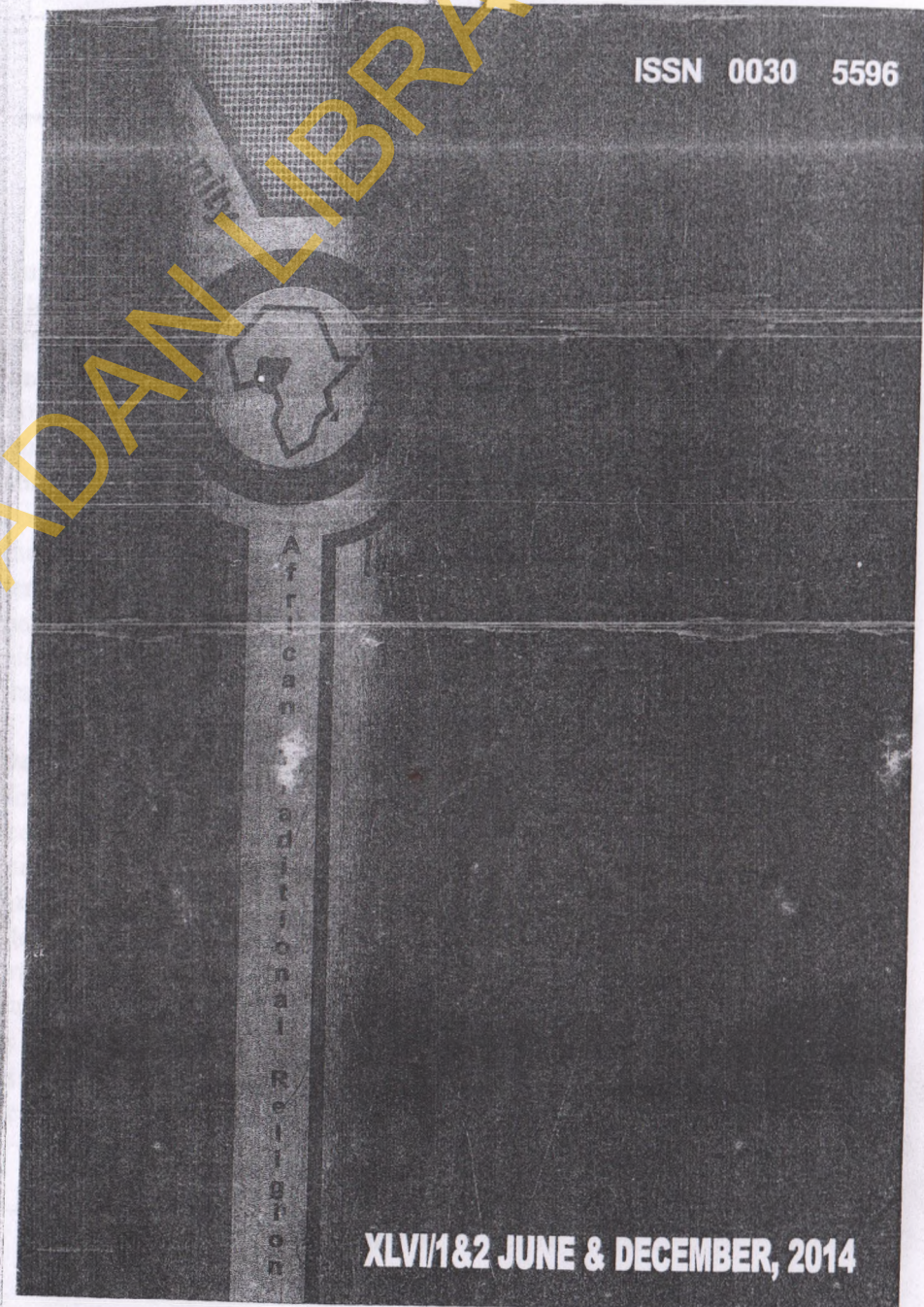


XLVI 1&2		JUNE & DECEMBER, 2014	
AUTHORS	ARTICLES	PAGE	
<i>First Issue</i>			
David Tuesday Adamo:	The Possible African Background of Genesis 1-2 Creation Accounts: Implication for African Christianity	1-32	
Abedu Quashie:	Imposters in the Pulpit: A Critique of Preaching in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity	33-50	
L. O. Abbas:	Islam's View on Family Planning and Birth Control	51-60	
Olaleye Samuel Kayode:	The Limitations of Scientific Method in Analysing Traditional Herbal Medicine	61-82	
Adekola, O. O.:	Ayanmo, Ayanle and Ayanmu: The Concept of Destiny Among the Yoruba Re-visited	83-100	
<i>Second Issue</i>			
Philip Tachin:	True Religious Piety and its Social Implications: An Analysis of Calvin's Thought	101-120	
Adebayo, Rafiu Ibrahim:	The Political Thought of Mawdudi as a Template for Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria	121-145	
E.F Taiwo & Adeboye, G. O.:	Interpreting Archetypal Isis in the Ancient Egyptian Religious Myth of Kingship from an African Feminist Ideological Perspective	146-164	
L. O. Abbas:	Assalat: Meanings, Prerequisites, Implications and Some Practical Observations of A Worshipper	165-190	
Doyin Odebowale:	Monotheism, Atenism and Fundamentalism in Ancient Egyptian Religion	191-210	
L. O. Lawal:	Sin and Punishment in Yoruba Traditional Religion	211-231	





- Okure, T., "Feminist Interpretations in Africa", Schussler Fiorenza (ed.) *Searching the Scriptures*, (London: SCM Press, 1995).
- Olanrewaju, Dorcas Omolere, "Challenging the Role of Religion on Women Development in Nigeria Using", (2015).
- Rea, Michael C. "Polytheism and Christian Belief", *Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 57, (2006).
- Ritner, Robert K., *The Legend of Isis and the Name of Re*, (P. Turin, 1993).
- Uduigwomen, Andrew, "The Nature, Function and Logic of Myth", *Footmarks in African Philosophy*, (Lagos: O. O. P. Press, 2002).
- [www.newdmagazine.com/apps/articles/web/articleid/76478/columnnid/default.asp](http://www.newdmagazine.com/apps/articles/web/articleid/76478/columnnid/default.asp) Accessed: October 21, 2015

## **Assalat: Meanings, Prerequisites, Implications and Some Practical Observations of A Worshipper**

L.O. Abbas\*

### **Introduction**

This paper aims at examining the institution of *Salat* as an important principle of Islam through a thorough exposition of its definitions and meanings, historical origin, prerequisites, implications and some common acts, which are fundamental to the validity of the *Salat* itself, but which most worshippers subconsciously disregard, probably out of sheer ignorance or unverified dogmatism. Such acts as joining a congregational prayer, observance of a brief sitting before rising after the second prostration (*Jilsatul-Istirahah*) and bringing the *Taslim* to terminate a given *Salat*, will be interrogated in this paper from the perspective of an observer and using three major sources of Shari'ah vis- a-vis the Qur'an, the Sunnah and the Ijma' as theoretical framework.

### **Definitions and Meanings of *Salat***

To start with, the word *Salat* will be defined from both literal and technical angles, which are not only found in the dictionary, but also reinforced by Qur'anic evidences and usages. Having clarified that, *Salat* as an Islamic concept and system is an Arabic word, which can literally be defined to basically mean bowing, homage, worship or prayer.<sup>1</sup> According to Wikipedia, an online free Encyclopedia, translating *Salat* as "prayer" is not usually considered precise enough, as "prayer" can indicate several different ways of relating to God such as in a way of personal supplication to Him, which in specificity, is described in Arabic as *du'a'*.<sup>2</sup> It must be stated here that though the

\* L.O. Abbas, Ph.D, is a Senior Lecturer in Islamic Studies in Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

1 Wikipedia, 2013. *Salat*. Retrieved on September 19, 2013. Par. 1  
2 Wikipedia, 2013. *Salat*... Par. 4



Arabic term *Salat* is used in many parts of the world, including many non-Arab countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria, other terms are still being used to refer to the same concept. An example of such terms is the Persian word **namāz**, used by the Turkish, the Bosnian and the speakers of the Indo-Iranian Languages like the Persian and the Urdu.<sup>3</sup>

The above literal meaning of *Salat* i.e. supplication (*du'a*) has Qur'anic references in portions such as where the Prophet (S.A.W.) was given a directive to collect alms (*Zakat*) from people and implored to pray for them (*Salat*) after the collection of the *Zakat* as his prayer will bring about peace and tranquility to the payer. Allah says:

Take alms of their wealth, wherewith you may purify them and may make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! Your prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, the Knower. (Qur'an 9 verse 103).

The above quoted Qur'anic portion uses '*salli*' as an imperative form of '*salla, yusalli*', while the verbal noun '*Salat*' is also used in '*innasalataka*' to refer to prophetic supplication or better still, his (S.A.W.) blessing.

Technically, the word *Salat* is used to refer to the most well-known Muslim practice among non-Muslims as **ritual prayer** which is performed five times a day: at dawn (*al-fajr*), mid-day (*az-Zuhr*), afternoon (*al-'Asr*), sunset (*al-Maghrib*) and evening (*al-Isha*).<sup>4</sup> According to the Wikipedia, **salat** is the practice of formal worship in Islam. Its importance for Muslims is indicated by its status as one of the Five Pillars of Islam, with a few dispensations for those for whom it would be difficult. It is also said to have consisted of prescribed actions and words.<sup>5</sup> According to the same source, the number of obligatory (*fard*) *raka'āt* varies from two to four according to the time of day or other circumstances (such as Friday congregational worship, which has

3 Wikipedia, 2013. *Salat*... Par. 5

4 Religion facts online. 2013. *Salat*: Muslim prayer. Retrieved on September 20, 2013.

5 Wikipedia, 2013. *Salat*... Par. 2

two *raka'āt*). The minimal obligatory *raka'āt* may be supplemented with acts that are optional but are considered meritorious. Prayer is *fard* (obligatory) for all Muslims except those who are retarded, prepubescent, very sick, lactating, pregnant, menstrual bleeding, frail and elderly or travelling on a long journey.<sup>6</sup>

The above given technical definition of *Salat* is referenced in various Qur'anic portions such as the following where Allah says to Prophet Musa (A.S.):

Verily I am Allah: There is no god but I. So serve Me [only] and establish regular prayer to remember me. (Qur'an 20 verse 14)

In the above quoted Qur'anic verse, the word *Salat* is also used in the divine directive given to Prophet Musa (A.S.) '*wa-aqimis-Salat*.....', to establish regular prayer but not supplication or blessing this time around.

Before the close of this segment, it must be pointed that it is part of the uniqueness of Islam that *Salat* as one of its most common practices cannot be precisely found in any common usage other than that of Islam. This uniqueness and unexampled honour should be appreciated by Muslims as it is a form of assurance and re-assurance for being on the right path.

### Historical Origin of *Salat*

*Salat* as an institution of Islam is believed by many people including Muslims to have originated from the Prophet (S.A.W.). This, of course, is one of the erroneous beliefs which this paper sets out to correct. To begin with, the rituals of *Salat*, *Zakat*, *Sawm* and *Hajj* among other religious practices had existed since the period of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.). These continued to exist until the advent of Islam with the coming of the Prophet (S.A.W.) who only emphasised these practices and purged them of certain innovations (*bid'ah*), which had over the years crept into them.

6 Wikipedia, 2013. *Salat*... Par. 2



To buttress the above assertion, it was for the establishment of the prayer that Abraham built the *Ka'bah* as hinted at by the *Qur'an* as follows:

O Lord I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a barren valley by Your sacred House in order O Lord! That they may establish regular prayer.

(*Qur'an 14 verse 37*)

This mode of worship described as *Salat* also has a *Qur'anic* reference tracing it beyond the time before Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.). To be more specific, while referring to the nation of Prophet *Shu'ayb* (A.S.) who lived much before Abraham (A.S.), the *Qur'an* says:

They said: O *Shu'ayb* does your prayer command you that we leave the worship which our fathers practised....

(*Qur'an 11 verse 87*)

The *Qur'an* reveals that *Salat* is an institution of age practised by many Prophets of Allah before Muhammad (S.A.W.) even outside those mentioned in the earlier quoted verses of the *Qur'an*. To mention and add others to them, Allah refers to *Salat* in the lives of Prophet Ibrahim together with Prophets Ishaq and Ya'qub (A.S.W.) in the *Qur'anic* verse which reads:

And We made them leaders guiding [men] by Our command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayer and to give *Zakat*.

(*Qur'an 21 verse 73*)

In the above quoted portion of the *Qur'an*, not only *Salat* was mentioned as the obligatory duty given by Allah to these patriarchs and ancient prophets of Allah, *Zakat* was also inclusive as another fundamental of Islam. Though the latter is not the focus of discussion in this paper, it must be put on record here that in the style of the Holy *Qur'an*, these two institutions are always referenced together as

inseparable entities as evident in the quoted verse.

Another relevant quotation which further validates the traceability of the origin of *Salat* to earlier prophets of Allah describes the evangelistic life (*al-Hayat ad-Da'wiyat*) of Prophet Isma'il (A.S.) as including enjoining the establishment of regular *Salat* and payment of *Zakat* as follows:

And he used to enjoin on his people prayer and *Zakat*.

(*Qur'an 19 verse 55*)

As regards the children of Israel to whom Prophets 'Isa and Musa among other prophets were sent, they were bound by a divine covenant to observe regular prayer (*Salat*), give alms (*Zakat*) and believe in His messengers in the following *Qur'anic* quotation:

Allah did take a covenant from the Children of Israel, and We appointed twelve leaders among them and Allah said: I am with you if you establish regular prayer, give *Zakat* believe my messengers, honour and assist them (*Qur'an 5 verse 12*).

The information provided in the above portion of the *Qur'an* is explicitly corroborated in specific terms referring to Prophet Musa (A.S.) and his brother Harun as follows:

We inspired Moses and his brother with this message: Make dwellings for your people in Egypt, and make your [own] dwellings into places of worship and establish regular prayer (*Qur'an 10 verse 87*).

There is a *Qur'anic* confirmation of this also by Prophet 'Isa (A.S.) who is quoted in the *Qur'an* to have said:

And He has made me blessed wheresoever I am, and has enjoined on me prayer and *Zakat* as long as I live. (*Qur'an 19 verse 31*)



Similarly, the Qur'an reveals of the sage Luqman who belonged to the ancient Arab tradition to have enjoined his son to make as a duty, the observance of regular *Salat* and other virtues imbibed through its observance as follows:

O my son! establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just and forbid what is wrong. (*Qur'an* 31 verse 17).

Going down the historic memory lane of Islam to the period shortly preceding the advent of Muhammad (S.A.W.), *Ka'abn Luhiyyi*, one of the ancestors of the Prophet was reported to have led Friday congregational prayers in the real description of *Jum'ah* as it is observed today. Ibn Manzur, in his report of this says thus:

Ka'ab was the first person who named *Yawm al-'Urubah* as *Yawm al-Jumu'ah* (Friday). The *Quraysh* used to gather round him on this day. He would address them and remind them of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and inform them that he would be from among his (Ka'b) progeny, and would direct them to follow him and believe in him.<sup>7</sup>

The above historic excursion was purposively cited to link the institution of *Salat* from the earlier prophets to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) who only came to re-establish, emphasise and re-demonstrate it among other institutions of note in Islam.

### Prerequisites of *Salat*

*Salat* as an Islamic system is guided in its observance by rules and principles. By these rules and principles, it distinguishes itself from other acts that may look or appear like it. In this segment, some of these rules, especially those that must be fulfilled before its observance will be examined as prerequisites, as this discourse may not be able to

discuss all except when reference to some others outside the prerequisites become inevitable.

To start with, making of intention (*niyyah*) which is important in every deed going by an-Nawawi's Hadith 1, becomes also inevitable in and applicable to *Salat*. This precedes any aspect of *Salat* as it is the propeller, which gingers a worshipper into such acts as performance of ablution, facing the *Qiblah* and making the *Adhan* (call to prayer) and or *Iqamah*, which are integral parts of *Salat*.

It must be noted also that absolute spiritual consciousness and psychological stability are required to be able to bring the proper intention for a practical fundamental of Islam as *Salat*. For example, the intention for *Salat* could be hampered if one is under intoxication. This is solely because *Salat* itself is not accepted from anyone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Apart from the fact that taking intoxicants is a great sin, an intoxicated worshipper (*musalli*) is also deprived the blessing of *Salat* because he is unconscious of what he is doing or saying. Hence, the absolute concentration needed while observing *Salat* will be missing completely. Allah says in the Qur'an:

O you who believe, do not approach the *Salat* while intoxicated until you know what you are saying. (*Qur'an* 4 verse 43)

Also, the principle of cleanliness and purification must be observed, both physical and spiritual, before the observance of *Salat* becomes compulsory on one. To this effect, apart from being a Muslim which has to do with spiritual purity and purification, it is obligatory that *Salat* is performed in a ritually clean environment. Besides, the clothes that are worn and the place of prayer must also be clean. The most important of physical cleanliness is the performance of ablution - water (*wudu'*) or dry (*tayammum*). A popular tradition of the prophet has described ablution as the key to *Salat*, another tradition of his quoted by an-Nawawi has described purity in general as half of faith.<sup>8</sup> To further corroborate this, Allah says:



O you who believe! when you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe your heads and your feet to the ankles; and if you are under an obligation to perform a total ablution, then wash (yourselves) and if you are sick or on a journey, or one of you come from the privy, or you have touched the women, and you cannot find water, betake yourselves to pure earth and wipe your faces and your hands therewith, Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favour on you, so that you may be grateful. (*Qur'an 5 verse 6*)

In Qur'an 2 verse 222, Allah makes a distinction between those who diligently observe the rules of cleanliness and those who are neglectful of them, and He prefers the former to the latter.

To further discuss the system of purification described in verse 6 of chapter 5, the first thing to note is that the water with which ablution or *Ghusl* (ritual bath) is done should itself be clean, otherwise its purpose will be defeated. Generally, water mixed with oil, urine, faeces or similar impurities is unsuitable for cleanliness. Its colour, taste and smell (if any) must remain natural.

More specifically, *wudu'* is performed by washing the hands, mouth, nose, arms, face, hair (often washing the hair is merely drawing the already wet hands from the fringe to the nape of the neck), ears, and feet three times each in that order. (It is not obligatory to wash the hair three times, once is sufficient, and men must also wash their beard and mustache when washing the face).

In addition, the *Qiblah* must be faced in the observance of *Salat*. The direction expected to be faced is known in Qur'anic terms as *Masjidul-Haram* (the sacred mosque in Makkah). With the revelation of the Qur'an, the *Qiblah* was changed from *Baytul-Maqdis* in Jerusalem to *Masjidul-Haram* in Makkah. Allah gives this directive as follows:

And from wherever you set off, you shall turn your face towards the *Masjidul-Haram*. This is the truth from your

Lord and indeed, God is not unaware of what you do. (*Qur'an 2 verse 149*)

This same directive is re-iterated in another portion of the Qur'an thus:

Indeed, from wherever you set off, you shall turn your face towards the *Masjidul-Haram* and wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it so that the people will have no claim against you, except the transgressors among them. Therefore, do not fear them, but fear Me instead so that I may complete My blessing upon you and so that you may be guided. (*Qur'an 2 verse 150*)

In the above quoted verse, it is clearly stated that facing the *Qiblah* (*Masjidul-Haram*) brings about the complete blessing and guidance of Allah as though the sudden change from *Baytul-Maqdis* to *Masjidul-Haram* attracted the mockery by the unbelievers, which the then Muslims were encouraged to endure and tolerate.

In summary, quoting from the Wikipedia Encyclopedia, apart from being a Muslim, being of sound mind and reaching the age of puberty, which are the compulsory conditions that must be met before *Salat* is obligatory on one; the prerequisites of *Salat* are described as elements that validate its observance as follows:

Confidence of the time of worship; facing the *Qiblah* with the chest facing the direction of the *Ka'bah*; covering the *awrah* (nudity) which is from the navel to the knee for a male worshipper and the whole body for a female worshipper except her hands to the wrist and her legs to the ankle and her face; clean clothes, body and place of prostration; ritual purity (*wudu'*, *tayammum* and *ghusl*) and Praying in front of *sutrah* i.e. a clean object to prevent people from passing in front of somebody observing *Salat*.<sup>9</sup>



### Implications of *Salat*

Upon the advent of Islam, *Salat* as an institution becomes an exclusive preserve of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and his *Ummah*. Out of the myriads of devotional acts in Islam, it is only the *Salat* that, according to the Prophet (S.A.W.), distinguishes a Muslim from a non-Muslim probably because the latter fasts, does charity and undertakes a pilgrimage of sorts, among other things, but he does not offer *Salat*. What are the inherent properties of this fundamental of Islam that it was institutionalised next to *Iman* in sequence and also mentioned on the pages of the Qur'an and in various traditions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) such as Hadith 5 of *an-Nawawi*, which itemises the pillars of Islam?

To answer the above monumental and socio-spiritual question, it must first be noted that the chief purpose of *Salat* in Islam is to act as a means of communicating with Allah and at the same time, a medium for His remembrance. By reciting The Opening Chapter of the Qur'an in *Salat* for example, the worshipper stands before God, thanks and praises Him, the same way he asks for His divine guidance to the Straight Path. Allah says:

Remember Me, I will also remember you; show gratitude unto Me and never be ungrateful to Me.  
(*Qur'an 2 verse 152*)

In addition to the above, daily worship in the form of the five obligatory prayers (*salawat*) reminds Muslims to show gratitude for God's blessings on them so far and to demonstrate through regular remembrance (*dhikr*) that submission to God takes precedence over all other mundane affairs.

The Holy Qur'an mentions that:

The true believers are those who feel fear in their hearts when God is mentioned. And when His Revelations are recited to them, they find their faith strengthened. They do their best and then put their trust in their Lord (*Qur'an 8 verse 2*).

Besides, *Salat* is also cited as a means of restraining a believer from social wrongs and moral deviancy.<sup>10</sup> According to a tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.), *Salat* is considered as "the best deed" ever. This, as narrated by Imam Malik in *al-Muwatta* reads:

It reached me that the Prophet said: '(Try to) keep to the straight path although you won't be able to do so completely; and know that the best of your deeds is *Salat*, and only a (true) believer preserves his *wudu*.'<sup>11</sup>

The preservation and maintenance of ablution with which a true believer is described in the above apostolic quotation is in readiness for the daily obligatory prayers, the observance of which ensures regular spiritual cleansing and rebirth of the worshipper. This, of course, as another significance and implication of *Salat* is also hinted at in the following tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.):

Abu Hurayrah narrates that he heard Allah's Apostle saying: "If there is a river at the door of anyone of you and he takes a bath in it five times a day would you still notice any dirt on him?" They said, "Not a trace of dirt would be left." The Prophet added, "That is the example of the five prayers with which Allah blots out (annuls) evil deeds."<sup>12</sup>

Going by the above quotation, it reveals the spiritual benefit of *Salat*, the encouragement to observe it at the early stage in life is used as metaphor by the Prophet (S.A.W.) for other pillars of Islam and virtues to be imbibed as early as age seven. This is prescribed in the report of Sabrah bn. Ma'bad Al-Juhani as follows:

Prophet Muhammad was reported to have said: Teach a

10 Qur'an 4 verse 103  
11 Muwatta of Imam Malik  
12 Sahih al-Bukhari 1:10:506



boy *Salat* when he attains the age of seven years, and punish him (if he does not offer it) at ten.<sup>13</sup>

*Salat* in its essence also comes as the only conversation of man, which pleases Allah the most as the Prophet has described it as the best thing He ever enjoys listening to and for which the concerned worshipper receives His unprecedented mercies. This implication of *Salat* is buttressed by the following tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.):

Abu Umamah reported the Prophet (S.A.W.) to have said: Allah does not listen to anything from His servant as He does to the two genuflections (*rak'ah*) of prayer that he offers. His Mercy descends over the servant's head as long as he remains in prayer.<sup>14</sup>

Again, observance of the four main postures of a *rak'ah* (genuflexion) i.e. standing, bending, prostration and sitting serves as physical exercise of a worshipper's body. It ensures free flow of blood and keeps him medically fit. This, if done at least five times a day as required by Islam, surely replace juggling, running or other physio exercises.

Another significance of *Salat* which will be examined in this segment is the forgiveness of Allah, which accompanies His mercies for observing *Salat*. This comes to a worshipper at different stages of the *Salat*. For example, the Prophet was narrated by Abu Hurayrah to have said:

The angels keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for anyone of you, as long as he is at his praying place (*musalla*) and he does not pass wind (*Hadath*). They say, 'O Allah! Forgive him, O Allah! Be Merciful unto him.'<sup>15</sup>

13 Sunan of Abu Dawud. Prayer (Kitabus-Salat). Book 2: Hadith 0494.

14 Tirmidhi and Ahmad narrated it while As-Suyuti considers it authentic as contained in *Salat* in reference to Wikipedia. Retrieved on September 19, 2013.

15 Sahih Al-Bukhari 1:8:436.

Another spiritual implication of *Salat*, which has to do with forgiveness is on the condition of joining a congregational prayer. To appropriate this reward and benefit is predicated on the condition of good intention and well-performed ablution. This is alluded to in the following Hadith narrated by Uthman bn 'Affan:

The Prophet (S.A.W.) said: He who properly performs Wudu' for *Salat* and then goes on foot to offer the obligatory *Salat* along with the people (in congregation) or in the *masjid*, Allah would forgive his sins.<sup>16</sup>

It is in appropriation of the above merit that the prophet (S.A.W.) enjoins the observance of *Salat* in congregation when the worshippers are two and above. This, according to him (S.A.W.) also empowers to overcome the devil (*Shaytan*). To quote the tradition, Abu Darda' narrates that the Prophet (S.A.W.) said:

If three persons in a village or a forest do not offer the congregational *Salat*, then *Shaytan* fully overpowers them. So make it obligatory on yourself to offer *Salat* in congregation, for undoubtedly the wolf eats only the stray goat.<sup>17</sup>

The congregationalism of an obligatory *Salat* is not enough in itself until it is observed at the right time described as the beginning of its prescribed time by the Prophet in the following Hadith:

'Umm Farwah narrates that Muhammad was asked about the best of good deeds and he answered: To offer *Salat* at the beginning of its prescribed time.<sup>18</sup>

16 Sahih Muslim. 002:0447.

17 Sunan Abu Dawud. Prayer (Kitabus-Salat). Book 2: Hadith 0547.

18 Sunan Abu Dawud. Prayer (Kitabus-Salat). Book 2: Hadith 0426.



Finally in this segment, the significance of *Salat* also lies in the types of Qur'anic chapters (*suwar*) and verses (*ayat*) recited in the course of the *Salat*. For example, *suwar* such as *ma'wadhatayn* (i.e. *Falaq* and *Nas*) and *Ayatul Kursiyy* are known to be efficacious for strong protection when recited at any time. Hence, their efficacy for same when recited during or after *Salat*, be it obligatory or supererogatory. To this effect, Hasan bn Ali narrates that the Prophet (S.A.W.) stated that:

He who recites *Ayatul Kursiyy* after the obligatory *Salat*, is in the protection of Allah till the next *Salat*.<sup>19</sup>

### Practical Observations in *Salat* with *Fiqh* Interpretations

This aspect of the discourse will investigate some acts, which are deliberately or unconsciously demonstrated by worshippers during *Salat*. These acts will not only be investigated, their implications will also be critically examined and interpreted from the purview of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*).

To start with, as a member of congregational prayers at different times and different places, it was observed that worshippers do come late to the prayer place (*masjid*) as a result of which there will be an inevitable need for them to join the congregation and complete the missed *rak'ah* later. If that has been established as a general knowledge, how then are such worshippers expected to join the on-going congregational prayer? From our observations, there are some worshippers who rush into joining the prayer even to the extent of running, not minding whether they fall down, step on other worshippers or even injure themselves. Some, after having missed the *ruku'* posture will eventually stand still until the Imam and the congregations return to the standing posture of the next *rak'ah*! What then is the essence of the rush in the first instance?

The most unimaginable to the writer is the way and manner most of these worshippers join an on-going congregational prayer without observing the *Takbiratul-Ihram*. By *Takbiratul Ihram*, we mean the first

<sup>19</sup> From at-Tabarani and *Majma'at-Zawa'id* quoted from Wikipedia: *Salat*. Retrieved on September 19, 2013.

*Allahu Akbar* uttered with the two hands raised at the beginning of an obligatory prayer. This, among other aspects of *Salat*, is a compulsory act without which one's *Salat* is a nullity. What then becomes of the validity of the *Salat* of such worshippers, who are fond of violating this *Fiqh* principle while praying?

To answer the above question, it must be emphasised here that any compulsory aspect of a concept must be observed in order to respect the fundamentality of that concept such as *Salat*, *Hajj*, *Sawm* and *Zakat*. Therefore, it is expected of a worshipper who is joining a congregational *Salat*, from the view point of Islamic jurisprudence, to exercise enough patience in observing the *Takbiratul-Ihram* first with which he joins the congregation. By implication, one should not be in a hurry to meet a congregational prayer to the neglect of the *Takbiratul-Ihram*. Whatever number of *raka'ah* one misses should be completed. If this *fiqh* rule is violated, as pointed out earlier, the *Salat* is neither valid as a congregational prayer nor as an individual prayer. The Prophet (S.A.W.) discourages rushing into joining a congregational prayer with serious disapproval. Abu Hurairah is reported to have said:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) saying: When the *Iqamah* has been pronounced for prayer, do not go running to it, but go walking in tranquility and pray what you are in time for, and complete what you have missed.<sup>20</sup>

Let it be clarified here that the saying of *Takbiratul-Ihram*, while joining an on-going congregational *Salat*, must be done with the observance of the conditions attached to it. These conditions, quoting Hussein Fadlallah are summarised as follows:

*Takbiratul-Ihram* must be recited from a standing position. Indeed, the worshipper has to be standing prior to uttering (the) *Takbir* to ensure that it is recited in that position. Just as it is obligatory to recite it standing,

<sup>20</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari. Book 004: 1249.



so it is obligatory to maintain a certain posture of the standing position. That is, the worshipper must be calm... stable and upright.<sup>21</sup>

The above quotation is corroborative of the calmness and tranquility required in joining a congregational *Salat*. As this is applied to *Takbiratul-Ihram*, which forms the inaugural part of *Salat*, it is also representative of the fact that absolute concentration should be maintained till the end of the *Salat*. According to Fadlallah:

The moment *Takbiratul-Ihram* is uttered, prayer (*Salat*) enters a state of consecration, and the moment that state comes to an end is when the worshipper finishes reciting *Tasleem*, meaning that when the worshippers recite the *Takbir*, the prayer starts, and thus they should refrain from all that which may render the prayer *batil* (invalid) until all is done with the recitation of *Tasleem* where and when the worshippers are considered having discharged their obligation.<sup>22</sup>

The Prophet (S.A.W.) has even extended the concentration, tranquility and calmness required during *Salat* and while joining a congregational *Salat* to the time when one is preparing for the *Salat* itself. By implication and application, it therefore means that the practice of concentration in worship (*'Ibadah*) is a product of the mind, which must begin to radiate from the point of intention for any act of worship. Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said:

When the words of *Iqamah* are pronounced, do not come to (prayer) running, but go with tranquility, and pray what you are in time for, and complete (what you have missed) for when one of you is preparing for prayer he is in fact engaged in prayer.<sup>23</sup>

21 Muhammad H. F.Fatawa: the common parts of prayer. Retrieved on October 2, 2013 from <http://English.bayynat.org/Fata.htm>

22 Muhammad, H. F.Fatawa: the common parts of prayer...

23 Sahih Muslim. Book 004: 1250

Another noticeably common practice among worshippers in a congregational *Salat* is the impatience demonstrated by subconsciously disobeying the Imam by doing some certain acts such as *sujud*, *ruku'* before or much later after him. The Imam is meant to be followed in a congregational *Salat* and not to be ignored. As there are those who do this intentionally under the pretext that the Imam is too fast or slow for their liking, there are others who do it out of absentmindedness in the course of the *Salat*. All still boils down to lack of the spiritual discipline expected of worshippers in all acts of worship. Anas reported the Messenger of Allah (SAW) to have led them in prayer one day and when he completed the prayer, he turned his face towards them and said:

O People, I am your Imam, so do not precede me in bowing and prostration and in standing and turning (faces, i. e. in pronouncing salutation), for I see you in front of me and behind me, and then said: By Him in Whose hand is the life of Muhammad, if you could see what I see, you would have laughed little and wept much more. They said: What did you see, Messenger of Allah? He replied: (I saw) Paradise and Hell.<sup>24</sup>

*Abu Hurayrah reports a similar tradition in a more explicit language that could be said to have been the interpretation of what the Prophet euphemised in his expression, "(I saw) Paradise and Hell" in the earlier quoted tradition. This report of Abu Hurayrah reads:*

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: Does the man who lifts his head ahead of the Imam (from prostration) not fear that Allah may change his head into the head of an ass?<sup>25</sup>

24 Sahih Muslim. Book 004: 0857

25 Sahih Muslim. Book 004: 0859



As we have earlier hinted at, the Paradise seen by the Prophet appears the reward for those who wholeheartedly get devoted while praying by strictly following the Imam, and the Hell for those who disagree with the Imam in the acts involved in *Salat*. The Hell can be deduced from the above narration of Abu Hurayrah in the form of literal or metaphorical transformation of a deviant's head to that of an ass. Whether the Imam is too fast to be followed or extremely slow to be emulated is a question of eligibility and qualification, which is not the aim of this paper. However, it must be stated that as far as there is an Imam appointed to lead a congregational prayer, the spirit and beauty of that congregation absolutely rests in strictly following the Imam.

The report of Anas b. Malik is more comprehensive to further corroborate our argument as it comprises almost all the acts in which the Imam should be followed during *Salat*. It goes thus:

The Apostle of Allah (SAW) fell down from a horse and his right side was grazed. We went to him to inquire after his health when the time of prayer came. He led us in prayer in a sitting posture and we said prayer behind him sitting, and when he finished the prayer he said: The Imam is appointed only to be followed; so when he recites *Takbir*, you should also recite that; when he prostrates, you should also prostrate; when he rises up, you should also rise up, and when he says "God listens to him who praises Him," you should say: "Our Lord, to Thee be the praise".....<sup>26</sup>

*Of utmost concern to us also is an attitude, which is common among worshippers (musallin) either in a congregational Salat or individual one (Salatul-Fadh-dh). In our view, this attitude, which is sitting briefly after the second prostration of the first and the third Rak'ah before going to the standing posture for the next rak'ah (jilsatul-Istirahah) may need to be re-examined. This act which is often described as the Sunnah of the Prophet (S.A.W.) is now prominent among the contemporary*

*Muslim youth. What is the position of this brief sitting in Salat? How does it form an integral part of Salat? How is it different from additional sitting, which should be redeemed with Ba'di (two prostrations of forgetfulness after Taslim)? These are some of the questions that bother the mind of the writer. Hence, the need to express a juristic view that is likely to address this issue and provoke other views in the light of our submission.*

*In our efforts to read Fiqh literature on the description of Salat, no evidence was found of that brief sitting as being an integral part of Salat. That notwithstanding, there are ahadith of the Prophet (SAW) interpreted by many worshippers in support of their respective views regarding this practice. To take a brief look at the description of Salat given by many writers and scholars, this paper will benefit from the following description of Salat in part:*

..... Prostrate. This is obligatory (*fard*). It is necessary (*wajib*) that one makes sure to place most of one's forehead on the ground, and also the nose, hands, knees and at least one toe of each foot. It is also necessary (*wajib*) to remain motionless therein for at least a moment. It is a *sunnah* to place one's knees on the ground first, then hands, and then the face and nose. It is recommended for men to have their hands at head level in prostration, and for women to have them at shoulder level. It is *sunnah* for men to separate their abdomen from their thighs, elbows from the sides, and forearms from the ground. Women do the opposite, by keeping their abdomen close to their thighs, elbows close to their sides, and forearms on the ground, while keeping as low as comfortably possible. It is recommended to gaze towards the tip of the nose.

Recite the invocation of the prostration three times, saying *Subhanarabbiya 'l-ala*. This is a highly emphasised *sunnah*.

After prostrating, sit up. It is minimally obligatory (*fard*) to raise the head from the prostration and necessary (*wajib*) to sit up such that you



are closer to sitting than to prostration, while remaining motionless for at least a moment. The *sunnah* is for men to sit on their left foot with the right foot propped up on the toes which face the direction of the prayer. Women sit on their left buttock with right thigh on left thigh and both feet coming out from the right side. It is *sunnah* to place the hands on the thighs, with the tips of the fingers ending at the beginning of the knee without bending. It is recommended to keep your gaze on your thighs.

Prostrate a second time (as before). This is also obligatory (*fard*) for each *ra'kah*. Stand from prostration, for the next *ra'kah*. This is obligatory (*fard*). It is *sunnah* to raise one's face first, then hands, and then knees. Rise on the tips of your toes without sitting after the prostration and without support of one's hands (unless out of physical need).<sup>27</sup>

The above description of *Salat* is precise and self explanatory enough. Not only that, the last part of the quotation in bold emphasises that it is obligatory to stand from the second prostration and the way and manner to do that is also expressed i.e. by raising one's face first, then hands and then knees. As important as this is, we must not also lose sight of the physical need that may arise from sickness, old age or other disabilities to violate this. This is therefore an important issue, which brings to the fore, the description of the Prophet's *Salat* given by Prof. Muhammad Asadullahi Al-Ghalib, quoted in part as follows:

On rising from *sajdah* the *musalli* will sit on the left foot and the right foot will be kept in straight position. At this stage he will sit calmly and read *Dua'*. Then with saying (of) *Alla-hu Akbar* will go to the 2<sup>nd</sup> *sajdah* and read the *Dua'*. ..... In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> *ra'kah* at just before standing after rising from *sajdah* will sit a little. This is known as *Jalsatul-Istirahat* i.e. sitting for relief. Thereafter, he will stand pressing two hands on the ground.<sup>28</sup>

27 A complete description of Prayer retrieved on October 3, 2013 from [www.yanabi.com/index.php?/topic/157533](http://www.yanabi.com/index.php?/topic/157533).

28 Muhammad, A. G. *Salatur-Rasul*. Retrieved on September 20, 2013 from [www.at-tahreek.com/salat](http://www.at-tahreek.com/salat).

Shaykh Muhammad S. al-Munajjid also gives the position of *Jalsatul-Istiharah* from the consensus view point of scholars (*ijma'*) as follows:

The scholars agreed that for the worshipper to sit briefly after rising from the second *sujud* (prostration) of the first or third *ra'kah* and before standing up to do the following *ra'kah* is not one of the obligatory parts of prayer, nor is it *Sunnahmu'akkadah* (an emphatic *Sunnah*). But after that they differed as to whether it is simply *Sunnah* or one of the obligatory parts of prayer at all and whether it should be done by those who need to do it because of old age, sickness or being heavy.<sup>29</sup>

To answer the vital question raised in the above quotation as to whether the *Jalsah* is an ordinary *sunnah*, and whether it is meant for a particular set of people at a particular point in time or not, Al-Shafaa'i and a group of hadith scholars affirm that it is *Sunnah*. This is predicated on the hadith narrated by al-Bukhari and the authors of *as-Sunan* from Malik bn al-Huwayrith who said that:

he saw the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) praying *Witr*, and he did not stand up until he had first sat up straight.<sup>30</sup>

The majority of other scholars including Abu Haneefah, Malik and Ahmad have an opposing view to the above, given the fact that other *ahadith* do not mention this sitting. This, according to them, therefore brings about a possible guess that the sitting, which was mentioned in the *hadith* of Malik bn al-Huwayrith happened at the end of the Prophet's life when he had put on weight or for some other reasons.

As noted by al-Munajjid, there is another school of scholars who reconcile the *ahadith* by suggesting that the Prophet (SAW) sat [at this

29 Muhammad, S. A. *Al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah in Fatawa'Islamiyyah*. 1: 21985: 268. Retrieved on September 20, 2013 from <http://islamqa.com/en/21985>.

30 The position of al-Shafaa'i and a group of scholars narrated by al-Bukhari in Adhaan, 818 as quoted by Shaykh Muhammad S. al-Munajjid in *fatawa* no. 21985. Retrieved on September 20, 2013 from <http://islamqa.com>



point during the prayer] when it became necessary for him to do so.

Going by the above exposition, it could be deduced that the practice of *Jalsatul-Istirahah* was not reported as a custom in the early life of the Prophet (SAW), but just a tradition noticed at later years of his life when old age and other factors attached to it had set in. This, therefore, in our opinion, suggests that the *jalsah* is neither compulsory (*wajib*) nor a regular practice (*sunnah al-mustamirrah*) of the prophet. Rather, it is *mustahabb* (desirable) for worshippers, who are compelled by nature to practise it because they have no other option. For example, in the description of *Salat* according to Hambali School of Thought (*madh-hab*), another option aside the *jalsah* is given when rising from the second *rak'ah* as follows:

He then rises while saying "Allahu Akbar", rising on the balls of his feet (and without sitting for *jalsat al-istiraha*); if it is easy, he supports himself by putting his hands upon his knees and otherwise pushes himself up by putting them on the ground.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, this paper will briefly investigate the system of terminating *Salat* with the utterance of *Assalamalaykum* at the end of *Salat*. The area of controversy here is not in the termination of *Salat* itself with this expression, but in the manner and way it is expressed. As will be discussed in this segment, there are three different categories of formulae observed among worshippers as regards this issue. As there are those who turn only to the right in the expression of this statement, there are those who turn both left and the right in this expression, starting with the right and then the left. The third formula for this expression explores the front position and space in the expression of the statement. This comes immediately after the right hand expression of the statement, before the left.

To start with the justification of the third school of thought listed above, it is believed that the *Taslim* to the right is expressed to bring the prayer to an end, while the one to the front comes in the form of

31 Muhammad, S. A. *Al-Lajnah al-Daa'imah in Fatawa Islamiyyah*. 1: 21985: 268...

salutation to the Imam, who leads the congregational prayer. According to the argument of this school of thought, the *Taslim* to the left is said to reciprocate the salutation of the worshipper sitting to the left who, by this standard, would have started his salutation towards the worshipper by his right.<sup>32</sup> At this point, the question that comes to mind is: Of what essence will the *Taslim* to the front and the left hand side be, if the *Salat* involved is not congregational? We want to therefore presume that this could be a possibility for the belief of the group that advocate for only the *Taslim* to the right and nothing more. If this interpretation also applies to the other school of thought who believes in extending the *Taslim* to the left, after the right hand expression of it, then there is serious need for a juristic re-interpretation, re-examination and reconsideration of this act in *Salat*.

To critically examine the controversy painted above for seemingly reconciliation, it must be noted here that the *Taslim* at the end of the prayer is one of the pillars or essential parts of *Salat* which cannot be done away with. This position is hinged on the report narrated by Abu Dawud and Imam at-Tirmidhi from 'Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) who said:

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: "The key to prayer is purification, its start is with *Takbir* (saying *Allahuakbar*) and its exit is the *Taslim*."<sup>33</sup>

The above is the view of a number of scholars, including Imam Malik, ash-Shafi' and Imam Ahmad. Going by an -Nawawi who expresses a similar view, saying the *Taslim* is obligatory as it is one of the pillars and essential parts of *Salat* without which the prayer is not valid. This is the view of the majority of scholars among the Sahabah, Tabi'n and those who came after them.<sup>34</sup>

The significance of the first *Taslim* to the right as being to terminate or exit the prayer as pointed out by Anas in his report that the Apostle of

32 Shaykh Muhammad S. al-Munajjid in *fatawa* no. 138009. Retrieved on September 20, 2013 from <http://islamqa.com>

33 Sharaf, Y. N. *al-Majmu' Sharh al-muhadhdhab*. 3:462.

34 Sahih Muslim. Book 004: 1528.



Allah (may peace be upon him) used to turn to the right (at the end of the prayer).<sup>34</sup> Besides, it is also established, going by the practice of the Prophet (SAW) that the *Taslim* should not end at the right hand side, but should also extend to the left. This assertion is supported by the tradition of the Prophet (SAW) narrated by Abdullah as follows:

None of you should give a share to Satan out of yourself. He should not deem that it is necessary for him to turn but to the right only after prayer.<sup>35</sup>

Imam an-Nawawi expatiates further on this issue as follows:

When saying the *Taslim*, the Imam should intend the first *salam* as an exit from the prayer and a greeting to those who are on his right and upon the recording angels, and he should intend the second *taslim* as a greeting to those on his left and the recording angels. The one who is praying behind him should intend the first *taslim* as an exit from the prayer and as a greeting to the Imam, the recording angels and the worshippers in his vicinity, in his row and behind him and in front of him, and he should intend the second *taslim* as a greeting to the worshippers in his vicinity, and if the Imam is in front of him, he should intend his two *taslim* to be greetings to him too.

The one who is praying alone should intend his first *taslim* as an exit from the prayer and a greeting to the recording angels, and the second *taslim* as a greeting to the recording angels. The basic principle in his case is that which was narrated by Samurah ibn Jundub who said: The Messenger of Allah (SAW) instructed us to send *taslim* upon ourselves and to greet one another with *taslim*...<sup>36</sup>

It becomes evident therefore, that the above quotation has been able to defend the justification for the *Taslim* to the right and followed by the

35 Sahih Muslim. Book 004: 1525.

36 Quoted from al-Majmu' by Muhammad S. al-Munajjid. Fatawa no. 138009. Retrieved on September 28, 2013 from <http://islamqa.com>

left from the apostolic point of view and consensus of scholars. As for the *Taslim* to the front after that of the right, the justification given by its advocates has been punctured by the provision made for the Imam in both the *Taslim* to the right and the one to the left. Apart from that, it also becomes glaring that the *Taslim* to the left is not only meant for the worshipper sitting to that side but also to the recording angels.

To further strengthen the position maintained above, based on the established Prophetic practice and that of his companions and their followers, Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) says if the question: upon whom are the *Taslims* being sent is asked, the answer is that:

If there is a group of others with him, then the *salam* is upon them; if there is no group with him, then the *salam* is upon the angels who are on his right and left sides, so he says: *As-Salamu 'alaykum warahmat-Allah*.<sup>37</sup>

To sum it up, when saying the *Taslim* at the end of the *Salat*, the worshipper intends three things: to exit the prayer; to send greetings upon the recording angels; and to send greetings to his fellow worshippers. If the worshipper is praying alone, then s/he intends when saying the *Taslim* to exit the prayer and send greetings upon the recording angels.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has made efforts to look at the Islamic institution of *Salat* by: examining its meanings and prerequisites; tracing its historical journey of origin; and establishing its importance and implications from *fiqh* and spiritual perspectives. Apart from these, a number of controversial juristic issues were also carefully selected for critical investigation from personal observations of the writer in the observance of *Salat*, individually and in congregation. Such issues as joining a congregational prayer, followership in a congregational *Salat* (*iqtida'ul-Imam*), observance of a brief sitting before rising after the

37 Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen quoted from Ash-Sharh al-Mumtī' by Muhammad S. al-Munajjid. Retrieved on September 28, 2013 from <http://islamqa.com>



second prostration (*jalsatul-Istirahah*), and saying the *Taslim* to terminate a given *Salat* were not only critically discussed, but also subjected to seemingly reconciliation through a cross examination of various scholastic opinions and views expressed with textual references.

### References

- A Complete Description of Prayer accessed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October  
@[www.yanabi.com/index.php?/topic/157533](http://www.yanabi.com/index.php?/topic/157533)
- Al-Majmu' Sharh al-Muhadhdhab* by YayahIbnSharaf an-Nawawi.  
Volume 3.  
Hadith 23 of an-Nawawi's Collection.  
IbnManzur, Lisan al-'Arab, vol.8.  
Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. Fatawa> Chapter Four: The Common  
Parts of Prayer. Accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> Octobe, 2013  
@<http://English.bayynat.org/Fata.htm>
- Muwatta of Imam Malik.  
Questions and answers on the *Sutrah* by Muhammad bn. al-Uthaymin.  
Quoted from *al-Majmu'* by Muhammad S. al-Munajjid, Fatawa No  
138009. Accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 at <http://islamqa.com>
- Sahih al-Bukhari 1:10:506.  
Sahih al-Bukhari Books 004, Number 1249.  
Sahih Muslim 002:0447.  
Sahih Muslim Book 004, Number 1250.  
Salat: Muslim Prayer: Religion facts online. Accessed on 20<sup>th</sup>  
September, 2013.  
Salatur-Rasul by Prof. Dr, Muhammad Asadullah al-Ghalib accessed on  
20<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 at [www.at-tahreek.com/salat](http://www.at-tahreek.com/salat).  
Salat-Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. Accessed on 19<sup>th</sup> September,  
2013.  
Shaykh Muhammad S. al-Munajjid, Fatawa No. 21985 accessed on 20<sup>th</sup>  
September, 2013 at <http://islamqa.com/en/21985>. *Al-Lajnah al-  
Daa'imah* in *FatawaIslamiyyah*, 1/268.  
Sunan of Abu Dawud. Book 2: Prayer (*Kitabus-Salat*), Hadith 0494.