

Qunut

The word “*qunut*” means obedience accompanied by humility. For example, while addressing Hadrat Maryam (Mary), God says: “**O Mary, be obedient {*uqnuti*} to your Lord.**”¹ What is meant by *qunut* in prayer is the supplication that we recite in the second *rak‘ah* of every prayer.

On the interpretation of the verse, “**And dedicate yourself to Him with total dedication,**”² Imam as-Sadiq (‘a) says that what is meant by “*tabattul*” is to raise the hands in supplication during prayer.³ The word “*tabattul*” means cutting off hope in other than God.⁴

The Qur’an thus enjoins us: “**Supplicate your Lord, beseechingly and secretly.**”⁵ One of the signs of beseeching and weeping in the presence of God is to raise the hands in supplication.⁶ The indigent man stretches his hands toward the Absolute All-sufficient, praying to Him alone and purges his heart of other than Him.

Although *qunut* is only optional {*mustahabb*} in prayer, it has, nevertheless, been given such attention that Imam ar-Rida (‘a) thus wrote in one of his letters to Ma’mun: “*Qunut* is an obligatory *sunnah* in all the daily prayers.”⁷ Of course, the purpose of the Imam (‘a) is to emphasize the importance of *qunut*. For example, if one forgets to perform it before the *ruku‘*, it is recommended to perform a compensatory one after *ruku‘*, and if he remembers it during *sujud*, he may also do so after *salam*.

Concerning the etiquette of performing *qunut*, it is thus recorded: You have to raise your hands up to the level of your face; the palms of the hands must be open toward the sky; the two hands must be kept together; the fingers must be close together except the thumbs; at the time of reciting the supplication, you have to look at the palms of the hands and recite it loudly; of course, not to the extent that the leader of the congregation would hear it.⁸

There is no specific supplication and one may recite whatever supplication one wants. It is also not necessary that the supplication be recited in Arabic as it may also be recited in English. Of course, it is clear that the Qur’anic supplications and the supplications that the Infallibles (‘a) read in their *qunut* have special virtue and preeminence.

The qunut of different prayers

The number of *qunut* is not identical in all prayers. Each of the five daily prayers has one *qunut* before the *ruku'* of the second *rak'ah*. But the Friday congregational prayer which has two *rak'ahs* have two *qunuts*, one before the *ruku'* of the first *rak'ah* and the other one after the *ruku'* of the second *rak'ah*.

In the *'Id al-Fitr* and *'Id al-Qurban* prayers each of which has two *rak'ahs*, we recite nine *qunuts*; five successive *qunuts* before the *ruku'* of the first *rak'ah* and four successive *qunuts* before the *ruku'* of the second *rak'ah*. Of course, there is a special supplication recorded for these *qunuts*.

Even in the *salah al-ayat* {prayer of natural signs} which has two *rak'ahs* and five *ruku's* in every *rak'ah*, it is recommended to recite the *qunut* before the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth *ruku's*, though it is enough to have one *qunut* before the tenth *ruku'*.

The *witr* prayer, which is a one-*rak'ah* prayer performed at the end of the night supererogatory prayers, has a long *qunut* and many recorded supplications, such as *istighfar* {to say, for example, “*astaghfirullah*”} 70 times, “*al-afwu*” 300 times and supplication for 40 believers.

The prayer for rain, like the *'Id* prayers, has five *qunuts* in the first *rak'ah* and four *qunuts* in the second *rak'ah*.

In any case, to prolong the *qunut* is recommended. Abu Dharr asked the Prophet (S): “Which prayer is better?” The Prophet (S) replied: “The prayer whose *qunut* is longer and anyone who would recite his *qunut* longer will have more comfort during the time of the Day of Resurrection.”⁹

The qunut of the Infallibles ('a)

Ibn Mas'ud said that the reason behind his acceptance of Islam was his witnessing the prayer of three persons, viz. the Holy Prophet (S), Hadrat 'Ali ('a) and Hadrat Khadijah (r).¹⁰

In the *salam* that we give in the *Ziyarah Al Ya Sin* to Hadrat al-Mahdi (may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent), we read: “Peace be upon you when you are standing for prayer and *qunut*!”

For each of the Infallibles ('a), there has been recorded long supplications in the *qunut*, which we cannot quote here for lack of space. It is surprising that the *qunut* with all its blessings is not widely and frequently practiced. Were Hadrat 'Ali and the *Khulafa' ar-Rashidun* not reciting *qunut* in their prayers?

During *qunut* we should not think of ourselves and our requests only. We have to learn from Hadrat Zahra who said: “*al-jaru thumma 'd-dar*.”¹¹

That is, “Think of your neighbor first and then your family.” God has promised to grant the personal requests of anyone who would pray for others.

In the *qunut* we have to pray against our enemies, asking for the victory of Islam and the Muslims. In his *qunut* the Holy Prophet (S) would curse a group of people, mentioning their names and descriptions. In the *qunut* of his prayer, Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) used to curse Mu‘awiyah and ‘Amru ibn al-‘As. [12](#) At any rate, *tawalla* and *tabarra* are part of the religion, nay the foundation of our religion:

هَلِ الدِّينُ إِلَّا الْحُبُّ وَالْبُغْضُ؟

“Is the religion other than love and hatred?” [13](#)

- [1.](#) Surah Al ‘Imran 3:43.
- [2.](#) Surah al-Muzzammil 73:8.
- [3.](#) Wasa’il ash-Shi’ah, vol. 4, p. 912.
- [4.](#) Mufradat ar-Raghib.
- [5.](#) Surah al-A’raf 7:55.
- [6.](#) Ma’ani as-Saduq, p. 369.
- [7.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 197.
- [8.](#) Masa’il-e Qunut dar Tawdih al-Masa’il.
- [9.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 200.
- [10.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 38, p. 280.
- [11.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 43, p. 81.
- [12.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 82, p. 201.
- [13.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 63.

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