

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, most Kind, most Merciful



Surat al-Ankabut 29:45

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ
وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

Maintain the *salah*. Indeed *salah* prevents indecencies and evil, and the remembrance of Allah is surely greater.

Learning Objectives

- To explain that *salah* is the best form of communication with Allah
- To explore the deeper meanings behind the *wajib* and *mustahabb* actions of *salah*
- To categorise the actions of *salah* into *rukn* and *ghayr rukn*

Key Words

عِبَادَة *Ibadah*
worship

عِبَاد *Ibad*
servants; worshippers

رُكْن *Rukn*
support; essential part
of *salah*

Salah

Salah is the pillar of religion. It is the most important act of worship in Islam because it is through *salah* that we establish a communication and dialogue with our Lord. *Salah* allows us to start a conversation with Allah and to build on our relationship with Him. Through *salah* we acknowledge the greatness of Allah and praise Him through our actions and *dhikr*.

As human beings, the search for a higher being is part of our nature. It is what drives us towards Allah to seek His help and assistance. *Salah*, together with other ways of constantly remembering Allah, helps to take away our worries and to find inner peace. In the Qur'an, Allah confirms this:



Surat ar-Rad 13:28

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ
اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Those who believe, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!



Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) has said:

The first thing about which a person will be questioned will be the *salah*. If it is accepted then all his other good deeds will also be accepted. But if it is rejected then all his other deeds will also be rejected.

Just as the body needs food to survive and grow, the soul also needs to be nourished, and the food of the soul is *ibadah*, the best of which is *salah*. Islam instructs us to pray five times a day so that we can be spiritually nourished. Allah has set specific methods of *salah* that must be offered at five specific times during the day and night:

Surat al-Isra 17:78



أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ
وَقُرْآنِ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

Maintain the prayer from the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and [observe particularly] the dawn recital. Indeed the dawn recital is attended [by angels].



ACTIVITY...

A person can only pray a *wajib salah* once they are sure the time for that *salah* has set in. If in doubt remember to wait until you are sure it is time for *salah*.

Match the *salah* to the time of the day it should be prayed.

<u>Salah</u>	<u>Time</u>
<i>Fajr</i>	Late evening
<i>Dhuhr</i>	After sunset
<i>Asr</i>	Noon/Midday
<i>Maghrib</i>	Early dawn
<i>Isha</i>	Afternoon

Performing Salah

Salah has a major impact on our actions throughout the day. If we pray properly with complete attention and humility, Allah accepts our prayers and is pleased with us. This brings us closer to Allah and helps us to stay away from sinning. In the Qur'an (29:45), Allah tells us that *salah* protects us against indecency and evil. This means that every action Allah commands us to perform in *salah*, including *niyyah*, *qiyam*, *ruku*, and so on, all have the purpose of encouraging us to improve our character and keep us on the *sirat al-mustaqim* (straight path). Every act of *salah* is therefore not just a bodily movement, but has a deeper meaning behind it.

There are 11 *wajib* actions of *salah*:

- 1 *Niyyah*
- 2 *Takbirat al-ihram*
- 3 *Qiyam*
- 4 *Qira'ah*
- 5 *Ruku*
- 6 *Sujud*

- 7 Dhikr
- 8 Tashahhud
- 9 Salam
- 10 Tartib
- 11 Muwalat

We will now explore some of the deeper meanings behind these *wajib* actions so we can understand why we have been commanded to perform them and how they can impact our souls.



Niyyah means intention, the reason to do something. All our actions depend on why we are doing them. In *salah*, our intention should be to seek nearness to Allah and to fulfil our duty of worship towards Him as His servants. Our motivation to pray should be our sincere love for Allah, gratitude for His blessings, and the desire to speak with our Lord.

We must know which *salah* we are praying for the sake of Allah and make this clear in our intention, though we do not actually have to say this with our tongues. We must be conscious of our *niyyah* before *salah* begins and be aware of this *niyyah* from the beginning of the prayers till its end. For example, when we stand to pray *dhuhr salah* on time and we are not travelling, we must know that we are praying *dhuhr salah* in full; if this is not clear then our *salah* will be *batil*.



It was just after midnight and the man was alone in the *masjid*. He had just begun his *salat al-layl* (night prayer) when he heard a noise behind him. Immediately he started praying slowly and reciting lengthy *du'as* in a beautiful voice. After he finished he turned around to see a dog that had come in to take shelter from the rain outside. The man realised that he had prayed only for the dog and not for Allah!



Takbirat al-ihram is made up of two words: *takbir* and *ihram*.

Takbir means to glorify Allah by saying '*Allahu akbar*', which means Allah is greater than to be described in any way.

Ihram means a state in which certain things become *haram*. *Takbirat al-ihram* means a *takbir* which makes certain things *haram* for us.

Thus, once we have performed *takbirat al-ihram*, certain things become *haram* for us, for example eating or laughing would make our *salah* *batil*. *Takbir* must be:

- Pronounced correctly in Arabic
- Recited whilst standing still in the position of *qiyam*

As you raise your hands to your ears and say '*Allahu akbar*', imagine you are pushing the *dunya* away with your hands and entering a special space where there is only Allah and you. This action allows us to mentally and physically prepare for *salah* by disconnecting with everyone and everything else and connecting fully with Allah.



When we stand still in *qiyam* with our backs straight and our arms on our thighs, we are acknowledging that we are Allah's humble servants and have come to stand before Him in prayer. Our eyes should be looking to the place of *sajdah*. Women should keep their feet together whilst men should keep them apart.

Rasulullah (s) once told his companion Abu Dharr:

Surely, as long as you are in prayer, you are knocking on the door of the Great King, and whoever knocks long on the door of the King it will be opened for him.

DID YOU KNOW?

There is another *wajib qiyam* in *salah* known as *QIYAM MUTTASIL BIR-RUKU*. After *qira'ah*, we must ensure that we are standing and go into *ruku* from the position of *qiyam*.



Qira'ah refers to the recitation of *Qur'an* within *salah*. In the first and second *rak'at* of any *salah*, it is *wajib* to recite *Surat al-Fatihah* and any other *surah*. In the third and fourth *rak'at*, it is *wajib* to recite either *Surat al-Fatihah* or *tasbehat al-arba'ah*. During *qira'ah* our body must be still.

Men must recite *qira'ah* of the first two *rak'at* of *salah* of *fajr*, *maghrib*, and *isha* loudly.

Women can recite *qira'ah* of first two *rak'at* of *salah* of *fajr*, *maghrib*, and *isha* aloud as long as there is no *non-mahram* listening.

Both men and women must recite the *qira'ah* of the first two *rak'at* of *salah* of *dhuhr* and *asr* quietly (in a whisper).

The recitation of either *Surat al-Fatihah* or *tasbehat al-arba'ah* in the third and fourth *rak'at* of any *wajib salah* is always performed quietly (in a whisper). Remember, that by reciting

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before any *surah*, we are saying that we begin with the name and help of Allah, the Most Kind, the Most Merciful. Through *qira'ah* we are engaging in a dialogue with Allah. We are praising Him, showing our dependence on Him as *ibad* (servants), and asking and begging Him for help and guidance to stay along the right path. Even when we have found the right path, we need Allah's help to stay on it and away from the evil whisperings of Shaytan.

5



RUKU:
'GLORY BE
TO ALLAH'

In every *rak'ah*, after *qira'ah* we must bow down to Allah in *ruku*. Allah says in the Qur'an:

Surat al-Hajj 22:77

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا
وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who believe! Bow down [perform *ruku*] and prostrate yourselves [perform *sujud*], and worship your Lord, and do good, so that you may be successful.

As Muslims, we do not bow down to anybody except Allah, the Lord of the universe. The action of *ruku* makes us recognise His greatness and teaches us to be humble before Him. The more we bow down in humility before Allah the more power we shall have to defeat Shaytan.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a) tells us that:

Long *ruku* and *sujud* make Shaytan angry, and he says: With this level of worship people will no longer obey me!

Men should bow with their feet apart, keeping their elbows away from the body like the wings of a bird and the palms of their hands should be on their knees with the fingers spread out.

Women should bow with their feet together, keeping their elbows in towards the body and resting their palms slightly above the knees.

During *ruku* we should be looking at our feet and reciting the *dhikr* for *ruku*.

If we forget *ruku* and start going into *sajdah* and then remember that we haven't performed *ruku*, then we must stand up in *qiyam* and then proceed to *ruku*. If we do not then our *salah* becomes *batil*.

6

SAJDATAYN:
'I AM NOW
CLOSEST TO
ALLAH'



Sujud is one of the greatest actions of *ibadah* by itself and within *salah*. Although when we are in *sajdah* our head is on the ground, it is actually the height of our *salah*. As we sincerely humble ourselves on the ground before our Lord, He lifts us up to higher spiritual stations. *Subhanallah!* What a beautiful action!

Sujud removes our arrogance and pride because in *sujud* we place the highest part of our body (the head) on the ground in prostration before Allah, the Lord of the universe. *Sujud* reminds us that our worldly status has no meaning in the eyes of Allah, and whether we are rich or poor we are all *ibad* of Allah, and the only difference between us is our level of *taqwa*.

Imam Ali (a) beautifully explains the meaning behind this beloved action:

The first *sajdah* means that I was dust in the beginning, and as I raise my head from *sajdah* it means that I came to the world from the dust. The second *sajdah* means that I will return to the earth again [death], and as I raise my head again, it means that on the Day of Judgement I will be raised from the grave.

The actions of *sujud* therefore reflect our creation.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the position of *sajdah* we are the closest to Allah in a spiritual sense! *Sujud* is the best way to attain nearness to Allah.

7

Where did this *dhikr* come from?

On the night of *mi'raj*, Allah commanded Rasulullah (s) to bow down to Him in *ruku*. As Rasulullah (s) bowed, Allah showed him His *arsh* (throne) and Rasulullah (s) was inspired by what he saw and said:

“*subhana rabbi al-adhimi wa bi-hamdih*”
seven times.



8

TASHAHHUD:
'I BEAR
WITNESS'



After every two *rak'at*, we sit and recite *tashahhud*. In *tashahhud* we bear witness that Allah is one and that Muhammad (s) is the servant and Prophet of Allah. Through these words, we come to understand that there are two choices in front of us:

- Service to Allah
- Service to ourselves

When we free ourselves of the world and leave behind what we want for what Allah wants, then we become true *ibad* and all our actions become *fi sabilillah*.

9

SALAM:
'RECONNECTING
WITH THE
WORLD'



At the end of *salah* we send *salam* on Rasulullah (s), on ourselves, on all the righteous believers, and on the angels. It is at this point that we return back to the world around us and reconnect with others by sending peace upon them.

As-Salaam is one of the names of Allah. In *salah*, He has entrusted this beautiful name to us so that we may use it to impact our behaviour towards the rest of creation. This action of *salam* in *salah* is repeated five times a day, and teaches us to be kind and peaceful with the rest of creation, and to have *silm* (peace) at the core of all our relationships.

Allah is the ultimate abode of peace and security. We should also try and be a place of peace and security for all other creatures. Once we have completed our *salah* and return to our daily activities we should be peaceful to people, animals, and environment, through our actions and words.

10

TARTIB:
'ORDER,
ORDER'

Tartib means the correct order and sequence. Each action of *salah* must be performed in the right order and sequence.

11

MUWALAT:
'EVERYTHING
FLOWS'

Muwalat means continuity of recitation and flow in action. Each action of *salah* must follow on from the other without any gaps or stops. If a person stops praying and stands still for a while, long enough for an onlooker to think that he or she is not praying, then his or her *salah* is *batil*.

Dhikr and *qira'ah* must flow as well without any unusual gaps or stops.



STORYTIME!



On the 9th of Muharram when Umar ibn Sa'd asked Imam Husayn (a) to either accept Yazid or get ready for battle, Imam Husayn (a) asked for a delay of one more night so that he, his family, and his companions, could spend that night in the worship of Allah, communicating with Him through *du'a*, Qur'an, and *salah*.

Salah was so special to Imam Husayn (a) and his companions that they wanted one more chance to stand before Allah before they died and were constantly remembering Allah even during their last moments in this life.

Imam Husayn (a) did not neglect his *salah* even on the day of *Ashura* when the arrows of the enemy were showering upon him. Imam and his companions sacrificed their lives so that *salah* and its essence remains alive today.

'Labbayk Ya Husayn!

How beloved *salah* was to Imam and his companions. Despite the extreme hunger, thirst, tiredness and danger, they never abandoned or delayed *salah*. How can we learn from this the next time we maybe feel lazy to pray?'

Salah helps us to focus our attention and energy towards good acts and promotes punctuality and a well-organised lifestyle. Understanding the essence behind the actions of *salah* will help us to communicate with Allah with a pure and sincere heart.



Faith in Action

One *du'a* that is very highly recommended to recite in the *qunut* of *salah* is given in Ruling number 1105 of Islamic Laws. Look it up and memorise it. Once you have learnt it, recite it in at least one of your daily *salah* each day this week.



Surat al-Baqarah 2:201



رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي
الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the fire.

Surat al-Isra 17:24



رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا

My Lord! Have mercy on them, just as they reared me when I was [a] small [child]!

Qunut is a *mustahabb* action of *salah* and is highly recommended. It is the action of raising our hands in *du'a* to Allah in the second *rak'ah* of *salah* before going into *ruku*. As we raise our hands up in front of our face and look into our palms, we are spreading our hands out in front of Allah and asking Him to fulfil our needs and *hajat*.

According to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a), any *du'a* can be recited in *qunut* but there are some special *du'as* (from the Qur'an) that are recommended, such as:

Imagine that *salah* is a tent; the poles of that tent are the *rukn* actions and the pegs and ropes of the tent are the *ghayr rukn* actions. If you remove a pole on purpose or by accident the whole tent will collapse and its shape will be ruined. However, if you remove one of the ropes or pegs it may affect the structure slightly but the tent will still remain upright.

Rukn are the pillars of our *salah*. They are an important part of the foundation and structure of *salah* and so if they are left out our *salah* will collapse like the tent. Just like the removed poles of a tent cannot be randomly inserted back into it, the pillars of *salah* cannot be randomly performed once remembered.

The whole *salah* must be repeated in the same way the tent must be made again from the beginning with all its parts in the correct place.

Ghayr rukn actions of *salah*, like the pegs and ropes of the tent, can be corrected if left out or added unintentionally.



FIQH FACTS

The 11 *wajib* actions of *salah* are divided into two groups:

- *Rukn*
- *Ghayr rukn*

RUKN

Cannot duplicate, or miss out intentionally or unintentionally. If left out or added then *salah* becomes *batil*

- *Niyah*
- *Takbirat al-ihram*
- *Qiyam muttasil bir-ruku*
- *Ruku*
- *Sajdatayn*

GHAYR RUKN

If these actions are missed out or duplicated unintentionally then *salah* remains valid. But if they are left out on purpose then *salah* is *batil*

- *Qiyam*
- *Qira'ah*
- *Dhikr*
- *Tashahhud*
- *Salam*
- *Tartib*
- *Muwalat*

The two *sujud* together are *rukn*. Thus, if you miss or add a single *sajdah* unintentionally your *salah* is not *batil*.



ACTIVITY...

Using blocks such as jenga, create a tall structure like a tower or building and then randomly pull out blocks from the lower half of it. What happened to your building? Why do you think those blocks are important to your structure?



HIGHER LEVEL

SALAT AL-LAYL (THE NIGHT PRAYER)

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً
لَّكَ عَسَى أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ
مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

And keep awake for a part of the night, as a supererogatory [*mustahabb*] for you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station.

Surat al-Isra 17:79

Salat al-layl is a *mustahabb salah* that can be prayed anytime from midnight until just before *salat al-fajr*.

Salat al-layl is a very special prayer prayed by those special people who want to gain nearness to Allah by having a secret conversation with Him in the middle of the night when everyone else is sleeping. The faces of those who pray *salat al-layl* have a specific beauty and *nur*!

When Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) was asked why this happens, he replied:

It is because they
seek privacy
with their Lord,
Whose light **reflects**
on their faces!

Wow! Those people are very special.



KEY POINTS

- 1 *Salah* is the pillar of religion; it is the most important act of worship (*ibadah*) and the best form of communication with Allah.
- 2 Allah wants us to talk to Him and so He has given us *salah*.
- 3 We learn how to pray *salah* from the Qur'an and the guidance of Rasulullah (s) and the Ahlul Bayt (a).
- 4 Every action of *salah* has a deeper meaning and helps us improve our character, and keeps us on the straight path.
- 5 The 11 *wajib* actions of *salah* are: *niyyah*, *takbirat al-ihram*, *qira'ah*, *qiyam*, *dhikr*, *ruku*, *sujud*, *tashahhud*, *salam*, *tartib*, and *muwalat*.
- 6 The *wajib* actions of *salah* are grouped into *rukun* and *ghayr rukn*. *Rukn* acts are the pillars of our *salah* and if they are missed out or added on purpose or by accident then our *salah* becomes *batil* and must be repeated.



- 1 _____ is the best form of communication with Allah and the first deed we will be questioned about on the Day of Judgement.
- 2 How do the actions of *salah* bring us closer to Allah? Give one example.
- 3 Name the two groups that the *wajib* actions of *salah* are divided into.
- 4 _____ are the pillars of *salah*. *Salah* becomes *batil* if these actions are missed or repeated either on purpose or by mistake.