

# Tashahhud and Salam

## Tashahhud

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

*I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. O Allah! Send blessings on Muhammad and his progeny.*

Among the obligatory parts of prayer is *tashahhud* which is recited in the second and last *rak'ahs* of prayer. In the *tashahhud* we testify and bear witness to the Oneness of Allah and the apostleship {*risalah*} of His Prophet, Hadrat Muhammad (S). Although we have testified again and again to these two facts in the *adhan* and *iqamah*, those testimonies were at the time of the approach of the prayer and this testimony is at the end of the prayer.

There is wisdom behind all these repetitions. It is because man is easily subjected to negligence and forgetfulness, easily forgetting the Owner of the blessings. These sentences are like a rope that protects the ship of humanity from the waves of events.

## The slogan of tawhid

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the first slogan of all the prophets (‘a).

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the testimony that all those who possess knowledge along with the angels do acknowledge:

﴿ شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُوا الْعِلْمِ ﴾

**“Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him—and {so do} the angels and those who possess knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>**

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the sentence that every Muslim hears at birth, with which he will be buried and which will be recited at his grave {*talqin*}.

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the most beloved of sentences to God and the heaviest of deeds on the Scale.<sup>2</sup>

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the formidable fortress of God in which whoever enters is safe from His wrath:

“*La ilaha illallah* is My fortress; so, whoever enters My fortress is safe from My wrath.”<sup>3</sup>

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the demarcation between *kufir* and Islam. Any unbeliever {*kafir*} who recites it enters the fold of Islam. The Prophet (S) criticized the Muslim who did not pay attention to one of the enemy soldiers when the latter recited “*la ilaha illallah*” and killed him, saying: “With the utterance of this statement, anyone is safe even though we do not know whether he does so sincerely or not.”<sup>4</sup>

“*La ilaha illallah*” is the slogan of the Muslims at the time of passing the *Sirat* on the Day of Resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

We read in history that Abu Jahl said to the Prophet (S): “Shall we abandon the 360 idols and accept One God? We are willing to utter 10 sentences but not this statement.” But the Prophet (S) said: “It is this statement that will give you glory and power and will give you superiority over other communities.”<sup>6</sup>

A glance at the *Du‘a’ al-‘Arafah* of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) and the sermon of Imam as-Sajad (‘a) at Sham makes the fact clear that the saints of God wholeheartedly bore witness to this, and even the earth and time gave this testimony.

In the *tashahhud* we do not suffice ourselves with merely “*la ilaha illallah*”. We rather add, “*wahdahu la sharikalah*” “He is alone who has no partner”. That is, He is One who has no partner in creation, in control and in legislation: “*wa lam yaku’l-lahu sharika fi’l-mulk*” “And He has no partner in sovereignty.” Servitude to God is the highest honor for the saints of God:

عَبْدًا لَكَ أَكُونُ أَنْ عِزًّا بِي كَفَى إِلَهِي

“O Lord! It is already enough of an honor for me that I am Your servant.”<sup>7</sup>

Servitude to God implies man’s freedom from all forms of restriction, attachment and affection. It thus gives man so much power that he would not be afraid of any superpower. On account of being a sincere servant of God, the wife of Pharaoh became such an impenetrable force that all of Pharaoh’s gold and silver had no effect on her, and although Pharaoh subjected all to his service, she remained the servant of God alone. Her accomplishment was such that she became a model for all believing men and women throughout history:

﴿ وَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا امْرَأَةٌ فِرْعَوْنَ ﴾

***“Allah draws an{other} example for those who have faith: the wife of Pharaoh.”<sup>8</sup>***

In any case, testimony to the Prophet’s (S) servanthood {‘*ubudiyah*} to God is a preliminary to the testimony of his apostleship {*risalah*}, and this itself has lessons and messages: “*Ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduh...*”.

Testimony to his apostleship means the negation of all man-made schools; acceptance of the eternality and universality of the apostleship of the Seal of the Prophets {*khatam al-anbiya*}; and rejection of all the *taghuts*.

Testimony to the apostleship of Hadrat Muhammad (S) is a covenant that God has made with the all the prophets; had they not accepted his apostleship, they would not have attained the station of prophethood.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, I am not alone in saying, “*Ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasulah*” as all the prophets (‘a) have said so as well.

## **Pristine Tawhid**

What has afflicted most of monotheists nowadays is that they verbally utter, “*La ilaha illallah*” but in practice they turn to other than Him, looking for power and glory somewhere else. They obey other than Him and express love to other than Him.

By the way, polytheism is itself a grave act of injustice and disrespect for His Sacred Essence: ***“Polytheism is indeed a great injustice.”<sup>10</sup>*** It is so because having a partner connotes weakness, impotence and the inability to act, as well as the existence of a similar and equal being—things which are inconceivable with respect to God.

## **Testimony to the Apostleship**

“*Wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan ‘abduhu wa rasuluh*” “And I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger.”

Servitude {‘*ubudiyah*} is the highest station of the prophets (‘a). Indeed, it is the preliminary stage of apostleship and prophethood: “*‘abduhu wa rasulah*”.

It is servitude to God that brings the Prophet (S) to the ascension {*mi’raj*}: ***“Immaculate is He who carried His servant on a journey”<sup>11</sup>*** and it causes the heavenly revelation to descend upon him: ***“We have sent down (the revelation through angels) to Our servant.”<sup>12</sup>***

God also praises His prophets (‘a) for their servitude to Him. Regarding Hadrat Nuh (Noah) (‘a), He says: ***“Indeed he was a grateful servant,”<sup>13</sup>*** and concerning Hadrat Sulayman (Solomon) (‘a) He states: ***“What an excellent servant!”<sup>14</sup>***

One of the distinctions of the prophets (‘a) in relation to the geniuses and inventors is that the latter have obtained their genius and creativity as the result of intelligence, perseverance and exercise, while the prophets (‘a) have acquired their miracles as a result of servitude to God and under the aegis of the divine grace, and servitude is the foundation of all the stations of the prophets (‘a).

Acknowledgment of the servanthood of the prophets (‘a) prevents any form of extremism, fanaticism and radicalism concerning the stations of the saints of God. It reminds us that the Prophet (S), though the best of creation, is also a servant of God.

It is needless to say that this testimony must be based on sincerity and truthfulness for, the hypocrites {*munafiqin*} used to testify also to the apostleship of the Prophet (S) yet the Qur’an thus reveals about them:

﴿ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُنَافِقُونَ قَالُوا نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴾

***“When the hypocrites come to you they say, ‘We bear witness that you are indeed the apostle of Allah.’ Allah knows that you are indeed His Apostle, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars.”***<sup>15</sup>

## Salawat

*“Allahumma salli ‘ala Muhammad wa ali Muhammad.”* “O Allah! Send blessings on Muhammad and his progeny.”

After bearing witness to *tawhid* and the *risalah*, we invoke blessings for Muhammad and his progeny (‘a).

*Salawat* is the symbol of love {*muhabbah*}, friendship {*muwaddah*} and devotion to the family of the Holy Prophet of Islam (S), which the Qur’an regards as the reward for the apostleship of the Prophet (S).<sup>16</sup>

*Salawat* is the polish for man’s rusty soul<sup>17</sup> and it wipes away hypocrisy {*nifaq*}.<sup>18</sup> *Salawat* is a factor in wiping away sins,<sup>19</sup> a means for opening the gates of heaven,<sup>20</sup> the reason behind the angels’ supplication for man and asking for the forgiveness of his sins,<sup>21</sup> and a means of proximity to the Prophet (S) on the Day of Resurrection and the obtainment of his intercession {*shafa’ah*}.<sup>22</sup>

The one who has blissful fate is he whose last statement in the world is *salawat*.<sup>23</sup>

God initially sends blessings {*salawat*} to the Prophet (S) and then orders us to send *salawat*:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴾

***“Indeed Allah and His angels bless the Prophet. O you who have faith! Invoke blessings on him***

**and invoke Peace upon him in a worthy manner.”[24](#)**

From this verse and the following traditions, we have obtained these points below regarding *salawat*:

1. *Salawat* is a verbal gesture of respect, but what is more important is the practical obedience required as is indicated by the phrase, “*sallimu taslima*”.
2. The *salawat* of God and the angels is permanent—“*yusallun*” in the present perfect tense.
3. The *salawat* of God is nobility {*kiramah*}; the *salawat* of the angels is mercy {*rahmah*}; and the *salawat* of the people is supplication {*du‘a*}.
4. It is recorded in the traditions: “In addressing Hadrat Musa (‘a), God said, ‘Send *salawat* upon Muhammad and his progeny as I and the angels do send *salawat* upon him’.”[25](#)
5. The Messenger of Allah (S) said: “To remember God is a form of worship and to remember me is also a form of worship, and the same is true with respect to my successor ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib.”[26](#)
6. It is recorded in the traditions: “For the acceptance of your supplication, send *salawat* first before supplicating.”[27](#) Not only the sending of *salawat* upon hearing the name of the Prophet (S) but also writing it after his name has reward. The Prophet (S) said: “The angels are praying for the forgiveness of anyone who would send *salawat* to me in his book so long as my name exists in that book.”

## **The manner of sending salawat**

In the main books of the Ahl as-Sunnah, it is narrated that at the time of sending *salawat*, the progeny of Muhammad (S) should definitely be mentioned along with his name otherwise one’s *salawat* is incomplete {*abtar*} and defective.[28](#)

In the *Tafsir Durr al-Manthur*, it is narrated from the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, *Sunan Tirmidhi*, *Sunan Nisa’i*, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, and *Sunan Ibn Majah*, which are among the most important Sunni books, that someone asked the Prophet (S): “We know how to greet you {*salam*}, but how should we send blessings to you?” The Prophet (S) said: “You say,

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

“O Allah! Send blessings on Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad as You have sent blessings on Ibrahim and the progeny of Ibrahim. You are the Praiseworthy and Holy.”[29](#)

Imam ash-Shafi’i, the imam of the Shafi’i school of Sunni jurisprudence, expresses this issue in the following poem:

يَا أَهْلَ بَيْتِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ حُبُّكُمْ

فَرَضَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ أَنْزَلَهُ

كَفَاكُمْ مِنْ عَظِيمِ الْقَدْرِ أَنْكُمْ

مَنْ لَمْ يُصَلِّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَا صَلَوةَ لَهُ

*O members of the Household {Ahl al-Bayt} of the Messenger of Allah! Loving you is an obligation, which God has revealed in the Qur'an.*

*On the greatness and loftiness of your station, it is enough that anyone who does not invoke blessings on you (in invoking blessings on the Prophet (S)), it is as if he has not invoked blessings at all.<sup>30</sup>*

Yes, remembering Muhammad's progeny in every prayer indicates that after the Prophet (S) we have to refer to his *Ahl al-Bayt* (S) and not to others. And if it is not really so, mentioning the names of persons whose path is not necessary to tread, especially in every prayer, would be an act of extremism.

A certain person was clinging steadfastly to the *Ka'bah* and sending *salawat* but not including the progeny of Muhammad (S). Imam as-Sadiq said: "This is an act of injustice against us."<sup>31</sup>

The Prophet of God (S) said: "Those who would deprive my progeny of *salawat* cannot smell the fragrance of paradise on the Day of Resurrection."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, assemblies where the Name of God as well as that of the Prophet (S) and his progeny are not mentioned will be a source of regret on the Day of Resurrection.<sup>33</sup>

It is interesting enough that it is thus recorded in the traditions: "When the name of one of the prophets of God is mentioned, send blessings first to Muhammad and his progeny, and then invoke blessings and salutation on that prophet."<sup>34</sup>

The Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The real miser is he who hears my name but does not send *salawat* to me. He is the most unkind and unfaithful among people."<sup>35</sup>

## Salam

After reciting *salawat*, we give three types of *salam* {salutation}: first to the Messenger of Allah (S), second to the saints of God, and finally to the believers and our co-religionists.

In the verse, "**Invoke blessings on him and invoke Peace upon him in a worthy manner,**"<sup>36</sup> God

commands us to send salutations {*salam*} upon the Prophet (S) after the *salawat*. In prayer, therefore, after the *salawat* we extend *salams* to him:

اَلْسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

*Assalamu ‘alayka ayyuha’n-nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakuh!*

“May Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be upon you, O Prophet!”

Through the *takbirah al-ihram*, we detached ourselves from creation {*khalq*} and attached ourselves to the Creator {*khaliq*}. At the end of the prayer we also first convey salutation to the gem of creation, viz. the Holy Prophet (S). Then, we extend our salutation to the righteous servants of God:

اَلْسَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ الصَّالِحِينَ

*As-salamu ‘alayna wa ‘ala ‘ibadillahi’s-salihin!*

“May peace be upon us and the righteous servants of Allah!”

This *salam* includes all the past prophets, their successors and the infallible Imams.

God also sends blessings and benediction upon His prophets (‘a): **“Peace be to the apostles!”**<sup>37</sup>  
**“Peace be to Noah!”**<sup>38</sup> **“Peace be to Abraham!”**<sup>39</sup> **“Peace be to Moses and Aaron!”**<sup>40</sup>

Through the *salam*, we attach ourselves to the righteous servants of God—an attachment and relationship which are beyond the bounds of time and space, with all the purified and righteous ones throughout history, in all epochs and generations.

Then, it is the turn of our fellow believers at the present time. We send our *salams* upon those who have participated in the congregation of Muslims who have been standing with us in ranks as well as upon the angels who are present in the congregation of Muslims and the two angels who are assigned to each of us:

اَلْسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

*Assalamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakuh!*

“May Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be upon you!”

We commence the prayer with the Name of God and end it with *salam* to the creatures of Allah.

In these salutations, the hierarchy is observed. We send our *salam* first upon the Messenger of Allah, then upon the prophets, the saints and the righteous, and then the believers and followers.

## The physiognomy of salam

- *Salam* is one of the Names of God.
- *Salam* is the salutation of the dwellers of paradise to one another.
- *Salam* is the greeting of the angels at the time of entering the paradise.
- *Salam* is the message of the All-merciful Lord.
- *Salam* is the reception of the Night of Ordainment {*laylah al-qadr*}.
- *Salam* is the first right of Muslims upon one another.
- *Salam* is the key to commencing any discourse or writing.
- *Salam* is the deed of security from every sort of fear and evil.
- *Salam* is the simplest good deed.
- *Salam* is the symbol of humility and meekness.
- *Salam* is the element of love and intimacy.
- *Salam* is the expression of peace and amity.
- *Salam* is the first gift and present between two human beings.
- *Salam* is the wish for the safety of the servants of God.
- *Salam* is the call for world peace.
- *Salam* is the harbinger of hope and the bearer of joy.
- *Salam* is the effacer of past offenses.
- *Salam* is the announcement of presence and the permission to enter.
- *Salam* is the best word at the time of entrance and exit.
- *Salam* is a word which is light on the tongue but heavy in the scale.
- *Salam* is the way for the reformers to reform the society.
- *Salam* is the word addressed to both the dead and the living.
- *Salam* is the source of glory and grandeur.

- *Salam* is the element for earning the pleasure of God and the anger of Satan.
- *Salam* is the means of entrance of the divine secrets into the heart.
- *Salam* is the compensator for sins and the enhancer of good deeds.
- *Salam* is the messenger of fellowship and friendship.
- *Salam* is the agent that crushes vanity and egoism.
- *Salam* is divine courtesy.
- *Salam* is the reception of all that is good and wholesome.
- *Salam* is a form of perfection the abandonment of which signifies stinginess, arrogance, seclusion, wrath, and the breaking of relationship ties.
- *Salam* is the cloud of mercy that we spread out over the people, and as such, we say: “*As-salamu ‘alaykum*” {May peace be upon you} instead of “*As-salamu lakum*” {May peace be to you}.

The Holy Prophet (S) used to say: “I shall never abandon the practice of greeting children in my life.”<sup>41</sup> Although offering *salam* is recommended and replying to it is obligatory, the reward of the one who first offers the *salam* is 10 times more than that of the one who simply replies.

We read in the traditions that the one riding has to convey *salam* first to the one walking; the one standing to the one sitting; and the one arriving to those who are sitting in an assembly.<sup>42</sup> And the Qur’an thus exhorts:

﴿ وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا ﴾

**“When you are greeted with a salute, greet with a better one than it.”<sup>43</sup>**

! وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

**May Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be upon you!**

1. Surah Al ‘Imran 3: 18.
2. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 93, “Bab at–Tahlil wa Fadlah.”
3. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 3, p. 13.
4. It refers to Surah an–Nisa’ 4:94: “Do not say to someone who offers you peace, ‘You are not a believer.’”
5. Jami’ al–Ahadith, vol. 1, p. 188.
6. Faraz–ha’i az Tarikh–e Islami {Highlights of Islamic History}, p. 111.
7. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 77, p. 402.

8. Surah at-Tahrim 66:11.
9. Surah Al 'Imran 3:81: "When Allah took a compact concerning the prophets, {He said,} 'Inasmuch as I have given you of the Book and wisdom, should an apostle come to you thereafter confirming what is with you, you shall believe in him and help him.' He said, 'Do you pledge and accept My covenant on this condition?' They said, 'We pledge.' He said, 'Then be witnesses, and I am also among the witnesses along with you'."
10. Surah Luqman 31:13.
11. Surah al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) 17:1.
12. Surah al-Baqarah 2:23.
13. Surah al-Isra' (or Bani Isra'il) 17:3.
14. Surah Sad 38:30.
15. Surah al-Munafiqun 63:1.
16. Surah ash-Shura 42:23: "Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for {my} relatives."
17. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1216.
18. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 492.
19. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 54.
20. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1220.
21. Mir'ah al-'Uqul, vol. 12, p. 109.
22. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 63.
23. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1216.
24. Surah al-Ahzab 33:56.
25. Tafsir Nur ath-Thaqalayn, vol. 4, p. 305.
26. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 69.
27. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 64.
28. As quoted in Tafsir-e Nemuneh, vol. 17, p. 420.
29. As quoted in Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. 16, p. 365; Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 6, p. 151.
30. Al-Ghadir, vol. 2, p. 303 quoting Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, vol. 6, p. 323.
31. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1218.
32. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1219.
33. Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 397.
34. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 94, p. 48.
35. Wasa'il ash-Shi'ah, vol. 4, p. 1220.
36. Surah al-Ahzab 33:56.
37. Surah as-Saffat 37:181.
38. Surah as-Saffat 37:79.
39. Surah as-Saffat 37:109.
40. Surah as-Saffat 37:120.
41. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 16, p. 98.
42. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 84, p. 277.
43. Surah an-Nisa' 4:86.

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