

The Quran and its Message

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Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

WHAT IS 'SALAAT' (PRAYER) FROM THE QURAN?

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There is an understanding amongst some Muslims that as the Quran does not furnish the reader with a descriptive 'form' of prayer which mirrors the traditional form of prayer, therefore the directive to establish prayer (Arabic: Aqemus Salat) has a broader meaning and does not represent the common prayer.

(Please see related article below dealing with why prayer is not defined by the Quran)

There is no doubt, that Muslims must follow the Quran and remain guided by it. However, one must also study it ardently (Tadabur 47:24; 4:82) and remain consistent with it and extract from it the **best possible meaning** (39:18).

039.018

“Those who listen to the Word, and follow the best (meaning) in it: those are the ones whom God has guided, and those are the ones endued with understanding”

Before we advance, let us take stock of the Arabic word '(Ta)Dabur'. This is something that the Quran implores mankind to engage in with respect to itself.

023.068

“Do they not ponder (Arabic: Yaddabbaru) over the Word (of God), or has anything (new) come to them that did not come to their fathers of old?”

047.024

“Do they not then earnestly seek to understand the Quran (Arabic: Tadabaruna), or are their hearts locked up by them?”

See also 4:82, 38:29

The word used is (TA)DABBUR(una) in its various forms (Root D-B-R) which is commonly translated as ponder / meditate. However, the word has a much more powerful rendering than is commonly appreciated.

passed]: (T: [see عَجَزَ:]) and in the Qur [iv. 84] it is said, أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ Will they, then, not consider the meanings of the Kur-án, and endeavour to obtain a clear knowledge of what is in it? (Bd:) and again, in the Qur [xxiii. 70], أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ Have they, then, not thought upon, (TA,) and endeavoured to understand, (يتفهموا, K,) what has been said to them in the Qur-án? for تَدَبَّرٌ signifies the thinking, or meditating, upon [a thing], and endeavouring to understand [it]; syn. تَفَكَّرٌ and تَفَهَّمٌ: (TA:) and تَدَبَّرَهُ he looked into it, considered it, examined it, or studied it, repeatedly, in order to know it, or until he knew it. (Mṣb in art. اَمَل.)

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

Therefore:

- With regards the Quran, God asks mankind to **research / ponder / examine / study earnestly / repeatedly** till the matter is clear.
- Note the directive to research deeply is not restricted to the knowledgeable, scholars, or the learned elite. The command is to all **mankind** including disbelievers.

If an Islamic concept, principle or doctrine stands in contradiction to the Quran's own theology and narratives, the concept must be rejected.

The purpose of this article is specific. From the Quran itself an attempt is made to ascertain whether the Salaat referred to is a mere allusion to the '**establishment of a system in accordance to the Quran**' or whether it refers to a particular practice as commonly understood.

PROPHET ABRAHAM'S (pbuh) PRAYER:

014:040

"O my Lord! make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring
O our Lord! and accept Thou my Prayer"

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ

This term **(A)qeemus Salaat** can be seen in many verses in the Quran, for example:

10:87; 11:114; 14:31; 14:37; 14:40; 17:78; 2:110; 2:277; 2:3; 2:43; 2:83; 20:14; 22:35; 22:41; 24:56;
27:3; 29:45; 30:31; 31:17; 31:4; 35:29; 4:77; 42:38; 5:12; 5:55; 58:13; 6:72; 7:170; 73:20; 8:3; 9:11;
9:5; 9:71; 98:5

WHAT DOES 'SALAAT' FROM THE QURAN INVOLVE

(1) SALAAT INVOLVES PROSTRATION (SUJOOD)

004:102

"And when you are among them and keep up the prayer for them, let a party of them **stand up with you**, and let them take their arms; then when they have **prostrated (Arabic: Sajadu)** themselves let them go to your rear, and let another party who have not prayed come forward and pray with you, and let them take their precautions and their arms; (for) those who disbelieve desire that you may be careless of your arms and your luggage, so that they may then turn upon you with a sudden united attack, and there is no blame on you, if you are annoyed with rain or if you are sick, that you lay down your arms, and take your precautions; surely God has prepared a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers"

فَإِذَا سَجَدُوا

Sajadu

(2) SALAAT HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED AT SPECIFIC TIMES

004:103

"When ye have performed the act of worship, remember God, standing, sitting and reclining. And when ye are in safety, observe proper worship. **Worship at fixed times (Arabic: Mawquta)** has been enjoined on the believers"

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا

Mawquta

Illustration - Joseph Islam

(3) THE QURAN'S ALLUSION TO SALAAT AT PRESCRIBED TIMES

(See related article below: **The Five Prayers from the Quran**)

011:114

"And establish regular prayers (Arabic: Aqeeemus Salaat) **at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night**: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord)"

017:078

Establish regular prayers (Arabic: Aqeeemus Salaat) **at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night**, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.

024:058

"O ye who believe! let those whom your right hands possess, and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: **before morning prayer (Arabic: Salaat-il Fajri)**; and when you put aside your clothes for the noon; and after the **late-night prayer (Arabic: Salaat-il'isha)**: these are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other: Thus does God make clear the Signs to you: for God is full of knowledge and wisdom"

صَلَاةَ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهِيرَةِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ الْعِشَاءِ

Salaat-il-Isha

Salaat-il Fajri

Illustration - Joseph Islam

002:238

"Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers, especially the middle prayer (Arabic Salaat-il-Wusta); and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind)"

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

Salaat-il-Wusta

Illustration - Joseph Islam

(4) THERE IS MORE THAN ONE SALAAAT - THE PLURAL 'SALAWAT IS USED

002:238

"Guard strictly your prayers (Arabic: Salawaati), especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before God in a devout (frame of mind)"

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَى وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

Salawaati

Illustration - Joseph Islam

(5) PURIFICATION MUST BE ACTIONED BEFORE ESTABLISHING SALAAT

005:006

"O you who believe! when you **prepare for prayer (Salaat)**, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and (wash) your feet to the ankles. If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes from the lavatory, or you have been in contact with women, and you find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands, God does not wish to place you in a difficulty, but to make you clean, and to complete his favour to you, that you may be grateful"

004:043

"O you who believe! Approach not prayers (**Arabic: Salaat**) with a mind befogged, until ye can understand all that ye say,- nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you comes from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For God does blot out sins and forgive again and again"

(6) WHERE DO THESE MARKS OF PROSTRATION COME FROM?

048:029

"Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them **bowing down, prostrating themselves**, seeking grace from God and pleasure; **their marks are in their faces because of the effect of prostration**; that is their description in the Torah and their description in the Gospels; like as seed-produce that puts forth its sprout, then strengthens it, so it becomes stout and stands firmly on its stem, delighting the sowers that He may enrage the unbelievers on account of them; God has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward"

(7) THERE IS A DIRECTION FOR QIBLAH

002:144

"Indeed We see the turning of your face to heaven, so **We shall surely turn you to a qiblah** which you shall like; turn then your face towards the Sacred Mosque, and wherever you are, turn your face towards it, and those who have been given the Book most surely know that it is the truth from their Lord; and God is not at all heedless of what they do"

002:149-150

"And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and surely it is the very truth from your Lord, and God is not at all heedless of what you do. And from

whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your faces towards it, so that people shall have no accusation against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me, that I may complete My favor on you and that you may walk on the right course”

(8) USE A MODERATE TONE IN SALAAT

017:110

"Say: Call upon God or call upon, the Beneficent God; whichever you call upon, He has the best names; and do not **utter your prayer with a very raised voice nor be silent with regard to it, and seek a way between these"**

(9) SALAAT INVOLVES UTTERANCE

004:043

"O ye who believe! Approach not prayers with a mind befogged, **until ye can understand all that ye say**, - nor in a state of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), until after washing your whole body. If ye are ill, or on a journey, or one of you cometh from offices of nature, or ye have been in contact with women, and ye find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth, and rub therewith your faces and hands. For God does blot out sins and forgive again and again"

(10) THERE IS A GENERAL FORM TO PRAYER

In this Quranic verse, the normative form of prayer is abandoned in danger. It becomes clear therefore that a form must exist before the danger is encountered. This notion is confirmed in the Quran when we are told to re-establish form when the danger has passed.

002:238-39

"Attend constantly to prayers (Salawaat) and to the middle prayer (Salaat) and stand up truly obedient to God. **But if you are in danger**, then (say your prayers) on foot or on horseback; **and when you are secure**, then remember God, as He has taught you what you did not know"

(See related article below: Pray As We Have Taught You How to Pray - Using Verse 2.239 As Support For a Fixed Form Of Prayer)

(11) CALL FOR PRAYER AND CONGREGATION

062:009

"O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of God, and leave off business: That is best for you if you but knew!"

(12) 'SALAAT' AND 'DHIKR' ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME PRACTICE

This can clearly be seen when in **one** verse, they are shown to be two separate practices. There are also other examples of this in the Quran.

062.010

"And when the Prayer (Arabic: salatu) is finished, then you may disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of God: and remember (Arabic: wa-udh'kuru) God often (Arabic: kathiran): that you may prosper"

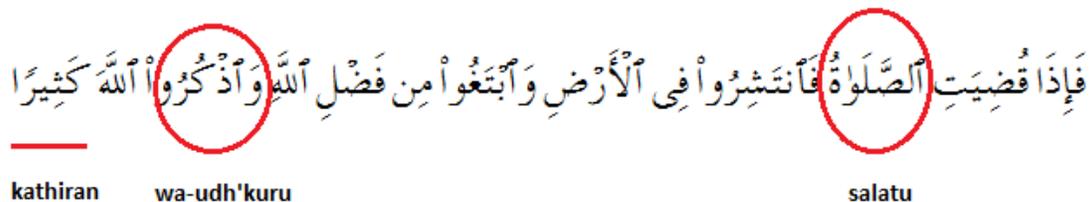


Illustration - Joseph Islam

(13) HYPOCRITES AND PRAYER

004:142-143

"Indeed, the Hypocrites - they think they are over-reaching God, but He will over-reach them: **When they stand up to prayer (Arabic: Salaat-i)**, they stand without earnestness, to be seen of men, but little do they hold God in remembrance; They are distracted in mind even in the midst of it,- being (sincerely) for neither one group nor for another whom God leaves straying,- never will you find for him the way"

(14) DO NOT ABANDON SALAAT AS DID THE PEOPLE BEFORE

019:58-59

"These are they on whom God bestowed favours, from among the prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and of those

whom We guided and chose; when the communications of the Beneficent God were recited to them, they fell down making obeisance and weeping. **But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers (Arabic: Salaata) and followed after lusts soon, then, will they face Destruction"**

FINAL THOUGHTS

From the few examples above, it is clear that the 'Salaat' mentioned in the Quran refers to a particular practice with certain features.

A discussion of the many possibilities as to why the contents of the prayer and its form are not prescribed in the Quran has much broader wisdom than is commonly appreciated.

See related article below that deals with why prayer is not defined by the Quran (Article: How can we learn to pray if we don't have Hadith to teach us?)

"Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers (Salaat)" **23.1-2**

002:002-3

"This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who guard (against evil). **Those who believe in the unseen and keep up prayer (Arabic: Salaat) and spend out of what We have given them"**

020:014

"Verily, I am God: There is no God but I: So serve Me (only), and establish salaat for My remembrance"

Related Articles:

- (1) [How Can We Learn to Pray if We Don't Have Hadith to Teach Us?](#)
- (2) [The Five Prayers from the Quran](#)
- (3) [Pray As We Have Taught You How to Pray - Using Verse 2.239 As Support For a Fixed Form Of Prayer](#)
- (4) [What is the Quranic Sujud \(Prostration\)?](#)

REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 3, Page 844

Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

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