

Ṣalāt in the Ḥadīth: Emphasis on its Psychological Values

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INTRODUCTION

Hadīth literature is vast, and there are several collections of which the *sunan sitta* are the most important according to the best judgment of the writer. These *sunan* comprise *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī* and *Sunan Ibn Māja*. Some scholars however, have different views on the sixth *sunan* and they considered *al-Muwattā'* of *imām Mālik* as the sixth book instead of Ibn Māja.¹

This article will try to examine the occurrence of the word *ṣalāt* in all these *sunan* and its appearance in *al-Kāfī* of al-Kulaynī.² This article, however, is not intended to concentrate upon the *fiqh* point of view, rather it tries to introduce a psychological approach of studying *ṣalāt* in the ḥadīth. The emphasis is therefore, more on its psychological benefits and values rather than its juridical point of view.

DUTY

In the enumeration of the obligations of a Muslim, *ṣalāt* always appears in the second place after the confession (*shahāda*). This is to be found for example in the ḥadīth which reads;

It has been narrated on the authority of °Abdullah ibn °Umar that the Messenger of Allah said: I have been commanded to fight against people till they testify that there is no god but Allah, that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and they establish *ṣalāt*, and pay *zakāt* and if they do it, their blood and property are guaranteed protection on my behalf except when justified by law, and their affairs rest with Allah.³

We notice from this ḥadīth that two other obligations i.e. fasting (*ṣawm*) and pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) are not mentioned. The absence of any mention of them implies the pre-eminent significance of the first three pillars of Islam i.e. *shahāda*, *ṣalāt* and *zakāt*. The confession is considered as the key to enable a person to enter into the fold of

Islam. The *ṣalāt*, is the pillar of the religion of Islam and the *zakāt* is the obligation which takes care of both personal and societal needs. This notion is also to be found in the Qur'ān where *ṣalāt* is mentioned after the faith in the "Unseen" and then it is associated with *zakāt* as appears in the Qur'ānic verse of al-Baqara, 2: 2-3.

Unlike the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth speak about the obligation of *ṣalāt* in more detail as we can see from the ḥadīth which shows how this duty has been ordained by God during the ascension (*mi'raj*) of the Prophet:

Ibn Ḥazm and Anas ibn Mālik said: The Prophet (mpbuh) said: Then Allah prescribed fifty *ṣalāt* to my followers and I returned with them till I passed by Moses who asked me, "What has Allah prescribed to your followers?" I replied, "Fifty *ṣalāt*" Moses said, "Go back to your Lord because your followers will be unable to do it." (So I went back to Allah and requested for reduction) and they were reduced to half. I returned to Moses and informed him about it. He said: "Go back to your Lord as your followers will be unable to do even this." So I returned to Allah and requested for further reduction and again those were reduced to half. I came back to Moses and he advised me to go back because my followers would be unable to do this. So I went to Allah Who said: "These are five *ṣalāt* and they are equal to fifty (in reward) for my statement does not change" ⁴

As we have learnt from the Qur'ānic discourse on *ṣalāt*, the Qur'ān does not mention explicitly the number of daily *ṣalāt* which had been laid upon the Muslim. It is in this ḥadīth that the prophet was informed about the daily number.

The importance of the obligation can be judged from its way of ordination. *Ṣalāt* as the ḥadīth reports, was ordained on the night of the Prophet's ascension. This is the only obligation in the pillars of Islam that had been given a special privilege by God where the Prophet had to seek audience with Him at the time of its ordination.

In addition, we also learn from the ḥadīth that although the number was reduced from fifty to five, the reward remains the same. God, as the ḥadīth reports, does not wish to change His command. At the same time we learn that God will never bow to any of His creature's demands or threats as the reduction was only due to His mercy and grace upon mankind. As to the assurance that the reward will remain the same, it further indicates the importance of this obligation from God's point of view.

Apart from the ḥadīth of the *mi'raj*, the obligation of five daily *ṣalāt* can also be found in the following ḥadīth:

Narrated ibn Shihāb: Once °Umar ibn °Abdul °Azīz delayed the *ṣalāt* and °Urwa ibn Zubayr went to him and said: "Once in °Irāq, al-Mughīra ibn Shu°ba delayed his *ṣalāt* and Abū Mas°ūd al-Anṣārī went to him and said: "O Mughīra! What is this? Don't you know that once Gabriel came and offered the *ṣalāt* (*fajr*) and Allah's apostle prayed too, then he prayed again (*ẓuhr*) and so did Allah's apostle and again he prayed (*°Aṣr*) and Allah's apostle did the same: again he prayed (*maghrib*) and

so did Allah's apostle and again prayed (*Ishā'*) and so did Allah's apostle and (Gabriel) said: "I was ordered to do so (to demonstrate the ṣalāt prescribed to you)" °Umar ibn °Abdul °Azīz said to °Urwa, "Be sure of what you say" Did Gabriel lead Allah's apostle at the stated times of the ṣalāt? °Urwa replied: "Bashīr ibn Abī Mas'ūd narrated like this on the authority of his father."⁵

This is one of the ḥadīth which elaborates the times of ṣalāt as the Qur'ān does not specify them in detail. On the obligation of five daily ṣalāt, we have another ḥadīth which specifies the number. We read for instance the following ḥadīth:

Ibn Shihāb reported: °Umar ibn °Abd °Azīz deferred the afternoon ṣalāt somewhat and °Urwa said to him: Gabriel came down and he led the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) in ṣalāt. °Umar said to him: "O °Urwa, are you aware of what you are saying?" Upon this he (°Urwa) said: I heard Bashīr ibn Abū Mas'ūd say that he heard Abū Mas'ūd say that he heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say: "Gabriel came down and acted as my *imām*. Then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, then I prayed with him, reckoning with his fingers five times of ṣalāt."⁶

This ḥadīth emphasizes the number five rather than explaining the precise times of each ṣalāt. Although the Muslim traditions suggest that the five daily ṣalāt had been fixed in Muḥammad's life time, this however has been disputed by some scholars.⁷ Since the article is trying to examine the psychological values, this dispute will not be discussed here.

One of the examples of the psychological emphasis which is to be found in the ḥadīth regarding the obligation of ṣalāt is the spiritual preparation that had been given to Muḥammad as a vocation for the prophethood. The story is related by Ibn Hishām in his *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*. A more recent reference about the opening of Muḥammad's breast is to be found in the writing of Harris Birke-land.⁸ In his writing, however, he refers to the biography of Ibn Ishāq (d. 151/767) as related by Ibn Hishām (d. 218/834) concerning the opening of the breast of the Prophet during his childhood. We give here the account of Ibn Hishām regarding the event:

°Abd al-Wahhāb Ibn °Aṭā' related to us on the authority of Thawr Ibn Yazīd: (second chain) Muḥammad Ibn °Umar informed us: Thawr ibn Yazīd informed us on the authority of Khālīd ibn Ma'dān: he said: The Apostle of Allah (mpbuh) was asked to give information about himself. He said: Yea! I am the answer to the prayer of Ibrāhīm; Jesus son of Mary foretold the good news about me; my mother, when she delivered me, perceived a light with which the palaces of Syria shone; and while I was with Banū Sa'd Ibn Bakr for being nursed I was, with my (foster) brother, grazing lambs behind our houses, two men wearing white clothes came to me with a basin of gold full of ice and they took me away and opened my belly (*baṭn*) and removed my heart (*qalb*) which they split and then they took out a black clog (*°alaqa*) from it and threw it away; then they washed my belly and heart with that ice⁹

We do not intend here to discuss the validity of the story as it is reported by the traditions, but it provides with the information that

the Prophet had already been given the vocation to become a purified man, a Prophet. His heart was cleaned and purified to receive the Divine Revelation so that he is always prepared to seek audience with God of which *ṣalāt* is one of the means. This event took place in his childhood. Then it is reported in the ḥadīth of the ascension that the Prophet was given another spiritual preparation before he travelled from the *Masjid al-Ḥaram* to *Bayt al-Maqdis* in the night of the ascension.

The ḥadīth states that:

Narrated Abū Dhar: Allah's apostle (mpbuh) said: 'The roof of my house was made open while I was in Mecca and Gabriel descended, opened my chest and washed it with the water of zam-zam spring. He brought a golden tray full of wisdom and faith and poured it into my chest, and then closed it. ..'¹⁰

The ḥadīth shows that the Prophet had had a preliminary preparation before ascending to meet with God and receive the obligation of *ṣalāt*. The process was to clean the Prophet's body and soul from all forms of doubts, idolatry, paganism and error. Then, his body was filled with wisdom and belief. It was a symbolic form of purification which was only experienced by the Prophet. The event leads us to relate the process of purification to the obligation of *ṣalāt* which also needs a purified body and soul. For the worshipper (*muṣallī*), the preliminary preparation is the ablution and the presence of the heart, at least at the time of *takbīrat al-ihram*. This needs to be done before he engages himself in the spiritual relationship with God in *ṣalāt*. We will be dealing briefly with the ablution in the proceeding discussion.

As for the obligation of *ṣalāt*, again the Qur'ān does not specify the number of *rak'āt*¹¹ but the following ḥadīth reveals that at first, *ṣalāt* was two *rak'āt* only:

Narrated ʿĀisha (the mother of faithful believers): When Allah prescribed the *ṣalāt* at first it was two *rak'āt* only in every *ṣalāt* both when in residence (*al-ḥaḍar*) or on journey (*al-safar*). The *ṣalāt* offered on journey remain the same, but the (*rak'a*) of the *ṣalāt* for non-travellers were increased.¹²

As far as this article is concerned, we are not interested in the discussion of the number, but our concern is on the psychological values which can be found in the ḥadīth. Nevertheless, when speaking about the obligation, it is best to look at the ḥadīth which shows exactly how the Muslim should establish the *ṣalāt* by following the Prophet's example. It is narrated from Mālik:

.. Establish the *ṣalāt* as you have seen me establishing my *ṣalāt* and when it is the time for the *ṣalāt* one of you should make the *adhān* and the oldest of you should lead the *ṣalāt*.¹³

Since the Qur'ān does not teach the detail movements of *ṣalāt*, this

ḥadīth strengthens the belief of the Muslim that they must depend on the example of the Prophet in matters regarding the ṣalāt. Because of this, we find that the collection of ḥadīth on this subject is vast.

PRE-REQUISITES

CLEANLINESS AND ABLUTION

The importance of cleanliness of body along with cleanliness of mind has been laid down by both the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth. This requirement is necessary because the cleanliness of body leads to the latter. It is enjoined upon the believer so that he attains the initial requirement of meeting with God with clean body and soul. This is affirmed by the Qur'ānic verse of al-Mā'idā, 5:7 which reads "... Allah does not intend to create difficulty for you in religious affairs, but He intends to purify (*yutahhir*) you..." Since body and soul are inseparable, cleanliness must also involve both aspects of the human being, the external and the internal, for external cleanliness leads to the internal purity. It is through ṣalāt that internal purity is renewed again and again. The need for purification, especially of mind, is vital, for the Qur'ān says:

The day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only he (will prosper) that brings to God a sound heart (*qalb salīm*). (al-Shu'arā' 26: 88–89)

As purification involves two aspects of the human personality, one has to undergo the following stages:

1. to achieve external cleanliness of the body, dress and the surrounding areas especially the place of worship.
2. to avoid bad attributes such as backbiting, falsehood, doing harm to the people, eating unlawful (*ḥarām*) foods and so on.
3. to remove all evil attributes from the mind such as greed, boastfulness and spite.
4. to concentrate the mind and thought on God alone.

By the spiritual strength of ablution, these processes assist the believer to attain the required purification as explained by the Qur'ān and ḥadīth.

The need for ablution to establish ṣalāt is to be found in the ḥadīth of the Prophet:

Narrated Abū Hurayra (r.^ḥa): Allah's apostle (mpbuh) said: "The ṣalāt of a person who does ḥadath (passes urine, stool or wind) is not accepted unless he repeats the ablution."¹⁴

This requirement was introduced by the Qur'ān. It is then the ḥadīth which provides a more detail explanation of the decree:

Abū ʿAbdillāh said that the Prophet (ṣ) had shown that ablution was to wash the parts once. The Prophet (ṣ) performed ablution by washing the parts twice and thrice but never more than three times.¹⁵

On the washing itself, the ḥadīth also explains in detail the procedures:

Narrated ʿAṭāʾ ibn Yasār: Ibn ʿAbbās (r. ʿa) performed ablution in the following way: He washed his face and took a handful of water and rinsed his mouth and washed his nose with it by drawing in water and then blowing it out. He then, took another handful (of water) and did like this (gesturing) joining both hands, and washed his face, took another handful of water and washed his right forearm. He again took another handful of water and washed his left forearm, and passed wet hands over his head and took another handful of water and sprinkled it over his right foot (up to his ankles) and washed it and similarly took another handful of water and washed his left foot (up to the ankles) and said: “I saw Allah’s apostle (ṣ) performing ablution in this way”¹⁶

This is the example of how the ḥadīth plays its part in further explaining the Qurʾānic verse. We find that the text barely carries any form of psychological statements which might help our interest in this subject.

As for the role of ablution to cleanse sins, we may read from the ḥadīth how ʿAmr ibn ʿAbasa embraced Islam. It is in this ḥadīth the Prophet mentions something on the spiritual aspect of ablution:

Apostle of Allah, tell me about ablution also. He said: None of you who uses water for ablution and rinses his mouth, snuffs up water and blows it, but the sins of his face, and his mouth and his nostrils fall out. When he washes his face, as Allah has commanded him, the sins of his face fall out from the end of his beard with water. Then (when) he washes his forearms up to the elbows, the sins of his arms fall out along with water from his finger-tips. And when he wipes his head, the sins of his head fall out from the points of his hair along with water. And (when) he washes his feet up to the ankles, the sins of his feet fall out from his toes along with water. And if he stands to *ṣalāt* and praises Allah, lauds Him, and glorifies Him with what becomes Him and shows whole-hearted devotion to Allah, his sins would depart leaving him (as innocent) as he was on the day his mother bore him¹⁷

It is interesting here that the Prophet has made a link between the need of external purification with the need of internal purity. This linkage emphasizes the psychological implications of ablution upon the believer, so that everyone understands the implicit meaning of the ablution. It is clear that the role of ablution in expiating sins from the believer is great. It covers the whole body from the head to the feet. Every part which is usually exposed to the external dirt such as head, eyes, face, hands elbows, feet and toes are washed by the water in ablution. In its spiritual sense, any sin which is attracted by these organs is already expiated. This is a beautiful explanation of the spiritual role of the ablution.

FACING THE QIBLA

Like the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth stress the importance of facing the *qibla* in *ṣalāt*. We may read for example:

Narrated Anas ibn Mālik (r. °a.): Allah's apostle (mpbuh) said: "whoever prays like us and faces our *qibla* and eats our slaughtered animals is a Muslim and is under Allah's and His apostle's protection. So do not betray Allah by betraying those who are in His protection' "18

In another ḥadīth which was narrated by °Abdullah ibn °Umar we read:

While the people were offering the *fajr ṣalāt* at Qūba' (near Medīna), someone came to them and said: Tonight Divine Inspiration came to Allah's apostle (mpbuh) and he was ordered to establish *ṣalāt* facing the Ka'ba. So all of them turned their faces from Shām to the Ka'aba.¹⁹

This ḥadīth is a complement of the Qur'ānic verse in al-Baqara, 2: 144 where the believers were asked to turn their faces towards the Ka'ba. It confirms that both the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth agree that the early community of Muslims in Medīna faced Jerusalem in *ṣalāt*. When the verse was revealed, about 16 months after the migration, they were asked to change the direction.

The importance of Ka'ba in the Islamic *ṣalāt* is not only shown by the requirement to face it, but also by the reward for those who establish *ṣalāt* in the Sacred Mosque where the Ka'ba is located. The ḥadīth affirms:

Yahya related to me from Mālik from Zayd ibn Rabah and °Ubaydullah ibn Abī °Abdullah Salman al-Agharr from Abī Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: "A *ṣalāt* in this mosque of mine is better than a thousand *ṣalāt* in any other mosques, except the *Masjid al-Harām* (in Mecca)."20

Apart from its ordinary direction in the Muslim's *ṣalāt*, the Sacred Mosque entails the highest spiritual significance. This assurance teaches the believer that the value of adhering to the command of God is priceless. By stressing the spiritual reward, at the same time, it encourages the believer to have a stronger determination to visit this place by performing the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*).

THE TIME OF THE SALĀT

On the precise time of each *ṣalāt*, we may read the following ḥadīth:

°Abdullah ibn °Amr reported: "The Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: The time of the noon *ṣalāt* is when the sun passes the meridian and a man's shadow is the same (length) as his height, (and it lasts) as long as the time for the afternoon *ṣalāt* has not come; the time for the afternoon *ṣalāt* is as long as the sun has not become pale; the time for the evening *ṣalāt* is as long as the twilight has not ended; the time of the night *ṣalāt* is up to the middle of the average night, and the time of the morning

ṣalāt is from the appearance of dawn, as long as the sun has not risen; but when the sun rises, refrain from *ṣalāt*, for it rises between the horns of the devil."²¹

It is important to note that the ḥadīth uses the sun to appoint or to determine the beginning and the ending of the times of *ṣalāt*. The sun is a universal standard and its measurement is applicable to all places and times. It is then dependent upon the length of the day or night in a particular area.

Here again we do not find a substantial spiritual or psychological explanation for the appointment of the times. This is the point where the ḥadīth lacks its psychological emphasis as compared to the Qur'ān.

PHYSICAL POSTURES

Unlike the Qur'ān, the ḥadīth explains each of the postures according to what the Prophet had done. The most pertinent example of the role of the ḥadīth in this context is its view on how sitting down (*jalsa*) is to be observed:

°Abdullah Ibn Zubayr narrated on the authority of his father: When the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) sat in *ṣalāt*, he places the left foot between his thigh and shank and stretched the right foot and placed his left hand on his left knee and placed his right hand on his right thigh, and raised his finger.²²

The Qur'an does not even mention the *jalsa* as one of the postures in *ṣalāt* whereas the word *aqāma* frequently occurs. Nevertheless in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* detailed descriptions of the postures and their recitations can be found in the *Book of the characteristics of salāt*. The Book lists a number of ḥadīth concerning the necessity of saying the *takbīr*, the raising of both hands in accompaniment of the first *takbīr* (*takbīrat al-iḥrām*), the raising of both hands while bowing down and on rising from it, the placing of the hands during the *qiyām*, recitation of the Fātiḥa and other Qur'ānic verses in *ṣalāt*, the observing of bowing down and prostration and their invocations.

One particular example of how to perform the prostration is to be found in the following ḥadīth:

Narrated Ibn °Abbās (r.°a): The Prophet (mpbuh) was ordered (by Allah) to prostrate on seven parts and not to tuck up the clothes or hair (while praying). These parts are: the forehead, both hands, both kness, and (toes of) both feet.²³

The ḥadīth does not elaborate the importance of limiting the prostration to the seven parts in prostration, but one can conclude that these are the most important parts of the human body. The forehead is the highest and the toes are the lowest parts, and they all touch the

same level when in prostration. They all make the prostration stable and submissive.

The conclusion of the ṣalāt is also explained by the ḥadīth:

Narrated ‘Itbān ibn Mālik: “We prayed with the Prophet (mpbuh) and finished our ṣalāt with the *taslīm* along with him.”²⁴

The word “*taslīm*” here refers to the words of greeting i.e. *al-salām ‘alaikum*. Once again, the ḥadīth does not reveal any psychological element as it is intended only to teach the Muslims how to end their ṣalāt.

INNER BENEFITS

INTIMATE CONVERSATION (*MUNĀJA*)

It is interesting to note that the ḥadīth relate ṣalāt with the intimate conversation with God. This is mentioned in the ḥadīth:

Narrated Anas ibn Mālik (r.ʿa.): The Prophet (mpbuh) said: “A faithful believer while in ṣalāt is having an intimate conversation (*yunājī*) with his Lord, so he should not spit in front of him or to his right side but he could spit either on his left or under his foot.”²⁵

What is important in this ḥadīth is the phrase *yunājī rabbah* which describes the ṣalāt as a form of dialogue between man and God. Since God is invisible, the reciprocal intimate conversation can only be experienced by a truly earnest worshipper (*khāshīʿ*). His earnestness leads him to feel that he can experience the presence of God in front of him. That is why, as we can see, the final part of the ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī forbids a person to spit in front of him or to his right side. But the same ḥadīth in al-Muwaṭṭāʾ, ends with a reminder “look what you confide to him, and do not say the Qurʾān out loud so that others hear it”. The difference in the second part of the ḥadīth between al-Bukhārī and al-Muwaṭṭāʾ does not deny the fact that ṣalāt is an intimate conversation with God, it is only a matter of different narration and transmission. Al-Muwaṭṭāʾ’s emphasis on “look what you confide to him” reflects its emphasis on the subject of intimate conversation. However, it is rather disappointing to find that the ḥadīth does not elaborate in more detail the issue of “intimate conversation” and this idea is not developed at all in other places in the *sunan sitta*.

The intimate conversation between the worshipper and God takes place through the medium of the Fātiḥa. This is confirmed by the ḥadīth which also shows the importance of Fātiḥa in relation to ṣalāt:

Yahya related to me from Mālik from al-°Ala ibn °Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ya°qūb that he heard Abū al-Sā'ib, the mawla of Hishām ibn Zuhra, say he had heard Abū Hurayra say: I heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say: "Whoever establishes a *ṣalāt* without reciting the *umm al-Qur'ān* in it, his *ṣalāt* is aborted, it is aborted, it is aborted, incomplete." So I said; Abū Hurayra, sometimes I am behind the *imām*. He pulled my fore-arm and said, "Recite it to yourself, O, Persian, for I heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say that Allah the Blessed, the Exalted, said: "I have divided the *ṣalāt* into two halves between Me and My slave. One half of it is for Me and one half of it is for My slave, and My slave has what he asks." The Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: "Recite" The slave says, "Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds." Allah says, "My slave has praised Me" The slave says, "The Merciful, the compassionate." Allah says, "My slave has spoken well of Me". The slave says, "Master of the Day of the *dīn*" Allah says, "My slave has glorified Me" The slave says, "You-alone we worship and you alone we ask for help" Allah says, "This is between Me and My slave, and for My slave is what he asks" The slave says, "Guide us in the straight Path, the Path of those whom you have blessed, not of those with whom you are angry, nor those who are in error" Allah says, "These are for My slaves, and for My slave is what he asks."²⁶

This ḥadīth has been used deliberately by Ibn °Arabī in his treatment of *ṣalāt*. The importance of Fātiḥa is described by another ḥadīth thus:

°Ubāda ibn Ṣāmit reported from the apostle of Allah (mpbuh): "He who does not recite *fātiḥa al-kitāb* is not credited with having observed the *ṣalāt*."²⁷

The *sūra* brings before the mind of man the gist of the Qur'ān. The whole Qur'ānic teachings can be briefly summarized into four main points: the attributes of God; the relationship between man and God; the accountability of man; the injunction to do good deeds and avoid evil acts. All these points are reflected in the Fātiḥa, for which reason it is an essential recitation at every *rak'ā* of *ṣalāt*. But the ḥadīth do not discuss either the spiritual or the psychological aspects of this essentiality. However the contents of the Fātiḥa which entail the intimate conversation with God suffice to exhibit the spiritual values of the *sūra*.

EARNESTNESS (*KHUSHŪ'*)

The perfection of *ṣalāt* is very much dependent upon the level of earnestness and devotion in it. There are various ḥadīth which indicate the necessity of earnestness and devotion. We may take for example:

Abū Hurayra reported: One day the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) led the *ṣalāt*. Then turning (towards his companions) he said: "O you, the man, why don't you say your *ṣalāt* well? Does the performer of *ṣalāt* not see how he is establishing the *ṣalāt* for he establishes it for himself? By Allah, I see behind me as I see in front of me."²⁸

There were occasions where the Prophet witnessed his companions establishing their *ṣalāt* without proper arrangements. The Prophet

saw their lassitude and consequently he advised them to be calm in ṣalāt and make a proper row. The following ḥadīth emphasizes the relationship of order and calm in ṣalāt:

Jābir ibn Samura reported: The Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) came to us and said: How is it that I see you lifting your hands like the tails of headstrong horses? Be calm in ṣalāt. He (the narrator) said: He then again came to us and saw us (sitting) in circles; he said: How is it that I see you in separate groups? He (the narrator) said: He again came to us and said: Why don't you draw yourselves up in rows as angels do in the presence of their Lord? We said: Messenger of Allah, how do the angels draw themselves up in rows in the presence of their Lord? He (the Holy Prophet) said: They make the first row complete and keep close together in the row.²⁹

We learn from this ḥadīth that it is forbidden to make gestures with the hands while engaging in ṣalāt as these movements eliminate the level of earnestness. In order to achieve this, one has to observe both the external and internal calmness. Tranquility and calmness can be obtained if unnecessary gestures are avoided. While internal peacefulness can be achieved by having full concentration and avoiding the state of drunkenness and drowsiness. This is explicitly stated in the following ḥadīth:

Yahya related to me from Mālik from Hishām ibn ʿUrwa from his father from ʿĀisha, the wife of the Prophet (mpbuh), said: "If you are drowsy in ṣalāt, sleep until sleep leaves you, because if you establish the ṣalāt while you are drowsy, you do not know whether you may intend to ask for forgiveness but (in fact) ask for harm."³⁰

We find that this ḥadīth is coherent with the Qur'ānic verse of al-Nisā', 4:43 which reads " . . . approach not ṣalāt with a mind befogged (*sukāra*), until ye can understand all that ye say, . . ." The Qur'ān identifies drunkenness as that which is caused by the drinking of *khamr* (wine). Drowsiness is caused by the human body itself, resulting from the lack of sleep. Both serve to eliminate the presence of the heart during ṣalāt. In view of its emphasis upon the body and the soul alike, the ḥadīth recommends that a person must firstly fulfil his physical need (going to sleep) before engaging himself in the spiritual relationship with God (establishing ṣalāt).

THE EXPIATION OF SINS

The role of ṣalāt as the expiation of sins is justified by the ḥadīth which was reported from Abū Hurayra that he heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say:

Tell me if there is a stream at the door of one of you, in which he bathes five times every day, what dost thou say, will it leave anything of his dirt? They said: It would not leave anything of his dirt. He said: This is the likeness of the five ṣalāt, with which Allah blots out (all) faults.³¹

This ḥadīth should also be linked up with the Qur'ānic verse of al-ʿAnkabūt, 29:45 which reads “*ṣalāt* keeps one away from indecency and evil”. In the context of its ability to blot out sins and faults, this ḥadīth seeks to curb the tendency of a person to do indecent and evil acts. A person who presents himself five times a day before God has his mind and soul purified, just as the bather is purified from the external dirt.

A more obvious example of the role of *ṣalāt* as the expiation of sins can be learnt from the ḥadīth which was reported from Abū ʿAbdullah:

A believer's *ṣalāt* at night can blot out sins which he committed during the day.³²

Another ḥadīth which links the state of mind and soul was reported from al-Ḥusayn ibn Sayf from his father who said:

Whoever establishes two *rakʿāt* of *ṣalāt*, and his mind as well as his heart are present at that time, he will be free from sins.³³

This ḥadīth suggests that the right function of *ṣalāt* involves primarily the condition of the mind and the heart. The mere movement of the organs cannot guarantee the expiation of sins as this only represents the physical exercises without going deeper into the spiritual relationship with God.

The spiritual significance of *ṣalāt* is also shown by the ḥadīth which was reported from Abū Baṣīr:

The obligatory *ṣalāt* is better than twenty times of pilgrimage in Mecca, and one pilgrimage is better than a house which is full of gold from where one can give charity.³⁴

Here we notice that *ṣalāt* is compared to the pilgrimage and a house which is full of gold. To fill up a house with gold and to perform the pilgrimage in Mecca involve the expenditure of a large sums of worldly gains (money etc). By comparison *ṣalāt*, which, according to the ḥadīth, is better than the other two, needs only the presence of the heart and mind. It is in this manner that we find the ḥadīth emphasizing the spiritual aspect of *ṣalāt*.

KEY TO THE PARADISE (*JANNA*)

The spirit of much of the ḥadīth suggest that the ultimate aim of a believer shall be to attain as much favour from God as possible so that he can be guaranteed a place in the Paradise. One of the essential means of obtaining this goal is the establishment of *ṣalāt*. The ḥadīth from Abū Ayyūb reports that:

A man said: O Prophet! Please tell me of a deed that can guarantee me a place in the Paradise. The Prophet said: You must worship God and do not associate Him with anything; establish *ṣalāt*, pay *zakāt*...³⁵

The establishment of ṣalāt is mentioned immediately after belief in God. This reminds us of the Qur'ānic treatment of ṣalāt where the word also often occurs together with belief in God.

On the essentiality of ṣalāt among other pillars of Islam, the ḥadīth reveals that its role and benefit affect not only one's life in the present world, but also transform life in the hereafter. We read:

The first thing (°amal) to be counted from a believer in the Day of Judgment is his ṣalāt. If his ṣalāt is perfect (ṣalūhat) he will succeed and attain prosperity. But if his ṣalāt is defective, he will without success (fail to obtain prosperity). If he omitted any of his obligatory ṣalāt, God will be looking into his supererogatory ṣalāt so that it can be supplementary to those missing obligations.³⁶

The intimation from the ḥadīth accords with the Qur'ānic verses of al-Baqara, 2:2–5 which link the obligation of ṣalāt with prosperity (al-falāḥ).

MERITS OF ESTABLISHING SALĀT IN CONGREGATION

As the Qur'an indicates the importance of social participation in the establishment of ṣalāt, the ḥadīth equally reveal the merits of establishing this obligation in congregation. We read for example:

Yahya related to me from Mālik from Nāfi° from °Abdullah ibn °Umar that the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: ṣalāt in congregations is better than the ṣalāt of a man by himself by twenty seven degrees.³⁷

The degree of merit attached to congregational ṣalāt differs from one ḥadīth to another. In *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* for instance, the ḥadīth reads:

Abū Hurayra reported Allah's Messenger (mpbuh) as saying: A man's ṣalāt in congregation is more valuable than twenty degrees as compared with his ṣalāt in his house and his market, for when he performs ablution doing it well, then goes out to the mosque, and he is impelled (to do so) only by (the love of congregational) ṣalāt, he has no other objective before him but ṣalāt. He does not take a step without being raised a degree for it and having a sin remitted for it, till he enters the mosque, and when he is busy in ṣalāt after having entered the mosque, the angels continue to invoke blessing on him as long as he is in his place of worship, saying: O Allah, show him mercy, and pardon him! Accept his repentance (and the angels continue this supplication for him) so long as he does not do any harm in it, or as long as his ablution is not broken.³

There are four important points that can be learnt from the ḥadīth. Firstly, it speaks about the superiority of the ṣalāt in congregation. Secondly, it speaks about the role of ablution in remitting sins. Thirdly, the angels always invoke blessings on man as long as he remains in the place of his worship. And fourthly, the supplication of the angels continues until the ablution is broken.

Our interest here is on the injunction to establish *ṣalāt* in congregation. It disciplines the Muslims to worship God communally and this should be taken as an example of disciplining themselves in their daily life. From the injunction, we understand that the communal participation in worship is a training for the Muslims so that when they come to the wider life, they will be aware of the need of communal relationship.

From a general incitement to establish *ṣalāt* in congregation, the ḥadīth comes to define the merits of specific *ṣalāt* in congregation. Thus we read:

°Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abū °Amra reported: °Uthmān b. °Affān entered the mosque after evening *ṣalāt* and sat alone. I also sat along with him, so he said: O son of my brother, I heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say: He who observed the °*Ishā* *ṣalāt* in congregation, it was as if he prayed up to the midnight, and he who prayed the morning *ṣalāt* in congregation, it was as if he prayed the whole night”³⁹

The value of the communal participation in *ṣalāt* can also be learnt from the ḥadīth which speaks about the rank:

Anas ibn Mālik reported: The Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: Straighten your rows, for the straightening of a row is a part of the perfection of *ṣalāt*.⁴⁰

Although the *ṣalāt* is valid from the *fiqh* point of view when all the requirements are observed, perfection rests upon the making of rows if it is established in congregation. A more psychological interpretation perhaps can be learnt from the following ḥadīth:

Nu°mān b. Bashīr reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say: Straighten your rows or Allah would create dissension amongst you.⁴¹

It is here perceived that discord in external behaviour (not making a straight row for instance) reflects the state of the heart and the mental attitude of the believer. The outward behaviour of a person creates a corresponding inward or mental attitude. It is a test for believers to arrange themselves in well-ordered communal response whenever they submit themselves to God. *Ṣalāt* in this aspect also teaches respect for other people and their rights. When the believers stand together in rows shoulder to shoulder, they present a striking example of discipline, cohesion and affection. This develops in them love and respect for other people and their rights.

THE EXCELLENCE OF A PARTICULAR *SALĀT*

The ḥadīth not only speaks about the merits of the night and morning *ṣalāt* in congregation, but also mentions the excellence of a particular *ṣalāt*. We read:

Abū Bakr ibn ʿUmāra ibn Ruwayba al-Thaqafī narrated from his father that he heard the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) say: “Whoever establishes the ṣalāt before the sun rises and before the sun sets, he will not enter the hell.”⁴²

This ḥadīth neither specifies congregational performance of ṣalāt nor does it speak about the excellence of establishing a particular ṣalāt, but the period between sunrise and sunset covers three ṣalāt i.e. morning, noon and afternoon. It is thus understood from the ḥadīth that whoever establishes these ṣalāt regularly, will not enter the hell.

ṢALĀT AS DUʿĀ AND BLESSING

Apart from its reference to the five daily prayer, the use of the ṣalāt in the ḥadīth can also mean *duʿā* (supplication or petition), reflecting the association of terms and meanings. The following ḥadīth confirms this linkage:

ʿAmr Ibn Sulaym al-Zurāqī said: Abū Humayd al-Saʿīdī told me that they asked the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) how they were to ask for blessings upon him and he replied that they should say, “O Allah, bless (*salli*) Muhammad and his wives and his descendants as you blessed the family of Ibrāhīm, and give *baraka* to Muhammad and his wives and his descendants as you gave *baraka* to the family of Ibrāhīm. You are worthy of praise and glorious.”⁴³

The word *salli* which occurs in this ḥadīth means “bless”. This phrase is uttered in every ṣalāt during the *tahyyāt*.⁴⁴ Therefore, *ṣalawāt* (blessings) upon the Prophet is enjoined by the ḥadīth and it is the duty of a Muslim to repeat this blessing whenever he feels necessary.

The reference of the words *tuṣalli* and *ṣallā* to supplication and petition is more obvious in the *sunan Abī Dāwūd* where we read:

It was reported from Abū Hurayra that the Messenger of Allah (mpbuh) said: The angel continues to pray or make petition (*tuṣalli*) upon those who remain on his prayer mat as long as his ablution persists. The angel says: O God, please grant him forgiveness and mercy.⁴⁵

We find that the angel’s ṣalāt occurs in the form of petition and supplication to God so that He grants his mercy and forgiveness to the obedient believers.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion shows that the ḥadīth confirm the Qur’ānic reference of the word ṣalāt to prayer as petition and blessing and most importantly its reference to the obligatory ṣalāt. But unlike the Qur’ān, the ḥadīth give very little emphasis to the spiritual or psychological aspects of ṣalāt. There are few ḥadīth which speak

about the spiritual role and benefit of *ṣalāt*, particularly in terms of the remission of sins. They do not draw out the significance of *ṣalāt* upon the development of human behaviour and moral attitudes. In other words, the ḥadīth emphasize more the value of the institution of *ṣalāt* itself rather than its effects upon the attitude and behaviour of the believer.

NOTES

1. Ṣubḥī al-Ṣāliḥ, *‘Ulūm al-Ḥadīth wa Muṣṭalahuh*, (Bayrūt: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1981), pp. 117–118.
2. Abū Ja‘afar Muḥammad Ibn Ya‘qūb Ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, *al-Furū‘ min al-Kāfī*, 8 Vols., (Tehran: Mu‘assasa Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmyya, 1377H).
3. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, trans. ‘Abdul Ḥamid Siddiqī, 4 Vols., (Lahore: H. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976), “The Book of Faith”, Vol. 1, p. 17. Hereafter cited: “*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Trans.)”
4. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* Arabic – English, trans. Dr. Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, 9 Vols., (Pakistan: Sethi Straw Board Mills, 1973), *The Book Of Ṣalāt*, Vol. 1, p. 213.
Hereafter cited as: “*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.)”
5. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 297.
6. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Trans.), Vol. 1, pp. 298–299.
7. Although the Muslim traditions suggest that the five daily prayers dated back to the earlier days of Islam, Gibb and Kramers have included the view of Houtsma regarding the Qur’ānic verse 24:58 as compared to the Medīna *sūra* 2:238. It seems to suggest that the third *ṣalāt* must have been added in Medīna to the usual *ṣalāt*. Regarding this dispute, Gibb and Kramers seem to agree that the number of daily *ṣalāt* had not yet been fixed at five in Muḥammad’s life time. But their view on this issue, as we have learnt from the ḥadīth of the ascension clearly indicates the number five, which has been reduced from fifty. For further reading, see: *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. 1, p. 492.
8. Harris Birkeland, *The Legend of The Opening of Muḥammad’s Breast*, (Oslo: 1 Kommissjon Hos Jacob Dybwad, 1955).
9. Abū Muḥammad Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawyya*, 2 Vols. (Miṣr: Maktaba Muṣṭafa al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1375/1955), Vol. 1, part 1, p. 166.
See also: Ibn Sa‘d’s *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*,
Translated by S. Moīnul Haq and H. K. Ghazanfar, (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1967), Vol. 1, part 1, p. 170.
10. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), “The Book Of *ṣalāt*”, Vol. 1, p. 345.
11. *Ṣalāt* in Islam consists of several *rak‘āt* (sing. *rak‘a*). The number of *rak‘a* varies from one *ṣalāt* to another. One *rak‘a* consists of one bowing down and two prostrations.
12. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 214.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 345.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 101.
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 101.
16. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 104–105.
17. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Trans.), Vol. 2, p. 396.
18. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 234.
19. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 240.

20. Abū ʿAbd Allāh Mālik Ibn Anas, *al-Muwattaʿ*, trans. ʿĀʿisha ʿAbd Raḥmān & Yaʿqūb Johnson, (Norwich: Diwan Press, 1982), p. 96.
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 299–300.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 288.
23. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 431.
24. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 444.
25. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 243.
See also *al-Muwattaʿ* (Trans.), p. 28.
26. *al-Muwattaʿ* (Trans.), pp. 29–30.
27. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 214.
28. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 235.
29. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 237.
30. *al-Muwattaʿ* (Trans.), p. 51.
31. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Trans.), Vol. 1, pp. 223–224.
32. al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, *al-Kāfī*, Vol. 3, p. 266.
33. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 266.
34. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 265.
35. *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*, 8 Vols. (in 4), (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1348H/1930AD), Vol. 1, p. 234.
36. Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2 Vols. (n. p., n. d.), Vol. 1, p. 84.
37. *al-Muwattaʿ* (Trans.), p. 57.
38. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Trans.), Vol. 1, p. 322.
39. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 317.
40. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 238.
41. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 238.
42. *Sunan al-Nasāʾī*, Vol. 1, p. 235.
43. *al-Muwattaʿ* (Trans.), p. 72
44. *Taḥyya* is an invocation to bless the Prophet in the last *rakʿa* of each *ṣalāt* before one ends his *ṣalāt*. We may read the following invocation as the example of this *taḥyya*: “ O Allah, bless Muḥammad and his wives and his descendants as You blessed the family of Ibrāhīm, and give *baraka* to Muḥammad and his wives and his descendants as You gave *baraka* to the family of Ibrāhīm. You are worthy of Praise and Glorious.”
45. *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, 4 Vols., (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, n. d.), Vol. 1, p. 127.

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