

SALAT / PRAYER

Salat is the obligatory Muslim prayers, performed five times each day by Muslims. It is the second Pillar of Islam.

God ordered Muslims to pray at five set times of day:

Salat al-fajr: dawn, before sunrise

Salat al-zuhr: midday, after the sun passes its highest

Salat al-'asr: the late part of the afternoon

Salat al-maghrib: just after sunset

Salat al-'isha: between sunset and midnight

All Muslims try to do this. Muslim children as young as seven are encouraged to pray. Prayer sets the rhythm of the day. This prayer timetable gives Muslims the pattern of their day.

In Islamic countries, the public call to prayer from the mosques sets the rhythm of the day for the entire population, including non-Muslims.

A universal Muslim ritual

The prayer ritual, which is over 1400 years old, is repeated five times a day by hundreds of millions of people all round the world.

Carrying it out is not only highly spiritual, but connects each Muslim to all others around the world, and to all those who have uttered the same words and made the same movements at different times in Islamic history.

Prayers of body, mind and soul

The set prayers are not just phrases to be spoken. Prayer for a Muslim involves uniting mind, soul, and body in worship; so a Muslim carrying out these prayers will perform a whole series of set movements that go with the words of the prayer.

Muslims make sure that they are in the right frame of mind before they pray; they put aside all every day cares and thoughts so that they can concentrate exclusively on God.

If a Muslim prays without the right attitude of mind, it as if they hadn't bothered to pray at all.

Woe to those who pray, but are unmindful of their prayer, or who pray only to be seen by people. (Qur'an 107:4-6)

Muslims don't pray for God's benefit

Muslims do not pray for the benefit of Allah. Allah does not need human prayers because he has no needs at all. Muslims pray because God has told them that they are to do this, and because they believe that they obtain great benefit in doing so.

Muslims pray direct to God

A Muslim prays as if standing in the presence of Allah. In the ritual prayers each individual Muslim is in direct contact with Allah. There is no need of a priest as an intermediary. (While there is a prayer leader in the mosque - the imam - they are not a priest, simply a person who knows a great deal about Islam.)

Praying in the mosque

Muslims can pray anywhere, but it is especially good to pray with others in a mosque.

Praying together in a congregation helps Muslims to realise that all humanity is one, and all are equal in the sight of Allah.

Ritual washing

Muslims must be clean before they pray. They make sure of this by performing ritual washing, called wudhu. Mosques have washing facilities.

MUSLIM PRAYER MOVEMENTS



Takbir: Takbir is entering into the state of prayer by glorifying God. Muslims face towards Makkah and make the intention to pray. To begin the act of prayer, they say '**Allahu Akbar**' meaning **God is great**, raising the hands to the ears or shoulder.



Qiyaam: Muslims place their right hand over their left on their chest or navel while in the standing position (this may vary according to the subdivision followed).

A short supplication glorifying God and seeking His protection is read. This is then followed by Surah Al Fatiha, which is the first chapter in the Qur'an. Verses from any another chapter are then recited.

1- Subhanaka:

Glory to You, Allah, and praise by You. Blessed is Your Name, great is Your Highness and there is no god except you.

2- I ask Allah to protect me from the rejected Shaytan. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

3- Surat Al-Fatihah (The opening)

-All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Âlemiin (mankind, Jinn and all that exists.)

- The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

-The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense. (i.e the Day of Resurrection)

-You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything)

-Guide us to the Straight Way.

-The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, nor of those who went astray.

4-Surat al-Asr (The Time)

- By Al-'Asr (the time).

- Verily! Man is in loss,

- Except those who believe (in Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to the truth, and recommend one another to patience.



Ruku: Ruku means bowing. During ruku, Muslims says 'glory be to God, the Most Great', three times.



Brief qiyaam: While moving into the upright position, Muslims recite '**God listens to the one who praises Him**' and while in the standing position, '**To God belongs all praise**' then is recited. 'God is Great' is recited again. Hands are loosely at the sides this time.

Each movement is always preceded by the phrase 'God is Great'. This indicates to followers of the prayer that the leader is about to make the next movement.



Sujud: Sujud means to prostrate. While in the prostration position 'Glory be to God, the Most High' is repeated three times. Palms, knees, toes, forehead and nose must be the only body parts touching the ground.

The Prophet said, "The worst thief is he who steals from his prayer." His companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah, how does he steal from his prayer?" He said, "He does not perfect its ruku and sujud".



Brief sitting:

'God is Great' is recited while moving to the sitting position. Muslims pause here for a few seconds, either staying silent, or reciting a shorter prayer. 'God is Great' is recited once more as the sujud position is taken again.

The Prophet recommended that each movement must last at least the time that it takes for the bones to settle. He compared some people's ruku' and sujud to the way that a crow pecks on the ground, because of the speed at which they perform it. (Ibn Khuzaymah)



Sujud:

This sujud is the same as the first one. After reciting 'Glory be to God, the Most High', one 'raka'ah', or unit is complete. Each salah has its own number of units though. The shortest prayer, Fajr, has two.

To continue the prayer from the sujud position, Muslims say 'God is Great' and stand up to repeat everything from Surah Al Fatiha, until they reach this sujud again.



Tashahhud:

After saying God is Great, Muslims return to the sitting position. They recite a set number of short prayers in Arabic, praising God, and sending peace on the Prophet. They repeat the declaration of faith, raising the forefinger of their right hand, in order to act as a witness.

They then ask God to bestow blessings and peace upon Prophet Abraham and his family, and ask for the same for Prophet Muhammad. Finally, Muslims ask for forgiveness and mercy, and ask God to bless them and their children until the Day of Judgement.

They recite these supplication during the tashahhud:

1- All purity, prayer and goodness belong to Allah. Peace upon you Prophet and Allah's mercy and blessings. Peace be upon all righteous servants of Allah. I declare that there is no god but Allah, He is One with no partners, and I declare that Muhammad is His servant an Messenger.

2- Allah send grace upon Muhammad and on the family of Muhammad, just like You put grace upon Ibrahim and on the family of Ibrahim. You are worthy of all praise, the Majestic. Allah bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad, just like you blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim in the world. You are worthy of all praise, the Majestic.

3-O our Lord! Bestow upon us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and protect us from the torment of the fire.

4-O our Lord! cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness? me, my parents, and (all) Believers, on the Day that the Reckoning will be established!



Peace to the right:

To end the prayer, Muslims first turn their face to the right saying 'Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah.' This is said to the Angels which Muslims believe accompany each human being to record their actions.

Peace to the left:

'Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah' is repeated turning to the left side now. Muslims believe the Angel on the right side records all good actions and thoughts, while the one on the left records all bad actions.