

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, most Kind, most Merciful



Surat al-Ankabut, 29:45

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

Recite what has been revealed to you of the book, and maintain the *salah*. Indeed *salah* prevents indecencies and evil, and the remembrance of Allah is surely greater. And Allah knows whatever you do.

Learning Objectives

- To appreciate that *salah* has a deeper meaning and purpose.
- To explain that the remembrance of Allah is the core of every act of worship.
- To evaluate the relevance of *salah* as a tool for keeping away from indecency and evil.

Key Words

فَلَسَفَة	Falsafah philosophy
فَحْشَاء	Fahsha' indecencies
مُنْكَر	Munkar evil



Salah creates a barrier to sins

The *ayah* at the beginning of this lesson explains, in part, the philosophy of *salah* when it says:



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إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ

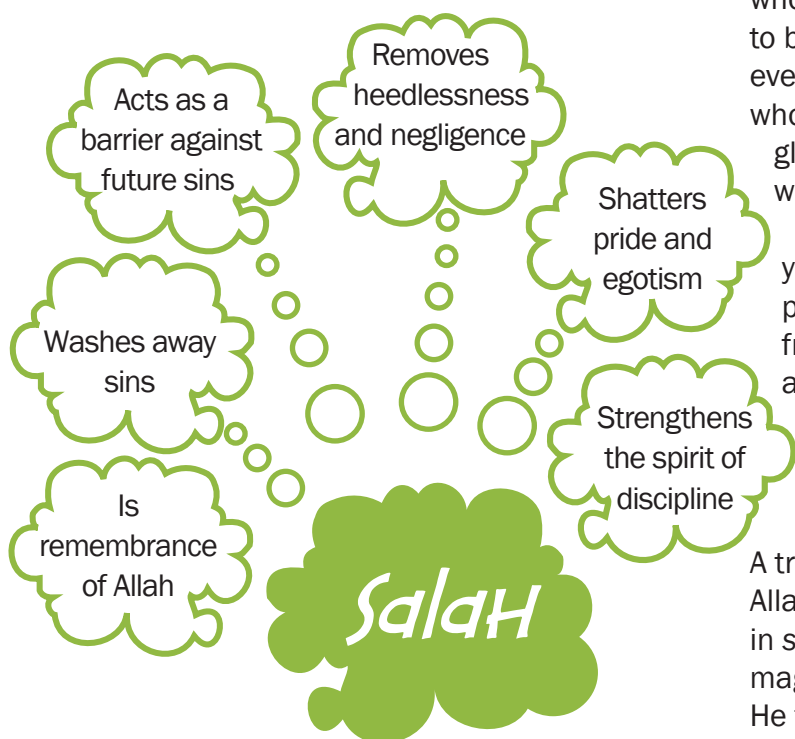
'Indeed *salah* prevents indecencies and evil.'

Imagine a person who stands to recite *salah*, who recites *Allahu akbar*, and who regards Allah to be superior to and greater than anything and everything else, who recollects Allah's bounties, who praises Him and offers Him thanks; who glorifies Him for His compassion and mercy, who brings to mind the Day of Judgement; who professes his lowliness as a servant, who yearns for His help, who seeks the straight path from Him, and begs Him for protection from treading the path of the deviated ones and those who earn His anger (the themes of *Surat al-Hamd*). Undoubtedly, the heart and the soul of such a person shall experience a pull towards truth, purity, and piety.

A true servant of Allah bows down into *ruku* for Allah and places his forehead on the ground in *sujud* before Him. He is drowned in His magnificence, and this removes his egotism. He testifies to His unity and to the prophethood of Rasulullah (s). He sends salutations upon Rasulullah (s) and begs Allah to place him amongst His righteous servants (the themes of *tashahhud* and *salam*).

All these acts create within him a tidal wave of spirituality, which is a strong barrier against sins.

This act is repeated several times a day, and is given priority above all other actions and states. Additionally, as he engages himself in the preliminaries of *salah*, he washes and cleans himself and keeps away *ghasbi* and *haram* things from himself. After this, he proceeds to present himself before his true friend, Allah. All these things serve as a deterrent, preventing him from entering the path of indecency and evil.



The effects of *salah* depend upon how it is offered

Every *salah* shall only keep one away from indecency and evil as much as one understands and engages with the spirit of worship. At times, a *salah* may keep one away from evil, completely and wholly, whereas at other times a *salah* does so only partially and incompletely.

It is impossible that a person offers *salah* for Allah and the *salah* has no effect on him. Obviously, the effects of a superficial *salah* are reduced, but had such individuals not been offering *salah* at all, they might have been in a much more polluted state.

In other words, 'preventing from indecency and evil' has levels and ranks, and every *salah* – depending upon the condition of it and how it is offered – possesses some of these levels and ranks.

Some *ahadith* mention that the effects of *salah* can be a gauge to see whether it has been accepted or not.

The *ayah* then goes on to say:



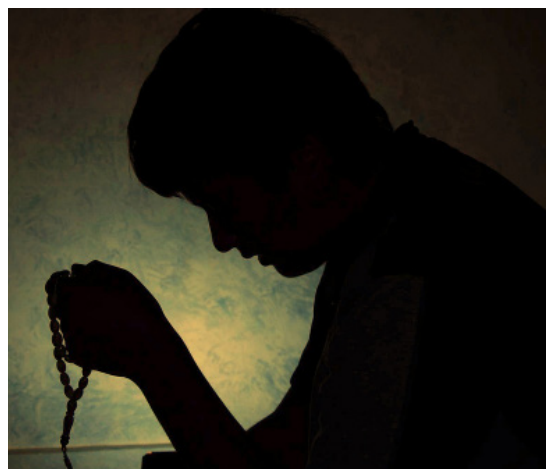
Surat al-Ankabut, 29:45

وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

'And the remembrance of Allah is surely greater.'

The apparent meaning of this part of the *ayah* is that it mentions an even more important philosophy of *salah* than 'preventing one from indecency and evil', and that is that *salah* causes man to remember Allah. The remembrance of Allah is the basis of every goodness and the foundation of all happiness. It is important because it is the **cause** of a person keeping away from indecency and evil. The remembrance of Allah keeps the hearts alive and sets them at rest, and no other thing can be likened to it in significance and importance.

The spirit of every act of worship, whether it is *salah* or something else, is the remembrance of Allah. The preliminary acts of *salah*, the recitations, actions, *du'as* recited afterwards, etc., all serve to revive the remembrance of Allah within a person's heart.



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

'One who desires to know if his *salah* has been accepted or not, should observe if it has kept him away from indecency and evil, or not; the measure in which it has kept him away [is the measure of his *salah* that] has been accepted.'



Listed below are a few more points to appreciate with regards to the philosophy of *salah*, which are derived from careful study of the Qur'an and *hadith*:

- 1 The spirit, foundation, objective, result, and ultimate philosophy of *salah* is remembrance of Allah. This should be a remembrance that brings about reflection, and this reflection should then lead to good deeds. In other words, it means to remember Allah and go towards *halal* and stay away from *haram*.
- 2 *Salah* is a means for washing away sins and achieving divine forgiveness, since it invites man towards repentance and rectification of the past.



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When Rasulullah (s) questioned his companions: 'If there flowed, at the doorstep of one of your houses, a river with pure and clean water, and if the owner happened to wash himself in it five times a day, would there be any dirt or impurity on his body?'

The companions replied: 'No.'

Rasulullah (s) then said: '*Salah* is similar to this flowing water. Whenever one offers a *salah*, the sins committed between two *salahs* get washed away.'

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Thus, *salah* acts as a soothing balm for wounds that are inflicted upon man's soul as a result of sins, and the rust that forms on the heart is eliminated.

- 3 *Salah* is a barrier against future sins. It strengthens the spirit of faith within man and fosters the seed of *taqwa* within his heart. We know that faith and *taqwa* are the strongest barriers against sins and this is exactly what has been referred to in the *ayah* as 'preventing indecency and evil'.
- 4 *Salah* removes heedlessness and negligence. It prevents one from forgetting the purpose of creation and from drowning in the pleasures of the material world. Since *salah* is offered at regular intervals during the day, it serves as a constant reminder about one's position in this world.
- 5 *Salah* helps to shatter pride and egotism. In the course of a day, man offers seventeen rak'at and in each of them he places his forehead on the ground twice before Allah, considering himself to be a tiny entity before His greatness, a zero in the presence of His infinity. This symbolises total submission and humility.
- 6 *Salah* strengthens the spirit of discipline within man since it has to be offered at specific times. Similarly, there are also rulings with respect to the different actions and recitations within *salah*, which further discipline man.

Imam Ali (a) says:

‘Allah made faith obligatory in order to purify [the people] of polytheism, and the *salah* in order to clean [them] of pride.’



Ayatullah Khomeini, the leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, has written a book named *Adab as-Salah*, in which he has uncovered and explored the deeper meanings and philosophy of *salah*.

There are many anecdotes written about his life and his deep attachment to *salah*. One such anecdote recalls the time of his life when he was in exile in Paris:

The order in the arrangement of Imam's life in Paris even had an effect on the work and timetable of the French police. From inside Imam's house, I once saw from one of the room windows that the door of Imam's house had still not opened yet, but the police had gotten out of their car to see the Imam off (knowing the Imam would leave the house at this time).

The police mentioned several times to some brothers that if their watches were sometimes behind or in front, they could get the correct time from the punctuality with which Imam said his prayers; this was very strange for them.

In another book it has been written:

Ayatullah Khomeini greatly stressed the secrets of *salah* and paid attention to the (inner) meaning of praying from the beginning of performing *wudhu*, i.e. from the time when a person goes towards water to perform *wudhu*, until the end of prayers.

He used to say this tradition many times, that one of the Imams has said: 'When you go towards water to perform *wudhu*, you are really going towards the mercy of Allah.' Imam used to emphasise this statement a lot.



FIQH FACTS

The word *munkar* means 'evil', and one of the *furu ad-din* is *nahy anil munkar*. This means to forbid and discourage people from doing evil (*haram* acts).

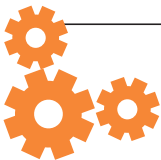
Ruling 1867

Enjoining good and forbidding evil becomes *wajib* when performance of the good deed in question is *wajib* and performance of the evil deed in question is *haram*. In this situation, enjoining good and forbidding evil is a collective obligation (*wajib al-kifa'i*), meaning that if some people act according to this duty, then everyone else is excused from it; however it is incumbent on everyone to not be indifferent if they encounter something unlawful being done or something obligatory being abandoned, and that they express their disapproval in their speech and actions. Acting to this extent is *wajib al-ayni* (compulsory on every individual).



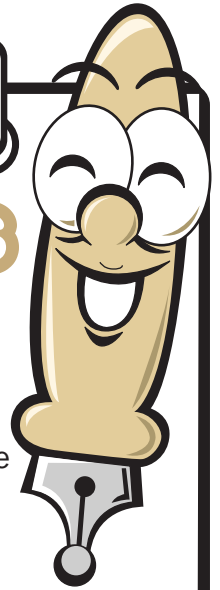
HIGHER LEVEL

Choose one of the six points mentioned in this lesson about the philosophy of *salah* that you can most relate to. Explain why in your own words.



KEY POINTS

- 1 Every part of *salah* has a deeper spiritual meaning.
- 2 *Salah* keeps one away from indecency and evil to the same measure as the rank and level of that *salah* and how it is performed.
- 3 Remembrance of Allah in *salah* should lead to reflection, and then to good deeds.
- 4 All our acts of worship should have remembrance of Allah at the core.



TEST YOURSELF

- 1 What two things does *salah* prevent according to the Qur'an?

- 2 What effect does set timings for *salah* have on an individual?

- 3 Explain what *sujud* symbolises and how it affects man's ego.

