (2:110; 4:103; 20:14) for our own benefits and not because He needs it as He is free of any need. He does not depend on anyone. Allah alone possesses all power. He is the All-Knowing, the Powerful (42:50), the Almighty, the Wise (59:24). When He desires a thing He only says 'Be' and it is (36:82). In other words, nothing is impossible to Him. He is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds (1:2). All creatures depend on Him (11:6). To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (42:49). He enlarges and restricts provisions to whom He wills (49:12). True prayer is due to Him Alone (13:14). We have to worship Allah Alone (6:102, 103; 11:1-2) because He commands us to worship Him. Allah says:

"That is Allah your Rabb! There is no God but He, the Creator of all things; then you worship Him: and He has power to dispose of all affairs. No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision; He is Subtle, Well-Aware." (6:102-103)

## The rationale of performing Salat

The performance of Salat (i.e., the five compulsory daily prayers) is the second pillar of Islam. It constitutes the physical, mental, and spiritual submission to Allah which starts by pronouncing Allah's greatness and ends with Salam (salutation of peace). The performance of Salat serves as the foundation of Islam. Without it there is no Islam. It is the concrete proof of our submission to Allah. It fulfills our very purpose of creation. Allah makes it very clear in the Glorious Qur'an that the very purpose why He has created us is to worship Him throughout our lives. He tells us:

"I have created not the jinn and men except that they should worship Me (Alone). I seek not any provision from them nor do I ask that they should feed Me. Verily, Allah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, Most Strong." (51:56-58)

"So glorify the praises of your Rabb and be of those who prostrate themselves (to Him). And worship your Rabb until there comes unto you the Hour that is certain (i.e., death)." (15:98-99)

The performance of Salat (prayer) was "the first act of worship" that Allah made obligatory for all believers (in Allah and His Messenger (pbuh)). Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received the revelation to perform Salat during his ascension to heaven. In a SahÓh (authentic) HadÓth (teaching of the Prophet (pbuh)) Anas (reported:

"The prayers were made obligatory on the Prophet (pbuh) the night of his ascension to heaven. At first, they were fifty in number, but were reduced several times until they were five. Then it was proclaimed, 'O Muhammad, the order is not changed. These five are (equivalent) to the fifty.'" (Ahmad, An-Nasai, and Tirmidhi)

Salat is obligatory to all Muslim believers who are sane and who reach the age of Tameez (begins at the age of seven years when a child is able to distinguish between right and wrong). The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"The pen is raised for three (meaning: there is no obligation upon three): one who is sleeping until he awakens, the child until he becomes an adult, and one who is insane until he becomes sane." (Ab' Daw'd, Ahmad, and Hakim)

"Order your children to pray at the age of seven, hit them to do so at the age of ten, and separate them (the boys from the girls) in their beds." (Ahmad)

Allah made it obligatory for us to perform Salat at its specified time. Our Creator says:

"When you have finished the prayers, remember Allah, standing, sitting down, and lying down on your sides. But when you are free from danger, set up regular prayers, for such prayer, are enjoined on believers at stated times." (4:103)

Aside from praying on time, our Creator commands us to guard our prayers and to pray with devotion. He also requires us to pray at all conditions whether we are traveling or not, or while we are in fear or in safe. He says:

"Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers. Especially the middle prayer. And stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind). If you fear (an enemy), pray on foot, or riding (as may be most convenient). But when you are in security, celebrate Allah's praises in the manner He has taught you, which you knew not (before)." (2:238,239)

Furthermore, Allah guides us how we should pray even in times of war or in peace (4: 102-103). All these show how imperative for us is to worship Him. A person who abandons the prescribed compulsory prayers is not considered a Muslim. Why? Because a Muslim is one who peacefully and completely submits to the Will of Allah and obeys His Law. The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"Between a person and disbelief is the discarding of prayer." (Muslim, Ab' Daw'd, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad)

"The pact between us and them is prayer. Whoever abandons it is a disbeliever." (Ab' Daw'd, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad)

### **The Benefits of Salat**

The benefits of performing Salat need not be overemphasized. Allah makes it very clear to us its great benefits. Allah says:

"O you people! Worship your Rabb (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you that you may become pious." (2:21)

"Seek (Allah's) help with patience perseverance and prayer." (2:45)

"Verily, I am Your Rabb (Allah). There is no God but I so worship Me (only), and perform regular prayer for My remembrance." (20:14)

"Successful indeed are the believers. Those who humble themselves in their prayers (i.e., who offer their prayers with all solemnity and submissiveness." (23:1-2)

"Recite (O Muhammad (pbuh)) what has been revealed to you of the Book, and establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows what you do (deeds)." (29:45)

"Indeed he will be successful who purifies himself. And remembers the Name of his Rabb (Allah), and prays." (87:14-15)

From the above Qur'anic Ayat (verses), we can conclude that there are many benefits that we can get in performing Salat. Regular observance of Salat makes us develop cleanliness not only in our bodies but also in our dresses and environment. Before the performance of prayer, we are not only required to perform Taharah (purification or ablution) but it is a must that our dress and place of worship are clean, free from any form of impurities. Aside from this physical purity, we are expected to purify our intention. According to an authentic Hadith:

"Verily, deeds are (judged) according to intentions and every man shall receive what he intended..." (Bukhari 1:1).

When we pray, our intention must be to worship Allah Alone. We have to develop Ihsan (perfection of worship) which the Prophet (pbuh) said: "It is to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him, and while even though you cannot see Him, He sees you..." (Muslim, 1:1)

Every time we pray, we have to remember that Allah is with those who fear and those who do good (16:128). He sees us standing forth (in prayer), and our movements among those who prostrate themselves. For it is He Who hears and knows all things (26:218-220). When we focus our mind and heart to Allah Alone, we develop concentration which the mind needs to function more intelligently.

The regular performance of Salat serves as a natural source of physical exercises that make our bodies stronger. It also trains us to be punctual, disciplined and conscious of our duties as each particular prayer (Salat) has its own appropriate time for its performance (4:103). It cultivates in us the ability to relax because one of the important requirements that we should observe while praying is Tum'aneenah (attaining calmness in the performance of each act). When prayer is performed in congregation, it promotes a bond of brotherhood, unity and equality among Muslim worshippers. In addition, when we pray to Allah, we develop obedience, patience, trust, honesty, piety, fear, humbleness, modesty, truthfulness, love, devotion and all other virtues acceptable to Allah. In other words, by performing Salat, we develop righteousness and prevent all sorts of immoral and indecent practices or evil deeds. Surat Al-Fatihah (The Opening Chapter) of the Qur'an which is an important part of Salat not only teaches us to glorify Allah but also guides us to ask for His help, guidance and protection so we will not go astray or incur His wrath.

"In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds: Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. You (Alone) we worship, and you (Alone) we seek help. Show us the straight way, the way of those on whom you have bestowed Your Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath. And who go not astray." (1:1-7)

Above all, observance of Salat serves as the concrete expression of thankfulness and appreciation to our Creator and Sustainer. After each prayer, we not only feel peace and tranquility but also self-fulfillment because we have performed the primary commandment of Allah. It gives us hope that Allah will forgive our sins as He is Most Forgiving (39:53; 53:32). If we sincerely pray to Him, He will surely answer our prayer.

"And your Rabb says: 'Call on Me; I will answer your (invocation). But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely enter Hell abased.'" (40:60) If we pray to Allah, He will bless our life here on earth and in the Hereafter. The Qur'an teaches us to have a well-balanced life as shown in the following supplication to Allah:

And of them there are some who say:

"...Our Rabb (Only God and Sustainer) give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter. And save us from the torment of the Fire!" (2:201)

Performance of Salat develops in us optimistic outlook in life because we know that we are praying to the only True God (47:19) Who is Most Forgiving (39:53; 53:32) and Whose guidance we seek for help (1:1-7). He rewards those who sincerely pray to Him with everlasting reward, Paradise (23:1-2, 9-11). This we should believe because Allah's promise is true and sure (10:4). His promise is the truth; no one's word can be truer than His Word (4:122).

### **The need to perform Salat based on the Qur'an and the Sunna**

Every one of us who hopes for Allah's eternal reward should perform Salat in accordance with Allah's injunctions in the Qur'an and the Sunna of His Messenger (pbuh). For our guidance, Allah commands us to believe and obey His Messenger (pbuh) (3:31-32; 4:170; 47:33). Allah tells us that he who obeys His Messenger obeys Him (4:80). He sent His Messenger (pbuh) with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions (61:9). Therefore, we have to pray the way Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) performed Salat. For our guidance on how to pray based on the Qur'an and the Sunna, we should read the booklet written by Sheikh Abdul-Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz (1995) entitled, "Salat according to the manners of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

In an authentic HadÓth collected by Imam Bukhari, it was reported that Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said:

"Perform your prayers in the same manner you have seen me doing."

It is for our own guidance that we perform properly the five obligatory prayers based on the Sunna. We have to pray at their right times (4:103) and with utmost sincerity to Allah. Allah dislikes those worshippers who are heedless of their prayers. Our Creator says:

"So woe to the worshippers, those who are neglectful of their prayers, those who (want but) to be seen." (107: 4-6)

With an everlasting reward æ Paradise where we will dwell therein forever, Allah inspires us to (strictly) guard our prayers. To reiterate, Allah says:

"Successful indeed are the believers, æ those who humble themselves in their prayers... and who (strictly) guard their prayers. These will be the heirs, who will inherit Paradise. They will dwell therein forever." (23:9-11)

The following are some of the AhadÓth that should further inspire us to pray properly and regularly on time:

"The first act that the slave (of Allah) will be accountable for on the Day of Judgement will be prayer. If it is good, then the rest of his acts will be good. And if it is evil, then the rest of his acts will be evil." (Tabarani)

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Mas'd:

I asked the Prophet (pbuh), "Which deed is dearest to Allah?" He replied, "To offer the Salat (prayers) at their early fixed times." I asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To be good and dutiful to your parents." I again asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To participate in Jihad (religious fighting) in Allah's cause." (Bukhari, 1/505)

"Almighty Allah said: 'I have made five times prayer obligatory on your people and I made covenant that if anyone observes them regularly at their right times, I shall admit him to Paradise. If anyone does not observe them regularly, there is no such guarantee of Mine for him.'" (Ab' Daw'd, 1/403)

Besides the prescribed five obligatory prayers, there are Sunna prayers (Rawatib) which are also recommended and beneficial for us to offer. These consist of twelve Rak'ah prayers which are performed before/or after obligatory prayers (i.e., 2 Rak'ah before Fajr, 4 Rak'ah before Zuhr and 2 after, 2 Rak'ah after Maghrib and 2 Rak'ah after 'Isha). The Prophet (pbuh) performed these prayers regularly. For our own benefit, we have to perform them. Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said:

"Whoever prays optionally twelve Rak'ah every one day and night, Allah will reward them by an established dwelling in Paradise." (Bukhari, Muslim 1/1581)

"The first thing that a slave will be taken to account for on the day of Judgement will be his prayer. If it is complete, he will have been victorious and successful. If it is lacking, he will have failed and lost. And if something is missing from his obligatory Salat, Allah will say: "Look and say if My slave has voluntary prayers. And his obligatory prayers that are lacking or incomplete will be completed by these." (Tirmidhi)

In addition to Rawatib prayers is the Witr. Witr which means "odd" is a single Rak'ah prayer. It is performed after the evening 'Isha prayer, right after the performance of the 2 Rak'ah Rawatib prayer in the evening until daybreak or before the Fajr prayer. We should make the necessary effort to perform it as it is a duty according to the Prophet (pbuh). He said:

"The Witr is a duty, so he who does not observe it is not of us." (Ab' Daw'd 1/1414)

Another important Sunna prayer is Tahajjud æ the prayer between 'Isha and Fajr. Tahajjud consists of two to thirteen Rak'ah, the thirteenth being the Witr prayer. It is preferably offered in the last third hours of the night. Allah praises those who habitually sleep little at night praying for forgiveness. He says:

"As to the righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Springs, taking joy in the things which their Rabb gives them, because, before then, they have done good deeds. They were in the habit of sleeping but little by night. And in the hours of early dawn they (were found) praying for forgiveness." (51:15-18)

We should try to make it a practice to perform Tahajjud in its prescribed time. Our Creator answers invocation, when done sincerely, during Tahajjud prayer. Allah's Messenger (pbuh) said:

"Our Rabb, the Blessed, the Superior, comes down every night to the nearest heaven to us during the last third of the night and He says: (Is there anyone) who invokes Me, (demands anything from Me) so that I may respond to his invocation? (Is there anyone) who asks Me for something so that I may grant him his request? (Is there anyone) who seeks My forgiveness, so that I may forgive him?" (Bukhari, 2/246)

Another Sunna that we should remember in praying is congregational Salat. The Prophet (pbuh) encourages it. According to him:

"The congregational Salat is twenty-seven times superior in degrees to the Salat (prayer) offered by a person alone." (Bukhari, 1/618).

Congregational prayer in the mosque is permissible for women but their prayer in their respective homes is more rewarded. According to the Prophet (pbuh) : "Do not forbid the female slaves of Allah from the mosques. Yet their prayer at home is better for them." (Abu Daw'd, 1/566)

They should, however, wear Hijab (dress modestly and conceal their beauty) and not use perfume. The Prophet said:

"If any of you women come out to go to the mosque, you should not touch perfume." (Muslim, 1/893)

The following AhadÓth should inspire men (from the time they reached the age of Tameez ) to perform Salat in the mosque:

"For him who goes to the mosque (every) morning and in the afternoon ( for the congregational ) Salat Allah will prepare an honorable place in Paradise with good hospitality for (what he has done) every morning and afternoon goings." (Bukhari, 1/631)

"Allah will give shade to seven (types of persons) on the Day when there would be no shade but His. (These types of persons are:) 1. A just ruler, 2. A youth who has been brought up in the worship of Allah (i.e., worships Allah Alone sincerely from his childhood), 3. A person whose heart is attached to the mosque (i.e., who offers the five compulsory congregational prayers in the mosque), 4. Two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake and they meet and part for Allah's cause only, 5. A man who refuses the call of a charming woman of a noble birth for illegal sexual intercourse with her and says: I am afraid of Allah, 6. A person who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given (i.e., nobody knows how much he has given in charity), and 7. A person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes become flooded with tears." (Bukhari, 1/629)

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Knowing the rationale and benefits of Salat, it is then best for us to strive hard to pray properly. We have to pray in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunna (tradition of the Prophet (pbuh), every time we pray, we should focus our attention on Allah. We should pray wholeheartedly and sincerely to Him to seek His Pleasure and forgiveness. We have to remember that Allah has given us twenty-four hours a day and He only commands us to perform five times obligatory prayers that take only a total of approximately one hour. What is one hour (out of the twenty-four hours) of our time? Is it too much for us, if we devote also part of our time praying the optional Salat? Should we not be thankful to Allah Who is our Creator (2:29; 39:62), Cherisher and Sustainer (7:54)

Let not anyone (even our children) nor anything in this world distract us in our prayers to our Creator. Allah tells us:

**"O you who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of Allah. And whoever does that, then, surely they are the losers." (63:9)**

We should also guide our children to pray properly and on time. Their prayers (if accepted) will not only benefit them but also us. The Prophet (pbuh) said:

"A man will be raised some degrees in Paradise and he will say, 'For what reason I am receiving this?' He will be told, 'Because of your son asking forgiveness for you.'" (Bukhari, 1613)

For our own benefit, we have to be conscious of the time for prayers. Never should we miss any obligatory prayer without any valid reason acceptable to Allah. While Allah may forgive us for missing a prayer due to forgetfulness and sleep, let us be conscious of our major obligation. If before sleeping, we are not sure to wake up to pray on time, we have to set our alarm clock so we will not miss Salat. Our Creator makes it clear that those who missed prayers and followed lusts will meet with destruction, if they will not repent and believe and work righteousness. (19:59,60).

Let us all strive to pray sincerely to Allah and pray that He will accept our prayers. We should remember that life in this world is temporary and nothing but play and amusement. The best is the Home in the Hereafter (6:32). We should pray to Allah that we remain true believers and righteous because He rewards the righteous believers the Gardens of Paradise as their final abode (25:15-16). They will therein enter peace and security (50:34). They shall have joy in all that they do. They and their associates will be in pleasant shade, reclining on raised couches; every kind of fruit will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for (36:55-57). Allah will remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury. No sense of fatigue will touch them (15:47-48). Their faces will beam with brightness of bliss (83:24). The greatest bliss is the Good Pleasure of Allah, that is the supreme triumph (9:72). Allah will be pleased with them, and they with Him (98:8).

Those, who feel lazy or preoccupied with worldly affairs and neglectful of their prayers, should be heedful of Allah's warning. They should fear the severity of the punishment of the Hell-fire. For the disbelievers, time has come that they should believe in Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) and perform Salat. They should reflect and ponder upon the many Signs of Allah (41:37). Allah sent His Messengers with the commandment to worship Him, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in Faith (8:5). They should have faith in Allah and His Messenger (pbuh) because Allah says:

"To Him is the word of truth. And those whom they call upon besides Him, hear them no more than one who stretches forth his hand for water to reach his mouth but it reaches him not, for the invocation of the disbelievers is nothing but an error." (13:14)

In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah tells us that the disbelievers will have terrible punishments in Hell-fire (18:1-6; 20:124; 36:63,64). They will forever suffer tribulations after tribulations in furious, blazing fire (4:56; 14:49-51; 22:19-22) and a boiling water (56:42). Their skins will be roasted and renewed (4:45). They will neither die nor live (20:74). They will taste the boiling fluid and a fluid dark, murky, intensely cold. They will suffer other penalties of a similar kind to match them (38:56-58). They shall have no portion in the Hereafter, nor will Allah (deign to) speak to them or look at them on the

Day of Judgement, nor will He cleanse them (of sin); they shall have a grievous chastisement (3:77). They will never see Allah, for He will make them blind on the Day of Judgement. Allah makes it very clear that those who were blind in this world (of the Qur'an as the Truth from Him) will be blind in the Hereafter (17:72).

Non-Muslims should think of the invitation to accept Islam as an invitation to the best religion and the best way of life. Verily, Islam is the light from Allah (39:22). Allah makes it very clear that the only religion acceptable to Him is Islam. He says:

"The religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will). Nor did the People of the Book (i.e., the Jews and the Christians) dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But whoever denies the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account." (3:19)

"And whoever desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)." (3:85)

From the above Qur'anic injunctions we can conclude that any form of worship that does not conform to Islam is not valid. Any prayer outside Islamic teachings becomes useless because Allah will never accept it. Therefore, for our own guidance and salvation, we have to perform Salat in accordance with Allah's injunctions in the Qur'an and the (authentic) Sunna of His Messenger (pbuh).