

## The Essentials (Arkan) of Salat

The validity of the *salat* is dependent upon *taharah* (purity) – both from *hadath* and *khabath*, the time of performing it, facing the *qiblah*, and wearing sufficient clothing. The fulfilment of these conditions (called *shurut*) before starting the *salat* is necessary, and they have been discussed in detail in the preceding sections. *Salat* also comprises certain essentials (*arkan wa fara'id*) which are performed as parts of *salat*.

They are many, and among them are the following:

### 1. Intention (Niyyah)

The schools -- or rather the legists of each school among themselves -- differ regarding the content of the *niyyah* (intention) required for *salat*, that is, whether it is necessary to specify the *salat* (such as its being *zuhr* or '*asr* prayer), whether it is obligatory or supererogatory, complete (*tamam*) or shortened (*qasr*), in time (*ada'*) or late (*qada'*), and so on.

The essence of the *niyyah*, as mentioned in the chapter on *wudu'* (ablution) is the intention to perform an act with the motive of obedience to a command of God Almighty. Specification of a particular *salat*, whether it is obligatory or supererogatory, *ada'* or *qada'*, is dependent upon the intention of the *musalli*. Thus if he intends to perform a supererogatory *salat* at the beginning and performs it with this intention, it will be supererogatory; if he intends to perform an obligatory *salat*, such as *zuhr* or '*asr* prayers, it will be so.

But if he does not intend anything it will be a waste of labour, though it is impossible for one not to intend anything. Because any act performed by a sane person cannot be without an intention regardless of whether he expresses it in specific words or not, and irrespective of whether he is attentive to his intention or not. Therefore, all the schools concur that expressing the *niyyah* in words is not necessary. Similarly, it is also ordinarily impossible for one who knows the difference involved to intend *zuhr* while performing '*asr* and an obligatory *salat* while performing a supererogatory one.

However discussions regarding *niyyah* and its various forms were not in vogue among the pioneering scholars of the *shari'ah*. It would be good to quote here the observations of two great scholars, Ibn al-Qayyim from among the Sunni legists, and Sayyid Muhammad, the author of *al-Madarik*, from the Imamiyyah.

The former observes in his *Zad al-Ma'ad* as quoted in the first volume of Ibn Qudamah's *al-Mughni*: "The Prophet (S) used to say 'Allahu Akbar' when he stood for prayer and did not say anything before it. He did not expresss the *niyyah* in words, such as saying: 'I perform such and such prayer in four *rak'ahs* facing the *qibla* as an *imam* or *ma'mum* (one who follows the *imam*). Neither did he mention whether it was *ada'* or *qada'* nor its time.These ten are later elaborations and no one has ever narrated them from him (S) in either *sahih* or *da'if* form. And neither the *tabi'un* nor the four imams have opted for them."

The latter, in *Madarik al-Ahkam* (mabhath al-niyyah awwal al-salat) observes: "That which is inferable from the sources of the *shari'ah* is that *niyyah* is a simple matter and all that it involves is the intention to perform an act in obedience to God, the Exalted. This is something which no sane person can do without while turning to perform an act of worship ('ibadah)."

Here some scholars have observed: If God were to enjoin the performance of *salat* or any other 'ibadah without a *niyyah*, it would have amounted to something impossible. Al-Shahid has mentioned in *al-Dhikra* that our earlier scholars did not mention *niyyah* in their books on *fiqh*. They would state: 'The first *wajib* in *wudu'* is washing the face, the first *wajib* in *salat* is *takbirat al-ihram*'. The reason for this is that that which is essential in regard to *niyyah* is something inescapable, and anything in addition to it is not *wajib*. That which confirms this is that *niyyah* has not been mentioned in the context of any of the 'ibadat – and particularly not in their case – and the traditions describing the *wudu*, *ghusl* and *tayammum* of the Prophet (S) do not make any mention of it.

## **2. Takbirat al-Ihram**

*Salat* does not materialize without 'takbirat al-ihram.' Its name derives from the statement of the Prophet (S):

مفتاح الصلاة الظهور و تحريرها التكبير و تحليتها التسليم.

*Taharah* (purity) is the key to *salat*; its consecration (*tahrim*) is the *takbirah*; and its termination (*tahlil*) is *taslim*.

It means that with *takbirat al-ihram* it becomes *haram* to speak and perform any act incompatible with *salat*, and by reciting *taslim* those acts which were prohibited after reciting the *takbir* become permissible again.

Its formula is ‘*Allahu akbar*’, and according to the Imamis, Malikis and Hanbalis no other form is permissible. The Shafi’is observe: Both “*Allahu akbar*”, and “*Allahu al-’akbar*” (with the addition of *alif* and *lam* to “*akbar*”) are permissible. The Hanafis state: Any other synonymous words such as ‘*Allahu al-’azam*’ and ‘*Allahu al-’ajall*’ will do.

All the schools, excepting the Hanafi, concur that it is *wajib* to recite it in Arabic, even if the *musalli* is a non-Arab. If he cannot, it is obligatory for him to learn it; and if he cannot learn, he may translate it into his own tongue. The Hanafis observe: It is valid to recite it in any language even if one can recite it in Arabic.

There is consensus among the schools that at the time of reciting *takbirat al-ihram* all the conditions necessary for *salat* (such as *taharah*, facing the *qiblah*, covering the body etc.) should be present, and that it should be recited – when one has the ability to do so – while standing stationarily, and in a voice that he can hear. The word ‘*Allah*’ should precede ‘*akbar*’, and the reverse, ‘*akbar Allah*’, will not suffice for entry into *qiyam*.

### **3. Qiyam (standing)**

The schools concur that *qiyam* is *wajib* in the obligatory *salats* from the beginning of *takbirat al-ihram* until going to *ruku’*, and that standing uprightly, stationarily and independently are its requisites.

Hence it is not valid to recline on any support when one is able to stand without it. If one cannot stand, he may perform *salat* sitting, and if this too is not possible, while laying down on the right side facing the *qiblah* (in the same position that a dead body is placed in the grave).

This is the opinion of all the schools except the Hanafis, who state: A person who cannot sit will perform *salat* laying down on his back with his feet pointing towards the *qiblah*, so that his gestures in lieu of *ruku’* and *sajdah* are made towards the *qiblah*.

If it is not possible to perform *salat* while laying on the right side, the Imamis, Shafi’is and Hanbalis permit him to perform *salat* laying on his back by making gestures with his head. If gesturing with the head is not possible, he will gesture with the eyelids.

The Hanafis say: If his state is as bad as that, the duty of *salat* will no longer apply to him, though he will have to perform it *qada’* when his condition improves and the hindrance is removed.

According to the Malikis, a sick person such as this is not required to perform *salat* and it is also not *wajib* for him to perform its *qada’*.

The Imamis, Shafi’is and Hanbalis state: The duty of *salat* does not disappear in any situation; if he is unable to gesture by blinking his eyes he will pass the *salat* through his mind and move his tongue for reciting the *qira’ah* and *dhikr*. If he is unable to move the tongue he will imagine it in his mind as long as

his mind works. To sum up, *salat* is *wajib* upon those who are fully capable and those who are not so capable. It may not be neglected in any situation, and every person must perform it in accordance with his ability.

Hence it is performed while standing, then sitting, then laying down on one's side, then laying down on one's back, then gesturing by blinking the eyes, and passing it through the mind, in that order. A fully capable person as well as one not capable will move from the previous state to the new situation which has come into existence. Hence if a fully capable person loses his ability during *salat* or one not capable regains it, either of them will perform the remaining part in accordance with his ability.

Therefore, if he performs one *rak'ah* (unit) standing and is then unable to stand, he will complete it sitting, and if he performs the first *rak'ah* sitting and then regains the strength to stand, he will complete the remaining *salat* standing.

#### **4. Qira'ah (reciting)**

The schools differ whether the recitation of *Surat al-Fatiyah* is *wajib* in every *rak'ah* (unit), or in the first two *rak'ahs*, or in all the *rak'ahs* without there being any other alternative. They give different answers to the following questions: Is the *bismillah* an essential part of *al-Fatiyah* or is it valid to omit it? Is it *wajib* or *mustahabb* to recite aloud or in a low voice? Is it *wajib* to recite another *surah* after *al-Fatiyah* in the first two *rak'ahs*? Can the *tasbih*<sup>1</sup> replace the *surah*? Is *takattuf* (the folding of arms during *salat*) a *sunnah* or is it *haram*? And so on.

The Hanafis observe: It is not compulsory to recite only *Surat al-Fatiyah* in the daily obligatory *salats*, and anything recited from the Qur'an may take its place, because God the Exalted, says:

فَاقْرُأُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ

**'Therefore recite of the Qur'an so much as is feasible' (73:20)** (*Bidayat al-mujtahid*, vol. 1, p. 122 and al-Shi'rani's *Mizan*, "bab sifat al-salat").

The recital from the Qur'an is *wajib* in the first two *rak'ahs*; but in the third *rak'ah* of the *maghrib* prayer and the last two *rak'ahs* of 'asr and 'isha' prayer there is an option between reciting from the Qur'an or saying the *tasbih* or keeping quiet (al-Nawawi, *Sharh al-Muhadhdhab*, vol.3, p.361).

Moreover, the Hanafis say: It is valid to skip the *basmalah* because it is not a part of any *surah*. Neither reciting aloud nor in a low voice are *mustahabb*, and a *musalli* praying alone is free to recite in a voice that he alone can hear or in a voice hearable to others. There is no *qunut* in *salat* with the exception of *salatal-watr*. As to *takattuf*, it is *masnun* (a *sunnah*) but it is not *wajib*, and its preferable form is for a man to place the palm of his right hand on the back of his left hand below the navel, and for a woman to

place her hands on her chest.

The Shafi'i's state: *Surat al-Fatiyah* is *wajib* in every *rak'ah*, without there being any difference in this regard between the first two *rak'ahs* and the other *rak'ahs* and between *wajib* and *mustahabb salats*.

The *basmalah* is a part of the *surah* and cannot be omitted in any circumstance. The recitation should be aloud in the morning prayer and the first two *rak'ahs* of *maghrib* and '*isha'* prayers; the remaining recitals are to be in a low voice. The *qunut* is *mustahabb* only in the morning prayer, and is to be performed after rising from the *ruku'* of the second *rak'ah*. Similarly, it is *mustahabb* to recite another *surah* after *al-Fatiyah* only in the first two *rak'ahs*. *Takattuf* is not *wajib* but a *sunnah* for both the sexes, and its preferable form is to place the right hand palm on the back of the left hand between the chest and the navel and towards the left side.

According to the Malikis, reciting *Surat al-Fatiyah* is necessary in every *rak'ah*, without there being any difference in this regard between the earlier and later *rak'ahs* and between *fard* and *mustahabb salats*, as observed earlier by the Shafi'i's. It is *mustahabb* to recite another *surah* after *al-Fatiyah* in the first two *rak'ahs*.

The *basmalah* is not a part of the *surah* and it is *mustahabb* to omit it altogether. Reciting aloud is *mustahabb* in the morning prayer and the first two *rak'ahs* of *maghrib* and '*isha'* prayers. *Qunut* is to be recited only in the morning prayer.

*Takattuf* is valid in their opinion, though it is *mustahabb* to keep the hands hanging freely in the *fard* prayers.

The Hanbalis consider *al-Fatiyah* to be *wajib* in every *rak'ah*, and to recite a *surah* after it in the first two *rak'ahs* as *mustahabb*. The morning prayer and the first two *rak'ahs* of *maghrib* and '*isha'* prayers are to be recited aloud. The *basmalah* is a part of *surahs* though it will be recited in a low voice and not aloud. *Qunut* is to be recited in *Salat al-watr* and not in any other *salat*. *Takattuf* is a *sunnah* for both men and women and its preferable form is to place the right hand palm on the back of the left hand below the navel.

It is evident that *takattuf*, which the Sunni legists call '*qabd*' and the Shi'a legists call '*takfir*' – i.e. to conceal – is not *wajib* in the opinion of any of the four Sunni schools.

The Imamis state: Reciting *Surat al-Fatiyah* is necessary in the first two *rak'ahs* of every *salat* and no other *surah* can replace it. But it is not *wajib* in the third *rak'ah* of *maghrib* and the last two *rak'ahs* of four-*rak'ah* prayers; rather, one has an option between it and *tasbih*. *Tasbih* means the recitation of:

سبحان الله و الحمد لله و لا إله إلا الله و الله أكابر

thrice, though even once is sufficient. It is *wajib* to recite another complete *surah* in the first two *rak'ahs*, and the *basmalah* is a part of the *surahs* which cannot be omitted in any circumstance.

It is *wajib* to recite aloud only the *surahs* and not the other recitations in the morning prayer and the first two *rak'ahs* of *maghrib* and '*isha'* prayers. The *qira'ah* in *zuhr* and '*asr*' prayers is to be done, except for the *basmalah*, in a low voice in their first two *rak'ahs* and also in the third *rak'ah* of *maghrib* and the last two *rak'ahs* of '*isha'* prayers.

*Qunut* is *mustahabb* in the five daily prayers and its place is the second *rak'ah* after the recital of the *surahs* and before *ruku'*. The minimum level of voice considered 'loud' is that a person nearby be able to hear it, and the minimum for 'low' voice is that the person himself be able to hear it. The schools concur that reciting aloud is not prescribed for women, nor is reciting in a voice lower than what can be heard by herself. If a *musalli* voluntarily recites loudly something which is to be recited in a low voice and vice versa, his/her *salat* will be invalid, if this is not done due to ignorance or forgetfulness.

The Imamis also considers saying "*Ammin*" (Amen) during *salat* to be *haram* and doing so invalidates the *salat*, irrespective of whether one is praying individually or in group prayer as an *imam* or *ma'mum*, because it is something adopted by the people, and nothing adopted by people is capable of being included in the *salat*.

The four Sunni schools concur that it is *mustahabb* in accordance with the narration of Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (S) said:

When the imam says, "*ghayr il maghdubi 'alayhim wa la-ddallin*," then say: "*Ammin*."

The Imamis negate the authenticity of the above tradition.

Most Imamis consider *takattuf* (putting hands over each other) renders the *salat* invalid (*batil*) because there is no explicit text (*nass*) in support of it. However, some of them say: *Takattuf* is *haram* and the one who does it has committed sin, though his *salat* is not invalid. A third group from among them observe: It is *makruh* (discouraged) and not *haram*.

## **5. Ruku' (bowing)**

There is consensus among the schools that *ruku'* is obligatory (*wajib*) in *salat* but they differ regarding the extent to which it is *wajib* and the necessity of staying motionless in that position. The Hanafis observe: What is obligatory is to bend down in any possible manner, and staying motionless is not obligatory. The remaining schools consider it obligatory to kneel down until the palms of the hands of the *musalli* reach his knees and to stay motionless during bowing.

The Shafi'i's, Hanafis and Malikis state: It is not obligatory to recite anything during *ruku'*, though it is sunnah that the *musalli* say: "*Subhana Rabbi al-'azim*".

The Imamis and the Hanbalis consider *tasbih* to be obligatory during *ruku'* and its formula in the opinion of the Hanbalis is "*Subhana Rabi al-'azim*", and according to the Imamis "*Subhana Rabbi al-'azim wa bi hamdih*" or just "*SubhanAllah*" thrice. It is encouraged (*mustahabb*) in the opinion of the Imamis to add after the *tasbih*, a benediction for Muhammad (S) and his Family (*Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa Ale Muhammad*).

The Hanafis say: It is not obligatory to return to the standing position after *ruku'*, and it is sufficient, though *makruh* (discouraged), to perform *sajdah* (prostration) straightaway. The other schools consider it obligatory to return to the standing position and *mustahabb* to recite the *tasmi'*, which is to say: "*Sami 'allahu li man hamidah*" (God hears one who praises Him). According to the Imamis, it is obligatory to stay motionless in this standing (*qiyam*).

## **6. Sujud (prostration)**

There is consensus among the schools that *sujud* (prostration) is obligatory twice in each *rak'ah*. They differ regarding its details, as to whether it is obligatory to prostrate with all the seven parts of the body touching the ground while performing it or if it is sufficient to lay on the ground only some of them. These seven parts are: the forehead, the palms, the knees and the big toes.

The Malikis, Shafi'is and Hanafis state: It is obligatory to lay only the forehead on the ground in *sujud*, and laying down the other parts is encouraged (*mustahabb*).

The Imamis and the Hanbalis observe: It is obligatory to lay on the ground all the seven parts while performing *sujud*. It has been narrated from the Hanbalis that they add the nose to these seven, thus making them eight. The difference of opinion regarding reciting *tasbih* and being motionless during *sujud* is similar to the difference mentioned concerning *ruku'*. Those who consider them obligatory there, consider them here as well.

The Hanafis do not consider it obligatory to sit between the *sajdahs*; the remaining schools consider it obligatory.

## **7. Tashahhud**

*Tashahhud* is at most recited twice in *salat*; the first, after the second *rak'ah* of *zuhr*, *'asr*, *maghrib* and *'isha'* prayers, which is not followed by *taslim*; the second in the last *rak'ah* of the two-, three-, and four-*rak'ah* prayers, which is followed by *taslim*.

The Imamis and the Hanbalis state: The first *tashahhud* is *wajib*. The remaining schools consider it *mustahabb* and not *wajib*. The second *tashahhud* is considered *wajib* by the Shafi'is, Imamis and Hanbalis, and *mustahabb* by the Malikis and Hanafis (*Bidayat al-mujtahid*, vol. 1, p. 125).

The following are the forms of *tashahhud* observed by the different schools:

## The Hanafis

التحيات لله والصلوات والطيبات، والسلام عليك أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللهِ  
الصالحين، أَشَهَدُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ، وَأَشَهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

"attahiyyatu lillahi wassalawatu wattayyibatu wassalamu 'alayka ayyuhaannabiyyu warahmatullahi  
wabarakatuhu,assalamu 'alayna wa 'ala`abadillahi assaliheena, ash-hadu anna la ilaha illa Allah,  
waAsh-haduanna Mohammedan 'abduhu warasuluhi."

## The Malikis

التحيات لله الزاكيات لله الطيبات الصلوات لله، السلام عليك أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَىٰ  
عِبَادِ اللهِ الصَّالِحِينَ، أَشَهَدُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشَهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

"Attahiyyatu lillah, azzakiyyatu lillah, attayyibatu assalawatu lillah.Assalamu alayka ayyuha annabiyyu  
warahmatu allahi wabarakatuhu,assalamu alayna wa 'ala 'abadi Allahi assaliheena, ash-hadu anna la  
ilaha illa Allah, wa ash-hadu anna muhammadan 'abduhu warasuluhi.

## The Shafi'i's

التحيات المباركات الصلوات الطيبات لله، السلام عليك أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَىٰ عِبَادِ  
اللهِ الصَّالِحِينَ، أَشَهَدُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ، وَأَشَهَدُ أَنَّ سَيِّدَنَا مُحَمَّداً رَسُولَ اللهِ

"Attahiyyatu almubarakatu assalawatu attayyibatu lillah, assalamu 'alayka ayyuha annabiyyu warahmatu  
allahi wabarakatuhu, assalamu alayna wa 'ala 'abadi allahi assalaiheena.Ash-hadu anna la ilaha illa  
Allah, wa ash-hadu anna sayyidana muhammadan rasulu Allah."

## The Hanbalis

التحيات لله والصلوات والطيبات، السلام عليك أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ، السَّلَامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَىٰ عِبَادِ اللهِ  
الصالحين، أَشَهَدُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَأَشَهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَىٰ مُحَمَّدٍ

"Attahiyyatu lillahi wa-assalawatu wa-attayyibatu. assalamu 'alayka ayyuha annabiyyu warahmatu allahi  
wabarakatuhu, assalamu alayna wa 'ala 'abadi allahi assalaiheena. Ash-hadu anna la ilaha illa Allah,  
wahdahu la shareekalah,wa ash-hadu anna sayyidana muhammadan 'abduhu wa- rasuluhi.  
Allahumma salli ala Muhammadin."

## The Imamis

أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأشهد أن محمداً عبده ورسوله، اللهم صل على محمد وآل محمد

"Ash-hadu anna la ilaha illa Allah, wahdahu la shareeka lahu, wa ash-hadu anna muhammadan 'abduhu wa-rasuluhu. Allahumma salli ala Muhammadi wa 'Ali Muhammad."

## 8. Tasleem

The Shafi'is, Malikis, and Hanbalis observe: *Tasleem* is *wajib* (obligatory). The Hanafis do not consider it *wajib* (*Bidayat al-Mujtahid*, vol. 1, p. 126).

The Imamis differ among themselves, a group considers it *wajib*, while others, including al-Mufid, al-Shaykh al-Tusi and al-'Allamah al-Hilli, regard it as *mustahabb*.

*Tasleem* (farewell) has only one form in the opinion of the four Sunni schools, and it is:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله

"Assalamu alaikum warahmatu allah".

The Hanbalis say: It is obligatory to recite it twice. The others consider reciting once as sufficient.

The Imamis state: *Tasleem* consists of two formulas; the first is:

السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله الصالحين

"Assalamu alaina wa 'ala 'ibadi allahi assaliheen".

The second:

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

"Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatu allahi wa barakatuh".

One of them is *wajib*. Hence if a person recites the former, the latter will be *mustahabb*, and if he recites the latter, he will stop at it. As to:

السلام عليك أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

"Assalamu alaika ayyuha annabiyyu wa rahmatu allahi wa barakatuhu", it is not a part of *tasleem*, and is a *mustahabb* addition to the *tashahhud*.

## **9. Sequence (tartib)**

Proper sequence (*tartib*) is *wajib* between the different parts of *salat*. Hence the *takbirat al-ihram* must precede reciting (*qira'ah*), the *qira'ah* must precede *ruku'*, the *ruku'* must come before the *sujud*, and so on.

## **10. Continuity**

Continuity (*muwalat* and *tatabu'*, i.e. to occur one after another) is *wajib* between the parts of *salat* and between the different portions of a part. Therefore, the reciting (*qira'ah*) must begin immediately after the *takbirah* and *ruku'* must similarly follow the *qira'ah*, and so on. The verses, words and letters must not be recited in a manner breaking continuity.

1. ‘tasbih’ means: saying "subhanallah wal-hamdu lillah wala ilaha illallahwallahu akbar" which is usually recited three times in the third and the forth rak'ahs (units). Also ‘qunut’ means rasing both hands toward the sky and holding them in front of the chest or face and then reciting a supplication, like asking for forgiveness. It could be some verses of Qur'an or not. However it should be in Arabic for obligatory prayers.

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