

## What's so special about Salah?

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ  
الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

**Mu'minoon 23: 1.** Successful indeed are the believers. **2.** Those who offer their Salat (prayers) with all solemnity and full submissiveness.

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ  
قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

**Muddathir 74: 42.** "What has caused you to enter Hell?" **43.** They will say: "We were not of those who used to pray (Salah).

Islam came to make us, all human beings, successful in this life and the next. It is not either or; it is both. It's not one at the expense of the other. It is both. That is why Allah ﷻ sent this Deen, to teach us how to be truly successful. Anyone here who is allergic to success? That is why I began with these Ayaat of Sura Al Mu'minoon and Sura Muddathir which clearly and unequivocally declare what the key to success is. And that is Salah.

My brothers and sisters, we enter Islam by believing in the Uloohiyat of Allah ﷻ; that only Allah ﷻ is worthy of worship and the Risaalat (Messengership) of Rasoolullah ﷺ and declaring that in the form of the Shahada. Islam is not merely a philosophy or ideology but a practice. That's why as soon as we declare the Sahada, Allah ﷻ requires that we give evidence of that by our actions. That action, evidence of our Imaan, is Salah. Allah ﷻ ordered us to pray and showed Rasoolullah ﷺ how it was to be done. And Rasoolullah ﷺ taught us how to do it. This also reiterates the critical position of Rasoolullah ﷺ in Islam.

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Allah ﷻ ordered:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

**Ta-Ha 20: 14.** *"Verily! I am Allah! La ilaha illa Ana (none has the right to be worshipped but I), so worship Me, and establish As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat) for My Remembrance.*

My brothers and sisters, human beings have prayed from the beginning of time. The vast majority of the most important relics of ancient people are related to their worship. It was the inspiration of religion that enabled them to construct vast temples and monuments which lasted not merely through centuries but millennia, standing in mute testimony to the yearning of mankind to connect to their Creator. But did that happen? Mankind understood this much, that 'god' must be worshipped. The quest of all people was the same and most commendable; to connect with the Creator, to talk to Him and to have Him respond. They tried to do whatever occurred to them. But they never knew if it worked.

That is when Islam came at multiple times in human history with the same message: That there is nobody worthy of worship except Allah ﷻ, who created us all, sustains us and to Him is our return. He is like nothing in His creation. And so, nothing in creation is worthy of worship except Him. Allah ﷻ didn't merely order us to worship Him. Nor did He leave it to us to decide what constitutes worship.

Allah ﷻ taught His Messenger ﷺ how He wished to be worshipped and Rasoolullah ﷺ taught us what to do. The beauty of this is, that when we worship, we are not in any doubt about whether what we are doing really

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works. We know it is the right thing, because the One we worship, prescribed it and His Messenger ﷺ taught us how to do it. How beautiful is that?

*Narrated Malik bin Huwairath (RA) (مالك بن الحويرث): We came to Rasoolullah ﷺ and stayed with him for twenty days and nights. We were all young and of about the same age. Rasoolullah ﷺ was very kind and merciful. When he realized our longing for our families, he asked about our homes and the people there and we told him. Then he asked us to go back to our families and stay with them and teach them (the religion) and to order them to do good things. He also mentioned some other things which I have remembered or [??] forgotten. Rasoolullah ﷺ then added, **"Pray as you have seen me praying and when it is the time for Salah one of you should call the Adhan and the oldest of you should lead Salah.** Sahih al-Bukhari 631: Book 10, Hadith 28, <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/10/28>*

Allah ﷻ gave us a way to contact Him directly and to ask for His help. He said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

**Baqara 2: 153.** *O you who believe! Seek help in (Sabr) patience and As-Salat (the prayer). Truly! Allah is with As-Sabirin (the patient ones).*

Among the earliest Ayaat revealed are those of Sura Al Muzzammil where Allah ﷻ ordered Rasoolullah ﷺ to establish Salah at night as the source of power and sustenance for his work.

Allah ﷻ said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُزَّمِّلُ  
قُمْ اللَّيْلَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

**Muzammil 73: 1.** *O you wrapped in garments (Muhammad ﷺ)! 2. Stand (to pray) all night, except a little.*

Salah was the first law prescribed.

Allah ﷻ said to Musa (AS):

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

**Ta-Ha 20: 14.** *"Verily! I am Allah! La ilaha illa Ana (none has the right to be worshipped but I), so worship Me, and establish As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat) for My Remembrance.*

Ibrahim (AS) understood this and so when he left his wife and infant son in the barren valley of Makkah he made this dua:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ  
رَبَّنَا لِتُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفئِدَةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارزُقْهُمْ  
مِّنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ

**Ibrahim 14: 37.** *"O our Rabb! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Ka'aba); in order, O our Rabb, that they may establish As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), so fill some hearts among people with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.*

Ibrahim (AS) shows his understanding of the importance of Salah as being the head of the matter which will result in all other matters falling into place. See the order of his dua; what he asks for first. Consider his situation and the situation in which he left his wife and son and then let's ask ourselves what we would have asked for first, if we were making this dua. Then ask why Ibrahim (AS) did the opposite? Establishing Salah before safety and sustenance? Ask why the first thing that Rasoolullah ﷺ did when he made Hijra to Madina was not to build his own house, but to build the masjid? The Anbiya understood the true priority in life, because they were the most successful people in the world. We need to ask ourselves what our standards and role models for success are. Are they the Anbiya (Prophets) of Allah ﷻ or someone else? Then ask why? And ask what the implications are? Today we have a single point of reference for success; net worth – 'value of possessions.' Ask what would happen if we changed that to 'value of character'?

Ibn Al Qayyim Al Jawziyya describes Salah in these beautiful words: *"Among all acts of worship and nearness to Him, Allah ﷻ favored the Salah and designed it in the most perfect and complete manner. It constitutes glorification of Allah ﷻ by engaging all our faculties; the tongue through speech, movements of hands and feet, the head and all the senses it hosts, and the whole body. Each limb takes its share of the fruits that this great act of worship has to offer, even the inner senses. And most importantly, the heart fulfills its share of worship to its utmost in the Salah. The Salah constitutes praise, glorification, tasbeeh and takbir as well as the declaration of the truth. It consists of standing with humility and servitude before our Rabb and Creator, feeling His care, attention and providence.*

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*It embodies humility before Allah ﷻ and seeking His nearness by beseeching Him using His own words. Then bowing in humbleness, submissiveness and acknowledgement of one's need for Him. Thus he (the slave) places the most dignified part of his body (his face) on the ground in submission and need of his Rabb, in acknowledgement of His Greatness and Power; the heart is humbled, the body is submissive, the senses are attentive!" Miftaah Daar as-Sa'aadah (2/230-231)*

## **Benefits of Salah**

Salah has many benefits, some of which I have listed here as a reminder.

Prevents and protects us from sin

اتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ  
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

**Ankabut 29: 45.** Recite (O Muhammad ﷺ) what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Qur'an), and establish As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat). Verily, As-Salat (the prayer) prevents from Al-Fahsha' (great sins of every kind) and Al-Munkar (every kind of evil wicked deed) and the remembering (praising, etc.) of (you by) Allah ﷻ (before the angels) is greater indeed [than your remembering Allah ﷻ in prayers]. And Allah knows what you do.

Abu Huraira (RA) reported: Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "If there was a river at a person's door and that person took a bath in it five times a day, would you notice any dirt on him?" They said, "Not a trace of dirt would be left." Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "That is the parable of the five prayers by which Allah ﷻ removes sins. [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 505, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 667]

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*Ibn Umar (RA) reported: Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "Verily, when a slave stands to pray, his sins are placed on top of his head and shoulders. Every time he bows or prostrates, they fall away from him." (Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān 1769)*

*Abu Huraira (RA) reported: Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "The five prayers, Friday to Friday, and Ramadan to Ramadan will expiate the sins committed between them, as long as major sins are avoided." (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 233)*

*Jabir ibn Abdullah (RA) reported: Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "The key to Jannah is Salah, and the key to Salah is Wudhu." (Sunan al-Tirmidhī 4)*

*Ibn Umar (RA) narrates: Rasoolullah ﷺ stated: "The place of Salah in religion is like the place of the head in the body." (Majmau'l-Awsat, 3:154, (2313.) Imam Tabarani, Mu'jamu's-Saghir)*

*Abu'd-Darda (RA) stated: "My friend Muhammad ﷺ gave me the following advice, "Even if you are chopped up and burnt, do not associate partners with Allah ﷻ and do not miss your Fardh Salah deliberately. Allah ﷻ will remove His protection from a person who misses his Fardh prayers deliberately." (Musnad Ahmad: 5/238, Sahih Ibn Majah: 3529, Bayhaqi)*

*Abdullah bin Qurt (RA): Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment, a slave will be questioned about his prayers first. If his prayers are good, his other deeds will be good, too. If his prayers are bad, his other deeds will be bad, too." (Tabarani)*

*Abdullah bin Umar (RA) reported that Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "A person who misses the afternoon prayer (Asr) is like a person whose family and property have been destroyed." (Jamiu'l Ahadith)*

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*Abdullah Ibn-Amr Ibn Al-Aas (RA): One day, Rasoolullah ﷺ talked about prayers. He said, "The Salah of a person who performs five daily prayers without missing will be brightness, evidence in his favor and salvation for him on the Day of Judgment. A person who does not perform five daily prayers properly will be together with Qarun, Haman, Firaun and Ubayy Ibn Khalaf." (Musnad: 2/169, Darimi: 2/301, Ibn Hibban: 1448)*

*Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "Allah ﷻ has obligated five prayers. Whoever excellently performs their Wudhu, prays Salawaat at their proper times, completes their Ruku'u, Sujood and has Khushu' has a promise from Allah ﷻ that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no promise from Allah ﷻ. He may either forgive him or punish him." [Sahih - Recorded by Malik, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Nasa'i and others. Al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami, vol. 1, p. 616.]*

*Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "When anyone of you is engaged in Salah, he is holding an intimate conversation with his Rabb." [Muslim]*

*Rasoolullah ﷺ said, "When you pray, pray like a person who is saying farewell." [Ibn Majah, Hakim, Bayhaqi]*

*Rasoolullah ﷺ would tell Sayyidina Bilal bin Rabah (RA) to call the Adhaan and say, "O Bilal, give us rest with it." [Abu Dawud]*

The Sahaba also considered Salah to be a great gift from Allah ﷻ, which it is. Someone asked the servant of Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) to tell him about the daily schedule of his master. He said, 'He waits from one Salah for the next and between the two, he recites Qur'an.' Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) was a businessman. He did this while doing his business. Today we give business as an excuse to delay or leave Salah. Let us reflect on this and repent. I ask to grant us the sweetness of Salah and to fill our hearts with love for it.