

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Salaat: Rituals and Meanings

Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre

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I. Preludes to Salaat

1. On the Time of Salaat

In hadith: Sitting and waiting for the time of salaat is worship.

Awaiting for the time of meeting with Allah (s.w.t.) helps one to have presence of the heart during salaat.

If one who is in journey towards God cannot devote all his/her time to God, at least he/she should devote the time of five daily salaats to Him, as God has required him/her to do so. This formal act may lead to real spiritual communion with Allah (s.w.t.).

2. Facing Kaaba (Qiblah)

Mecca is Umm-ul Qura (Mother of Cities) and the center of the extension of the Earth, being neither of the East nor of the West.

The secret of *Kaaba* is Bayt-ul Ma'mur (بيت المعمور; i.e. the House frequently visited), which is the secret of the heart, and the secret of its secret is the Hand of God (يدالله), and its most tightly held secret is Allah's Greatest Name (اسم الله الأعظم). People of knowledge and heart extend the decree of *Tawhid* from their *sirr* (سر) to their outward appearance. As they unify different physical directions into the direction of Kaaba, they unify different directions in their heart by turning their hearts towards the Qiblah of the manifestation of the secret of singularity (الأحدية) during their salaats.

And *uliya* (ولياء) in their salaat face *qiblah* of the manifestation of the secret of singularity (الأحدية) in body because they witness the face of the unseen singularity (الأحدية الغيبية), and see its secret of

مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا (هود 11:56)

(There is no crawling creature that He does not take by the forelock.)

And find the secret of

لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ (التور 24:35)

(Neither of the East nor of the West)

And with the اللطيفة الأجوافية (the hollow gentleness), they face the singularity of all intrinsic Names (الأسماء) (الذاتية), which has neither the western characteristic of the concealing of the Zaat (ذات), nor the eastern characteristics of the revealing of the plurality of the Names and Attributes. And with the secret of the spirit (سرّ الروح), they face the domain of oneness, which is the domain of the Greatest Name of Allah (اسم الله الأعظم), which has neither the western concealment, nor the eastern revelation. And with heart, they face Bayt-ul Ma'mur (بيت المعمور; the House frequently visited), which is its manifestation as deeds, and find the secret of “Neither of the East nor of the West”. And with physical outward, they face the objectified external *Kaaba* from the inhabited east and from its west, and see Allah (s.w.t.) in everything seen with the singularity of togetherness (أحدية الجمع).

We should know that the confinement and staying with a specific face and turning to a designated direction is for revealing the secret of the unity (الوحدة), and this is necessary for the *Aarif* (عارف) in each round of the journey, as many as of the five planes of the presence (الحضرات الخمس). If he/she exceeds this, it will be a sign of imperfection, for Allah (s.w.t.) says:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ (البقرة 2:115)

(To Allah belong the east and the west, whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah)

Thus, he who knows Allah sees Him everywhere, and finds everything Kaaba of aspirations, and the Beautiful Face of the Beloved.

II. Rituals Contemporaneous with Salaat

1. *Adhaan* and *Iqamah* (الأذان و الإقامة)

- *Adhaan* is the announcement to every being in entire macrocosm of universe, the seen and the unseen, and in the microcosm of the human being, to prepare and to get ready for coming forward before Allah Almighty. And *Iqamah* is to bring them forward and to station them in the sanctuary of Majesty and Sanctity.
- *Takbiraat* (الله اكبر): With the first *takbirs*, the person about to perform salaat loudly announces the all beings are incapable of praising Allah (s.w.t.) as He deserves to be praised. And he/she knows that he/she does not deserve to stand before Allah, but only to express his/her humility before Him so that He might bless him/her.
- By bearing witness (twice) that there is no god by Allah (أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله), he/she also denies by these *tahlils* every other being of self-sustained divinity (الألوهية الذاتية) and divinity of the deeds (الألوهية الفعلية). And by attributing these divinities only and exclusively to Allah (s.w.t.), it is declared that no one else is qualified for praise and tribute.
- By bearing witness that Prophet Mohammad is messenger of Allah and the seal of prophets (أشهد أن محمداً رسول الله), in the realm of the seen and the unseen, he/she appeals to the holy status of the absolute intercessor (الشفيع المطلق), so that he/she will get to the end of this journey in the companionship of that holy being, i.e. his position of the absolute *welaaya* (الولاية المطلقة)
- Bearing witness to *welaaya* of *wali* of Allah (ولى الله), (أشهد أن علياً ولى الله), is also an appeal to this holy status for accompanying the person in his/her journey towards Allah. In *hadith*: “With Ali, salaat is established.” And “I am salaat and fast of the believers”. It is said that this bearing of witness is also bearing witness to the status of the Prophethood because *welaaya* is the spirit of the *Nubowah*.
- By saying “حيّ على الصلّاة” (hurry to salaat), he/she announces being ready for salaat, and recites it to physical and metaphysical faculties.
- Then, he states the secret of salaat briefly by saying, “حيّ على الفلاح” (hurry to salvation) and “حيّ على خير العمل” (hurry to the best deed). This is to express his/her intrinsic love for liberation and natural perfection to his/her physical and metaphysical faculties.
- After the awakening of one’s divine essence (فطرة) and readiness of the faculties, *takbirs* and *tahlils* (أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله) are repeated to confess that one’s incapability and imperfection is fully internalized in the heart, and the secret of the *awwaliya* (الأولوية being the first) and the *akheria* (الأخرية being the last) is revealed.
- In *Iqamah* the physical and metaphysical stand in row and by repeating the same pronouncement of the *Adhaan*, they make those truths stronger, and enhance the appeal (التوسل) to intercession (الشفاعة), and awaken the divine essence (فطرة) in oneself. In addition, when the servant of God reaches this point, he announces being in the presence of Allah (s.w.t.), thus the salaat had been established “قد قامت الصلّاة”.
- Then, the seeker of Allah (السالك الى الله تعالى) establishes his/her heart, which is his/her best faculty and the divine solider in this land, as the Imam (the leader), and gathers all other faculties from different inside and outside places which were conquered by the heart, and makes them the followers of the heart.

- The obedient angels of the *Malakut* (الملكوت) also gather around it and follow him in salaah. Thus, when the seeker of Allah (السالك الى الله تعالى) sees being in front in this journey towards Allah (s.w.t.), he/she must fully guard his/her salaah, and not neglect it, so that he/she does not carry the burdens of the followers.
- It is said that the believer by him/herself is a congregation (الجماعة), and the virtue of the salaah increases as the number of the followers increase. Thus, if he/she is not truthful and attentive in his/her salaah, he is a liar and hypocrite in addition to someone who wastes salaah (ضائع الصلاة). The Imam is the guarantor of the salaahs of the followers.
- It said that the way to salvation from liability the prayer is to submit oneself in all acts and rituals, and recitations of the salaah to the spirituality (روحانية) of the holy Prophet, or other infallibles, such as the twelfth Imam (عجج الله تعالى فرجه الشريف), and praise Allah from their tongues and appeal to their acts, while he/she is Imam of the angels and divine faculties with the status of *resaala* and *welaaya*, while being a follower of these two. Thus, this journey will be complete with following and absolute submission.

2. Secrets of Qiyam (Uprightness)

- Allah (s.w.t.) says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ وَرَبَّكَ فَكَبِّرْ وَثِيَابَكَ فَطَهِّرْ (4-1 : 74 المدثر)

(O thou wrapped up [in the mantle]! Arise and deliver thy warning! And exalt your Lord, and thy garments keep free from stain!)

Uprightness (الإستقامة) in ethics, and justice in mastery of acts (الملكات) is to stand between hope and fear ...

Uprightness is to stay in the position of humanity, and away from the frailty (تفريط) and excessiveness (إفراط). And Allah says:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (3:67 آل عمران)

(Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but he was an upright man who had surrendered (to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters.)

فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ (11:112 هود)

(So stay upright as you are commanded, and those who turn (unto Allah) with you)

- Thus, one should not deviate from the center in all stages of the journey, and it is very difficult for the seeker of Allah (السالك الى الله تعالى). He/she should remain in shame before Allah (s.w.t.), head down, because he/she had not served Him as he/she should have. Thus, he/she should keep looking at the place of his/her prostration (سجدة), which is the clay of the humility, and remember his/her shortcomings, seeing him/herself before the Glorified Lord of the entire domain of existence, remembering that everything depends upon Him.