

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Salaat: Rituals and Meanings

Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre

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I. Rituals Contemporaneous with Salaat (cnt.)

It is narrated that Prophet Mohammad (s.a.) said:

"إِنَّ الرَّجُلَيْنِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي يَقُومَانِ فِي الصَّلَاةِ، وَرُكُوعَهُمَا وَسُجُودَهُمَا وَاحِدًا، وَإِنْ مَا بَيْنَ صَلَاتَيْهِمَا مِثْلَ مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ"
(Two men from my *ummah* (nation) establish *salaat*, their kneeling (ركوع) and prostration (سجدة) are the same, but the distance between their *salaats* is the distance between the sky and the earth.)

1. Intention (*Niyya*; النية)

1) Verses from the Holy Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ (البقرة 2:264)

(O, you who believe! Do not make your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like he who spends his wealth to show off to the people.)

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا (الإسراء 17:84)

(Say: "everyone acts according to his own disposition: but your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the way.")

2) Hadiths of Masomin (a.s.)

It is narrated that Prophet Mohammad (s.a.) said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ

(Deeds are [measured] by the intentions)

Advising Abu Azar:

وَلِيَكُنْ لَكَ فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ نِيَّةٌ حَتَّى فِي النَّوْمِ وَالْأَكْلِ

(You should have an intention in everything, even in sleeping and eating.)

3) With *Niyya* (Intention) One's Deeds Become Eternal:

It is narrated that Prophet Mohammad (s.a.) said:

"نِيَّةُ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَوْلَى مِنْ عَمَلِهِ، وَكَذَلِكَ نِيَّةُ الْفَاجِرِ"

(The intention of the believer is more effective than his act; the same is true of the nonbeliever.)

It is narrated that Imam Sadeq (a.s.) said:

"إِنَّمَا خُلِدَ أَهْلُ النَّارِ فِي النَّارِ؛ لِأَنَّ نِيَّتَهُمْ كَانَتْ فِي الدُّنْيَا أَنْ لَوْ خُلِدُوا فِيهَا أَنْ يَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ أَبَدًا، وَإِنَّمَا خُلِدَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ؛ لِأَنَّ نِيَّتَهُمْ كَانَتْ فِي الدُّنْيَا أَنْ لَوْ بَقُوا فِيهَا أَنْ يَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ أَبَدًا، فَبِالنِّيَّاتِ خُلِدَ هَؤُلَاءُ وَهَؤُلَاءُ، ثُمَّ تَلَا قَوْلَهُ: قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ (وقال: على نيته)."

(Companions of fire will remain in fire forever because their intention was that if they remained in this world, they would disobey God forever; and companions of heaven remain in it forever, because their intention was that if they remained in this world, they would obey God forever. Thus, by the intentions, these and those became eternal [in their status]. Then, he recited the verse,

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ (الإسراء 17:84)

“Say: everyone acts according to his disposition” (and he (i.e. Imam Sadeq) said (this means:) “according to his *niyya*”).

4) Giving Life to the Dead Deeds by Purification of the Niya

Allah (s.w.t.) says:

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ (81: 8-9 التكويد)

(When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned for what crime she was slain.)

Niyya (النِّيَّة) is a matter of the heart and its most important duty, and its relation with our deeds is that of the spirit to the body. Its most difficult condition to fulfill for the masses of the people is its purity, and very few can achieve true purity (إِخْلَاص) of *niyya*. And Allah (s.w.t.) says:

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ (39:3 الزمر)

(Surely pure religion is for Allah only.)

This hadith of Imam Sadeq (a.s.) also emphasizes that intention is the spirit of the deed:

ماضعف بدن عما قويت عليه النية

(Body does not fail [performing] that for which there is a strong intention).

Thus, deeds become alive with *niyya* (intention), and *niyya* is alive only if it is purely for Allah (s.w.t.).

Shaikh Ibn Arabi in his *Futuh-at-ul Makkiya* says that it is an obligation of the faithful servant of Allah (s.w.t.) to uphold the domain of the forms of the deeds that Allah has obligated him/her to perform by upholding its domain in the best manner, and Allah has given him the ability to breathe spirit into every form shaped by his acts, and that is presence and purity (الحضور و الإخلاص) in it. God has not criticized the servant who shapes a form for which there is a spirit from Him, that with the permission of its Lord and being upheld with that living spirit, glorifies and praises its Lord. But God has criticized anyone who creates a form which can potentially be alive; nonetheless, it is left dead by its creator. However, God will give life to it because of its potential for life, but not he who created it.

5) Three Types of Worship

Allah (s.w.t.) says:

وَفِي الآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ (57:20 الحديد)

(And in the hereafter is a severe chastisement, and forgiveness from Allah, and satisfaction).

Thus, there three major stations on the Resurrection Day: hell, heaven, and satisfaction. Human beings also have three major faculties: anger, lust, and intellect. Accordingly, worshipers are categorized into three major types: those who worship God out of the fear of the hell; those who worship, for they desire heaven; and those who worship God out of love; this last kind of worship, in hadith, is referred to as the worship of the free. Even though all of the three types of worship are correct, the last one is higher in rank because there is more purity of intention in it.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

... وبالإخلاص يكون الخلاص

(With purity of the intention comes freedom)

6) Various Levels of Niyya

It said that for the masses, *niyya* (النِّيَّة) is the decision to worship God out of fear or hope. For the people of knowledge, it is the dedication to worship God because of experiencing God's awe and glory. For people of attraction and love, it is the dedication to worship God out of the experience of passion and love. And for the *Uliya* (اولياء), it is the dedication to worship God as a matter of following (تبعية) after annihilation.

For the masses of the people, the purification is from manifest and non-manifest *shirk* i.e. polytheism (شرك الجلى و الخفى). For the elite, the purification is from fear and hope. For people of the heart, the purification is from the ego (I). And for the perfect, the purification is from seeing and noticing one's worship.

2. **Takbir (saying 'Allah is Greater')**

Takbir is professing and announcing the greatness of Allah (s.w.t.), and it is truly said when veils of ignorance are removed from one's eyes, and he/she is able to witness the greatness of Allah (s.w.t..)

1) **Hadith:**

Imam Ali (a.s.), regarding the pious (المتقين) said:

عَظُمَ الخَالِقُ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ فَصَغُرَ مَا دُونَهُ فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ

(The Creator has become great (magnificent) in them, and everything else has become insignificant in their eyes) [Sermon 193 of Nahj-ul Balagheh].

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) said:

امام صادق عليه السلام فرمود:

إذا افتتحت الصلاة فكبر إن شئت واحدة، وإن شئت ثلاثاً، وإن شئت سبعاً، وكل ذلك بجزء عنك، غير أنك إذا كنت إماماً لم تجهر إلا بتكبيرة

(When you begin salaah, if you want, say the *takbir* one time; and if you want, three times; and if you want, seven times. They all fulfill your obligation, but if you lead [congregational prayer], do not say more than one *takbir* loudly!)

With each *takbir*, one evil is removed from the person, and by raising hands up to the one's ears, the veil is thrown behind the back.

2) **Levels of Takbirs**

It is said that after standing before God and purifying the heart, and entering among those who are loyal to God, get ready to ask permission to enter the door, to leave the house of the nature (i.e. desires, impulses), and to remove its thick veil by appealing to the position of the majesty and glory and to throw it behind your back. By saying each *takbir* remove a veil and enter a new veil to remove it with the next *takbir*. By the third *takbir*, you enter the station of the heart. At this stage, Allah is understood as the owner of the heart, let your heart be only in His Hands and moved by Him, aware of the fact that you did not remove the veil from yourself but He did it for you and you are not capable of proclaiming His Greatness, for He is greater than being described. Then, see the divinity only in Him, and ask the forgiveness of your sins. Then, remove the fourth and fifth veils, and throw them behind you back. Then repeat *takbirs* and open the eye of your heart to hear the call, "Come forward"... After sanctifying *Haqq* (truth) from being reached and described, remove the sixth veil, and say *takbir* if you see yourself capable of removing the seventh veil, which is the seventh gentleness, otherwise, knock the door of His Grace and genuinely confess to your transgressions and say, "يا محسن قد أتاك المسيء" (O doer of good deeds, verily doer of bad deeds has come to you). Make sure you are sincere in this confession; otherwise be cautious of the hypocrisy.

3. **Recitation**

It is narrated that:

إصلاحاً إلا بفاتحة الكتاب

(There is no salaah except with the opening chapter of the Book.) Thus, recitation of some of the Holy Quran is obligatory in salaah. The Holy Quran also has different levels of

meanings, some of which are beyond the reach of everyone but the purified, as Allah (s.w.t.) says:

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (77-79 : الواقعة)

(That (this) is indeed a noble Quran, in a book kept hidden; none shall touch it save the purified ones.)

1) Levels of Recitation

1. **The Masses:** *Tajweed* (Correct and beautiful pronunciation) of the forms the words, and thinking about their conventional meanings.
2. **The Selected:** Bringing forth to the heart the truth of the word of God by their rational intellect or knowledge, reaching some secrets of recitation.
3. **The People of Knowledge:** Their recitation is the translation of what they witness after their knowledge of God's Book.
4. **The People of the Heart:** Their recitation is the translation of the feelings and inspirations of their hearts after *becoming* some aspects of the Holy Quran.
5. **Uliya:** Their recitation has three general degrees:
 - i) The translation of manifestations of God's Deeds in the heart of the *wali*.
 - ii) The translation of manifestations of God's Names.
 - iii) The translation of manifestations of God's Essence (تجليات الذاتية).

At these three levels, the *Haqq* ('The Truth') is being praised with His own tongue, as it is understood from hadith of القرب النوافل that God becomes the faculties of His servant as a result of seeking closeness to Him through performing voluntary worships. This begins with manifestations of God's Deeds (تجليات الفعلية). [And as implied by some verses and hadiths:] by performing obligatory worships, the servant becomes God's Faculties, and He praises Himself through His servant.

2) The Division of Salaat between God and His Servant

In a Qodsi Hadith, it is narrated:

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى فَسَمْتُ الصَّلَاةَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي نَصْفَيْنِ وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ فَإِذَا قَالَ الْعَبْدُ

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى حَمِدَنِي عَبْدِي وَإِذَا قَالَ

الرَّحْمَنَ الرَّحِيمَ

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى أَنْتَ عَلَيَّ عَبْدِي وَإِذَا قَالَ

مَا لِكَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

قَالَ مَجِدَنِي عَبْدِي وَقَالَ مَرَّةً فَوَضَّ إِلَيَّ عَبْدِي فَإِذَا قَالَ

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

قَالَ هَذَا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ عَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ فَإِذَا قَالَ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

قَالَ هَذَا لِعَبْدِي وَلِعَبْدِي مَا سَأَلَ

Translation of the First Chapter of the Book of Allah:

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

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

The Beneficent, the Merciful.

Master of the Day of Judgment.

Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help.

Keep us on the right path.

The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors. Not (the path) of those upon whom Thy wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray.