

*Paths of*  
**RIGHTEOUSNESS**  
The Qur'anic Concept of Virtue



Mustapha Elturk



In the name of Allah  
The Most Compassionate  
The Ever Merciful



# *Paths of* RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Qur'anic Concept of Virtue  
(al-Baqarah, 2:177)

Mustapha Elturk



**IONA**

Repentance . Revitalization of Faith . Renewal of Covenant

Paths of Righteousness: The Qur'anic Concept of Virtue  
By Mustapha Elturk

Edited by Melanie Elturk

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*In Memory of Dr. Israr Ahmad*  
(رحمه الله - Rahimahu Allah)



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## Terms and Symbols

In order to preserve the Qur’anic terminology and Islamic tradition, the words, “*Ayah* (pl. *ayāt*)” and “*Surah/Surat*” are used instead of verse and chapter respectively.

Linguistically, *ayah* (آية) means “a sign,” and for Muslims, every *ayah* in the Qur’an is regarded as a sign of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge. Similarly, the word *surah/surat* (سورة) is derived from the root س-و-ر *sur*, which refers to a high wall – such as a fortified wall surrounding an ancient city. This implies something elevated and significant. In this sense, a *surah*, as a collection of *ayāt* grouped under a specific title, can be likened to a walled city – structured, protected, and filled with Divine Wisdom and Guidance.

ﷻ (جل جلاله) - *Jalla Jalāluhu* - May His glory be glorified.

ﷺ (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) - *Sallāl -lāhu ‘alayhī wa-sallam* – May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him.

ﷺ - *‘alayhis-salām* - Peace be upon him.

ﷻ - *Raḍiyā -lāhu ‘anhu* - May Allah be pleased with him.

ﷻ - *Raḍiyal-lāhu ‘anhuma* - May Allah be pleased with both of them.

ﷻ - *Raḍiyal-lāhu ‘anhum* - May Allah be pleased with them.

ﷻ - *Raḥimahu-llāh* – May Allah have mercy on him.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ  
مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى  
الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ  
وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ  
بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ (البقرة - 177)

*"Righteousness is not (only) that you turn your faces (in prayer) towards the East and the West, rather, (true) righteousness is for one to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it (and in reverence of Allah), to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy, (offer assistance to) travelers (in need) and (help) beggars, and (to free) those in captivity; establish prayers and give zakat; who keep pledges when they make them; who are patient in (times of) hardship, adversity, and times of conflict (wars). It is they who are truthful and it is they who are the righteous." [al-Baqarah, 2:177]*



# INTRODUCTION

Many Muslims possess a rudimentary understanding of concepts like goodness, righteousness, virtue, and piety. However, without a thorough grasp of the Qur'anic understanding of these qualities, we might inadvertently deceive ourselves into believing we are righteous.

The Qur'anic *ayah* (177), *ayah al-Birr*, from *surat al-Baqarah* gives us a comprehensive concept of goodness, righteousness, virtue, and piety. The *ayah* emphasizes that true virtue and piety are not merely about outward rituals, but they encompass a holistic approach that combines belief, actions, and attitudes towards both God and fellow human beings.

*Ayah al-Birr* highlights the following key points:

1. Belief in God and the Last Day: True virtue involves a genuine belief in Allah (ﷻ) and a strong conviction in the Day of Judgment, which shapes a person's worldview and motivates their actions.
2. Belief in Angels, Scriptures, and Prophets: This refers to having faith in the unseen and the guidance provided by divine revelations through angels and prophets. It underscores the importance of adhering to the teachings of these revelations.
3. Charitable Acts: Virtuous individuals give away a portion of their wealth to those in need, despite their attachment to it. This generosity extends to relatives, orphans, the needy, travelers, beggars, and those in captivity, demonstrating compassion and concern for others.
4. Observing Prayer and Giving Alms (*Zakat*): Engaging in regular prayers (*salah*) and fulfilling the obligation of giving alms (*zakat*) is an essential aspect of righteousness and piety. These acts indicate devotion to God and a sense of responsibility towards the welfare of the community.

5. Honoring Pledges and Commitments: Keeping one's promises and commitments is an integral part of being virtuous. This extends to both formal pledges and informal agreements, showcasing integrity and trustworthiness.
6. Steadfastness in Adversity: Virtuous individuals remain patient and steadfast in the face of hardships, adversity, and challenges. This quality demonstrates resilience and faith in God's wisdom and plan.

*Ayah al-Birr* paints a comprehensive picture of virtue by combining faith, good deeds, and ethical behavior in various aspects of life. It emphasizes that virtue is not confined to ritual acts alone; rather, it encompasses a way of life that reflects a deep sense of spirituality and a commitment to doing good for the sake of God and the well-being of humanity.

The *ayah* forms the foundation for a well-rounded and morally upright life in Islam. It reminds us that true virtue and piety involve a harmonious integration of belief, actions, and attitudes that extend to all facets of life.

It is hoped that readers reflect on their own understanding of piety and explore how they can align their lives with the Qur'anic definition of righteousness in a more meaningful way.



## REAL VIRTUE

Just as *Ayah al-Kursi* (2:255) stands as the most comprehensive *ayah* addressing the concept of *tawhid* (monotheism), similarly, *ayah al-Birr* holds the position of being the most extensive *ayah* delving into the realm of true virtue (*al-Birr*).

As per *ayah al-Birr*, the foremost prerequisite for genuine virtue and piety is a steadfast belief (*iman*) in Allah (ﷻ), in the hereafter, in the angels, in the divine scriptures, and belief in the prophets. Among these five articles of faith, the last three collectively form the bedrock of belief in the institution of prophethood (*Iman bi al-Risalah* إيمان بالرسالة). This entails acknowledging Angel Jibril's role in transmitting divine revelations to the prophets, through which guidance is imparted to humanity.

The order in which belief in Allah (ﷻ) and the hereafter is emphasized before belief in prophethood stems from the fact that these core convictions purify intentions and serve as driving forces for virtuous conduct. This is vividly demonstrated by the exemplary figures of real virtue and piety, the prophets and messengers of Allah (ﷻ). These exceptional individuals embodied the epitome of human goodness, boasting harmonious and balanced personalities.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

*"Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah, you have an excellent example for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day, and who frequently engages in the remembrance of Allah."* [al-Ahzab, 33:21]

The initial expression of piety subsequent to faith is the display of kindness, empathy, and mercy toward fellow human beings.

A *hadith* narrated by Jarir Ibn Abdullah (رضي الله عنه) underscores this truth as the Prophet (ﷺ) conveyed,



عن جرير بن عبد الله - رضي الله عنه - قال: سمعتُ رسولَ الله - صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يقولُ:  
"من يُحْزِمِ الرِّفْقَ، يُحْزِمِ الخَيْرَ". (مسلم)

"He who is deprived of kindness is deprived of goodness."  
(Muslim)

Similarly, a narration by Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) emphasizes the importance of alleviating the burdens of other people.

وَعَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ - رضي الله عنه - قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - "مَنْ نَفَّسَ  
عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ الدُّنْيَا، نَفَّسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ , وَمَنْ يَسِّرْ عَلَى  
مُعْسِرٍ، يَسِّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ, وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا، سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ, وَاللَّهُ فِي  
عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ." (مسلم)

"Whoever alleviates the distress of a believer from the distresses of this world, Allah will alleviate his distress from the distresses of the Day of Judgment. And whoever makes it easy for a debtor, Allah will make it easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. And whoever conceals (the faults of) a Muslim, Allah will conceal (his faults for) him in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah is in the aid of the servant as long as the servant is in the aid of his brother." (Muslim)

The *hadith* elucidates that whoever alleviates the burdens of another believer (or a non-Muslim for that matter) in this worldly life will find relief from his own burdens on the Day of Judgment.

Moreover, aiding a person in need results in alleviation in both this life and the Hereafter. Concealing the faults of a fellow Muslim, as stated in the *hadith*, assures that Allah (ﷻ) will veil one's own shortcomings in both the present world and the Day of Resurrection. The principle elucidated here is that Allah's assistance accompanies those who assist their fellow beings.

The profound lessons within *ayah al-Birr*, encapsulate the intertwined nature of belief, virtue, and ethical conduct in the realm of faith.



## OCCASION FOR REVELATION

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ

*“Righteousness is not (only) that you turn your faces  
(in prayer) towards the East and the West.”*

Understanding the historical background and context in which a specific *ayah* or *surah* of the Qur'an was revealed holds great significance. This knowledge grants us valuable insights into the essence and purpose of a particular *ayah* or *surah*. The revelation of *ayah al-Birr* is closely tied to the incident of the alteration of the *Qiblah* (the direction of prayer, *Tahweel al-Qiblah* تحويل القبلة) from Jerusalem to the *Ka'bah* in Makkah.

During his time in Makkah, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would offer his prayers facing the *Ka'bah* toward the North. However, this orientation also meant that he was inadvertently facing Jerusalem, as it lay further north. Subsequent to his migration (*hijrah*) to Madinah, for around 17 to 18 months, the Prophet (ﷺ) and the believers continued to pray facing Jerusalem, in accordance with the *Qiblah* of the People of the Book, particularly the children of Israel (*Banu Isra'il*).

Nevertheless, this arrangement became emotionally burdensome for the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions who had migrated from Makkah. They were descendants of Ismail and Ibrahim (peace be upon them, عليهما السلام), and the *Ka'bah* held profound ethnic and religious significance for them. Approximately two years after the *hijrah*, a revelation was revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ), instructing him to shift his *Qiblah* from the al-Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem to the al-Masjid al-Haram (*Ka'bah*) in Makkah. This change aimed to restore the spiritual connection of the Muslim community to their ancestral heritage and their sacred center in Makkah.

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ  
وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَمَا اللَّهُ  
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

"We certainly see the turning of your face, (O Muhammad), toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a Qiblah with which you will be pleased. So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Haram. And wherever you (believers) are, turn your faces (in prayer) toward it. For verily, those who have been given the Scripture (the Jews) know that it is the truth from their Lord. And Allah is well aware of what they do." [al-Baqarah, 2:144]

Upon the change of the *Qiblah*, the Jewish community became perturbed, marking a significant juncture in history. This incident symbolized the emergence of a distinct Muslim ummah and the consequent marginalization of the Jewish community, once the predominant *ummah*, and diminishing influence.

The Jews commenced a campaign aimed at instilling uncertainty and distrust within the hearts and minds of believers concerning this transition.

Engaging in propagandist efforts, they cast doubts on the Prophet's commitment, portraying his shift from the former *Qiblah* (Jerusalem) as indicative of fickleness. This narrative sought to undermine the stability of the new direction. This narrative especially preyed upon the concerns of devout companions, who were deeply conscientious of their relationship with God. They began questioning whether the prayers they had devotedly offered for nearly two years while facing Jerusalem held any validity.

Within the context of this pivotal *Qiblah* change, *ayah al-Birr* was revealed. This *ayah* served to elucidate that true righteousness transcended the mere physical orientation of prayer. It stressed that genuine virtue and piety were rooted in faith and encompassed an array of virtuous acts. This revelation aimed to counteract the misinformation propagated by highlighting the deeper meaning of righteousness, beyond the physical aspect, thereby dispelling concerns and reaffirming the core principles of the faith.



## CORE BELIEFS

وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ

*(True) righteousness is for one to believe in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets*

True righteousness begins with conviction. The core beliefs that form the foundation of Islamic faith, known as the articles of faith, are essential for achieving *true* righteousness. These fundamental beliefs – faith in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the divine scriptures, and the prophets – create the spiritual framework that guides a believer’s actions and relationship with the Creator.

### 1. Belief in Allah (الإيمان بالله)

The foremost belief is in Allah, the One *true* God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. This belief includes recognizing Allah’s absolute oneness (*tawhid* توحيد), His attributes, and His sovereignty over all creation. It also involves worshipping Him alone without associating partners, showing reliance on Him, and understanding the classical theological attributes of Allah (ﷻ) that describe His perfect and infinite nature that He is all-powerful (Omnipotent), all-knowing (Omniscient), and present everywhere (Omnipresent).

**Omnipotent (All-Powerful):** Allah is all-powerful and has complete control over all things. This means that He has the ability to do anything, and nothing can limit His power. The Qur’an frequently refers to this attribute by calling Allah *al-Qadir* القادر or *al-Qadeer* القدير (The All-Powerful).

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ ۝

“Say (O Prophet), ‘It is He (alone) who has the power.’” [al-An’am, 6:65]

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝

*"Verily, Allah has power over all things."* [al-'Ankabut, 29:20]

**Omniscient (All-Knowing):** Allah is all-knowing and has infinite knowledge. This attribute, known as 'Alim or al-'Aleem العليم (The All-Knowing), signifies that Allah (ﷻ) is aware of everything – past, present, and future. He knows what is hidden and what is manifest, and His knowledge encompasses everything in the heavens and the earth.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ غَيْبِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٠﴾

*"Verily, Allah knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He fully knows what is in the hearts."* [Fatir, 35:38]

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

*"and He has knowledge of everything."* [al-Baqarah, 2:29]

**Omnipresent (Present Everywhere):** Allah's Omnipresence refers to the fact that while Allah (ﷻ) Himself is above and beyond the confines of time and space, His knowledge, power, and authority are present everywhere. This concept means that Allah (ﷻ) is aware of and controls everything in the universe, but He is not physically present within the creation in the way that human beings are bound by time and space.

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ﴿١٠﴾

*"He is with you wherever you are."* [al-Hadid, 57:4]

Allah's omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence reflect His absolute and limitless power, knowledge, and presence, which are central to understanding His relationship with the universe and His creation.

## 2. Belief in the Last Day (الإيمان باليوم الآخر)

Belief in the Last Day refers to acknowledging the reality of the Day of Judgment, resurrection, and life after death. On this day, all individuals will be held accountable for their deeds, and Allah (ﷻ) will judge them with *justice*. The righteous will be rewarded with Paradise, while the disobedient will face punishment in Hell. This belief encourages moral responsibility, ethical conduct, and mindfulness of the consequences of actions in the Hereafter.

### 3. Belief in the Angels (الإيمان بالملائكة)

Angels are creations of Allah (ﷻ) made from light, who carry out His commands and serve as intermediaries between Allah (ﷻ) and the world. They do not have free will and are completely obedient to Allah (ﷻ). Examples include Jibril (Gabriel), who delivered revelation to Allah's messengers, and Mikail (Michael), who oversees natural events. Belief in angels strengthens one's understanding of the unseen world and the divine order of Allah's creation.

### 4. Belief in the Books (الإيمان بالكتب)

This article of faith involves accepting the divine scriptures that were revealed by Allah (ﷻ) to guide humanity. These include the Torah التوراة, Psalms الزبور, Gospel الإنجيل, and finally, the Qur'an القرآن. Belief in these books means accepting that they were revealed to guide people toward the truth, though the earlier books have been altered or corrupted, the Qur'an remains preserved in its pure, unaltered form. The Qur'an is considered the ultimate source of guidance for mankind.

### 5. Belief in the Prophets (الإيمان بالأنبياء)

Belief in the prophets includes accepting that Allah (ﷻ) sent messengers to guide humanity toward His worship and to provide moral and legal codes for living a righteous life. This includes all the prophets from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them عليهم السلام). Each prophet brought guidance suited to their time and people. The belief culminates in the finality of Muhammad (ﷺ) as the last prophet and messenger, whose message is universal and eternal.

These articles of faith outline the fundamental beliefs of a Muslim, fostering a comprehensive understanding of one's relationship with Allah (ﷻ), the unseen world, divine scripture, prophetic guidance, and the ultimate accountability in the Hereafter. Embracing these core beliefs as a conviction is what constitutes true righteousness (*al-birr*), as highlighted in the *ayah*.



## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ  
وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ

*“(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it (and in reverence of Allah), to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy, (offer assistance to) travelers (in need) and (help) beggars, and (to free) those in captivity.”*

The act of giving away wealth ‘despite their love for it’ (*ala hubbihi* عَلَى حُبِّهِ) can be interpreted in multiple ways. It might signify (1) spending out of a deep love for Allah (ﷻ); (2) spending even when the attachment to wealth is strong due to human nature’s inclination toward it; and (3) spending with the intention of ‘giving’ itself, as some individuals have an innate love for acts of giving.

The majority of scholars hold that the pronoun ‘it’ in the *ayah* refers to wealth itself quoting the Qur’an,

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

*“You will never attain (true) piety until you spend out of what you love, and whatever you may spend of anything, Allah surely knows it.”* [Aal ‘Imran, 3:92]

However, there are also scholars who find merit in all three interpretations.

Devout believers exemplify a righteous mindset, driven not by material gain or acclaim, but by the desire to please Allah (ﷻ) and

secure success in the afterlife. This sentiment finds an eloquent expression in the *ayah* where sincere believers proclaim:

إِنَّمَا نَطْعُمُكُمْ لَوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا ۖ إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا  
قَمْطَرِيرًا ۝

"We feed you for the sake of Allah; we neither want a recompense nor thanks from you. We fear a wrathful and dreadful day from our Lord." [al-Insan, 76:9-10]

Among the categories of recipients Allah (ﷻ) mentioned is:

## Relatives

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

*"(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives,"*

At the forefront of those deserving of our charitable contributions stand our relatives, particularly those closely connected by blood ties. Ironically, it is these relatives who often receive the least attention in terms of aid. Upholding familial bonds and extending financial support is a religious obligation, solidifying our kinship. A *hadith* highlights the virtue of assisting relatives, promising a dual reward—one for nurturing family ties and another for charitable giving (*sadaqah*).

عَنْ سَلْمَانَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّ الصَّدَقَةَ عَلَى الْمِسْكِينِ صَدَقَةٌ وَهِيَ عَلَى ذِي الرَّحِمِ ثِنْتَانِ صَدَقَةٌ وَصَلَةٌ. (النسائي)

Salman ibn 'Amir reported: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Verily, charity given to the poor has one reward, and charity given to relatives has two rewards: one for charity and one for upholding family ties." (al-Nasā'ī)



## Orphans

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ

*“(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans,”*

Following in this honorable queue are orphans, whose care is profoundly virtuous and highly meritorious. An orphan is a child deprived of a father, lacking the emotional and physical maturity to fend for himself. We may not comprehend the vulnerability of parentless children. The Prophet (ﷺ), himself an orphan, affirms their significance, stating that those who care and provide for orphans will be with him in Paradise,

عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "أَنَا وَكَافِلُ الْيَتِيمِ فِي الْجَنَّةِ هَكَذَا". وَأَشَارَ بِالسَّبَّابَةِ وَالْوُسْطَى، وَفَرَّجَ بَيْنَهُمَا. (البخاري)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “I and the person who looks after an orphan will be in Paradise like this,” and he held his index and middle fingers together. (al-Bukhārī)

## The Needy

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ

*“(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy”*

In the ranks of those deserving financial support, the needy (*al-miskin* المسكين) claims a place. The Prophet (ﷺ) in an authentic *hadith* narrated by Imam al-Bukhārī and Imam Muslim clarified,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "لَيْسَ الْمِسْكِينُ الَّذِي يَطُوفُ عَلَى النَّاسِ تَرُدُّهُ اللَّقْمَةُ وَاللُّقْمَتَانِ وَالتَّمْرَةُ وَالتَّمْرَتَانِ وَلَكِنَّ الْمِسْكِينَ الَّذِي لَا يَجِدُ غِنًى يُغْنِيهِ وَلَا يُفْطِنُ بِهِ فَيَتَصَدَّقَ عَلَيْهِ وَلَا يَقُومُ فَيَسْأَلَ النَّاسَ". (متفق عليه)

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) narrates: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "The poor man (*miskin*) is not the one who goes around asking people and they send him away with a morsel or two, or a date or two. Rather, a truly needy person (*miskin*) is someone who lacks sufficient resources to sustain himself yet does not appear to be in need. People are unaware of his condition and therefore do not offer help, nor does he ask others for anything." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

## Travelers (in need)

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ

السَّبِيلِ

*"(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy, (offer assistance to) travelers (in need),"*

Travelers, who may generally be relatively prosperous but find themselves far from home, are especially vulnerable when stranded without resources – such as losing money, tickets, or identification while on a journey. In such situations, they are considered a group deserving of support through *zakat* and charity.

*Zakat* is not only a means of purifying one's wealth but also a crucial mechanism for ensuring social justice. Among the eight categories eligible for *zakat*, travelers (*ibn al-sabil* ابن السبيل) are specifically mentioned, highlighting the importance of assisting those who are away from their familiar surroundings and might be facing unexpected hardships.

The act of giving charity, particularly to travelers in need, is strongly emphasized and supported by both the Qur'an and *hadith*. The Qur'an specifically identifies travelers as one of the eight categories eligible to receive *zakat*:

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَرَمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَبْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

*“Zakat is only for the poor and the needy, for those employed to administer it, for those whose hearts are to be won, for freeing slaves (or captives), for those in debt, for Allah’s cause, and for travelers (in need) - an obligation (imposed) by Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” [al-Tawbah, 9:60]*

The *ayah* indicates that travelers who find themselves in difficulty are entitled to support through *zakat* charity.

The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged kindness and support towards travelers.

عَنْ عُقْبَةَ بْنِ عَامِرٍ الْجُهَنِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ثَلَاثٌ مُسْتَجَابٌ لَهُمْ دَعْوُهُنَّ الْمُسَافِرُ وَالْوَالِدُ وَالْمَظْلُومُ. (مسند أحمد بن حنبل)

‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amir Aljuhanney reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “The supplications of three people are answered: the traveler, the parents, and the oppressed.” (Musnad Ahmad)

The *hadith* highlights the elevated status of the traveler in Islam, indicating the importance of providing them with the necessary support and assistance.

Helping travelers in need is a reflection of compassion and a fulfillment of one’s duty to support those in distress, ensuring that no one is left alone in a time of need.

Through these teachings, Islam ensures that the community remains vigilant and compassionate towards the needs of travelers, reflecting the broader Islamic values of kindness, solidarity, and social justice.

## Beggars

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ  
السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ

*“(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy, (offer assistance to) travelers (in need) **and (help) beggars.**”*

When dealing with beggars (*al-fuqara'* الفقراء), who are among those in need, our approach must be guided by compassion, understanding, and respect. Islam teaches us to respond to the needs of others with kindness, without judgment or harshness. The Qur'an explicitly instructs believers to treat those who ask for help with dignity and not to turn them away or scold them.

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلُ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ۝

*“And as for one who asks (for help) (a beggar), do not repulse them.” [al-Dhuha, 93:10]*

It is crucial to maintain a gentle and generous attitude toward those who are forced by their circumstances to ask for assistance. It reminds us that beggars, like all people, deserve respect and that their dignity should be upheld, regardless of their situation. Instead of dismissing or criticizing them, we are encouraged to offer what we can with a kind heart, reflecting the compassionate and merciful nature of Islam. By doing so, we embody the values of empathy and care that are central to the faith, recognizing that every act of charity, no matter how small, is a step toward achieving greater social justice and spiritual fulfillment.

## Captives

وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ  
السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ

*“(Virtuous believers are those) who (generously) give of their wealth, despite their love for it, to (support) their relatives, (care for) orphans, (aid) the needy, (offer assistance to) travelers (in need) and (help) beggars, and (to free) those in captivity.”*

In the early days of Islam, one of the significant applications of charity (*sadaqah*) was in the emancipation of slaves and captives. The Qur’an explicitly mentions the allocation of *zakat* funds for this purpose, as it was seen as a profound act of social justice and compassion. Freeing a person from the bonds of slavery was not only a means of restoring their dignity and humanity but also a way of upholding the principle of equality that Islam emphasizes.

However, as the practice of slavery has been abolished, Islamic scholars have reinterpreted this category to address the needs of our contemporary context. Today, the focus has shifted to alleviating the burdens of those who are metaphorically “enslaved” by debt. Scholars agree that helping fellow Muslims who are genuinely in need and struggling under the weight of debts is now considered part of this category of charitable giving.

This shift reflects the enduring spirit of Islamic charity, which adapts to the evolving needs of society while maintaining its core principles of compassion, justice, and community support. Just as freeing a slave restored their freedom and dignity, assisting someone in paying off their debts can lift them out of a cycle of financial hardship, enabling them to regain their stability and independence.



## WORSHIP

وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ

(True righteousness is) to establish (daily) prayers  
and give zakat.

*Ayah al-Birr* encompasses three broad categories of true virtue (*al-Birr*). These include: (1) fulfilling the rights of fellow human beings (*Huquq al-'Ibad* حقوق العباد) through compassionate care and financial support for the sake of Allah (ﷻ); (2) fulfilling the rights of Allah (*Huquq Allah* حقوق الله) through prayer (*salah*) and obligatory almsgiving (*zakat*); and (3) fulfilling commitments such as business transactions, marriage contracts, and promises, guided by honesty and trustworthiness.

*Salah* and *zakat* are among the most significant obligations to Allah (ﷻ). Every believer is duty-bound to perform the five daily prayers and consistently give the obligatory charity. These acts of worship serve as a vital connection between individuals and their Creator. They are mentioned right after acts of charity. This serves as a reminder to believers that acts of charity, without fulfilling the rights of Allah (ﷻ) through *salah* and *zakat*, lack true righteousness in His sight. Both *salah* and *zakat* are obligatory, and it's not sufficient to perform *salah* while neglecting *zakat*, or vice versa. *Salah* nurtures spiritual strength, while *zakat* purifies and increases one's wealth.

### الصلاة *Salah*

In this section, ablution (*wudu'*) and *salah* will be discussed exploring some common mistakes people make during these modes of worship and how to avoid them.

Performing *salah* is akin to taking a respite from the busyness of daily life. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to request Bilal (رضي الله عنه), the companion entrusted with the call to prayer, saying,

يا بلال، أقم الصلاة، أرحنا بها

“O Bilal, call iqamah for prayer and give us comfort by it.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, *salah* is about discovering peace and tranquility during these moments, recognizing that during *salah*, one engages in a profound conversation with Allah (ﷻ).

*Salah* performed without proper *wudu'* is not acceptable. It is crucial, therefore, to be mindful of common errors that people often make during *wudu'* and *salah*.

The obligatory components of *wudu'* are outlined in *surat al-Mā'idah*.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ ﴿٥﴾

“O you who believe, when you rise to (perform) prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and (wash) your feet to the ankles.” [al-Mā'idah, 5:6]

It is generally adequate to perform each of these acts once. Nevertheless, based on the prophetic tradition (*sunnah*), we are encouraged to perform certain actions in *wudu'* in a specific manner. This includes washing the hands, rinsing the mouth, cleansing the nose, washing the face and the arms up to the elbows, wiping over the head, including the inside and outside of the ears, and washing the feet up to the ankles.

## Common Mistakes Made During *Wudu'*

1. **Omitting the Invocation (Bismillah بسم الله):** The Prophet (ﷺ) emphasized the importance of invoking the name of Allah (ﷻ) before commencing *wudu'*.

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<sup>1</sup> Salim ibn AbulJa'dah said: A man said: (Mis'ar said: I think he was from the tribe of Khuza'ah): would that I had prayed and got comfort. The people objected to him for it. Thereupon he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as saying: O Bilal, call iqamah for prayer: give us comfort by it. (Musnad Abu Dawud)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا صَلَاةَ لِمَنْ لَا وُضُوءَ لَهُ وَلَا وُضُوءَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَذْكُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِ. (سنن أبي داود)

Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) said, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "There is no prayer for one without ablution, and there is no ablution for one who does not mention the name of Allah." (Sunan Abī Dāwūd)

Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (RA) was of the opinion that saying "Bismillah" is obligatory during *wudu'*. He supported this view by citing the *hadith* mentioned above,

لَا وُضُوءَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَذْكُرْ اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ

"There is no ablution for one who does not mention the name of Allah."

On the other hand, most scholars, including Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, and Imam al-Shafi'i, are of the opinion that saying "Bismillah" is a recommended act (*sunnah*) during *wudu'* but not obligatory.<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with the *sunnah*, it is essential to remember and recite "Bismillah" before initiating *wudu'*. However, if one forgets to say "Bismillah," his or her *wudu'* is sound.

2. **Incomplete Face Washing:** The proper washing of the face encompasses the entire facial area, extending from the hairline to the chin and from one ear's edge to the other.
3. **Inadequate Arm Washing:** To ensure the arms are properly cleansed, scholars suggest washing them up to a point approximately three fingers width above the elbows.
4. **Ineffective Foot Washing:** Some individuals merely place their feet under the water without thoroughly washing them or neglect running their fingers between the toes. Adequate foot washing includes washing up to the ankles. The ankle

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<sup>2</sup> It's important to note that these differences in opinion are part of the broader tradition of jurisprudential diversity within Islamic scholarship, and all opinions are held with respect for each school's methodology and evidence.



is the joint that connects the bones in the lower leg to the foot bones.



5. **Neglecting the Supplication After Wudu':** It is recommended to make a supplication after completing *wudu'*. This typically involves reciting the *tashahhud* followed by an optional supplication:

أشهد أن لا إله إلا الله وحده لا شريك له، وأشهد أن محمداً عبده ورسوله.  
اللهم اجعلني من التوابين، واجعلني من المتطهرين.

“I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, alone, without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.” “O Allah, make me among those who turn to You in repentance, and make me among those who are (clean) and pure.” (al-Tirmithi)

These are important aspects of *wudu'*, and adhering to them ensures that the purification ritual is performed correctly and in accordance with the prophetic tradition.

## Common Mistakes in the Observance of *Salah*

1. **Intentionally Delaying *Salah*:** Righteous believers offer their *salah* on time and consistently observe the prescribed prayer times as stated in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا ﴿٤٠٣﴾

“Indeed, prayer (*salah*) has been decreed upon the believers to be performed at prescribed times.” [al-Nisa', 4:103]

and

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ ﴿٢٣٨﴾

“Safeguard the (daily) prayers, especially the middle one. And stand in (complete) devotion to Allah.” [al-Baqarah, 2:238]

**2. Incorrect Timing or Omission of the Opening Takbeer** (*Takbirat al-Ihram* تكبيرة الإحرام): Some latecomers to congregational prayers may rush to join the congregation while it is already in progress, and take the same posture, while people are in *ruku'* and say the opening *takbeer* (*takbirat al-Ihram*, *Allahu Akbar*) for fear of missing that *ruku'*. *Takbirat al-Ihram*, which is the first pillar (*rukn*)<sup>3</sup> is to be pronounced when one is standing upright only; otherwise, the *salah* becomes invalid if one rushes to join the *salah* and not saying the opening *takbeer*.

**3. Hasty Performance of Prayer:** Rushing through *salah* without allowing for calmness in *ruku'* (bowing) and *sujud* (prostrations) is discouraged. The Prophet (ﷺ) emphasized the importance of completing these postures properly and with tranquility.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) forbade certain behaviors in prayer.

عن أبي هريرة: نهاني رسول الله - عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - عَنْ نَفَرَةٍ كَنَفَرَةِ الدَّيْلِ، وَالتَّيَفَاتِ كَالْتَّيَفَاتِ النَّعْلَبِ، وَإِقْعَاءِ كَيْفَعَاءِ الْكَلْبِ.

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) forbade me from performing postures of prayer resembling the pecking of a rooster, turning like the turning of a fox, and sitting like the sitting of a dog (sitting on thighs).” (Ahmad and al-Baihaqi)

In a similar *hadith* on the authority of ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Shibl,

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<sup>3</sup> Salah (prayer) consists of essential components known as “pillars” or “*arkan*.” These pillars are integral to the validity of the prayer, and if any of them are omitted or performed incorrectly, the *salah* must be repeated. See Appendix I for pillars (*arkan*), obligatory parts (*wajibat*), and *sunnah* actions of *salah*.

عَنْ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ بْنِ شَيْبَلٍ قَالَ: نَهَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عَنْ نَقَرَةِ الْغُرَابِ وَافْتِرَاشِ السَّبَّعِ وَأَنْ يُوطَّنَ الرَّجُلُ الْمَكَانَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ كَمَا يُوطَّنُ الْبَعِيرُ. (رَوَاهُ أَبُو دَاوُدَ وَالنَّسَائِيُّ وَالدَّارِمِيُّ)

On the authority of ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Shibl, “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prohibited to peck like a crow, and to spread (the forearms) like a wild beast, and to fix a place in the masjid like a camel which fixes its place.” (Abu Dawud, al-Nasā’i and al-Darimi)<sup>4</sup>

This *hadith* highlights the importance of maintaining proper decorum and concentration during prayer, avoiding hasty movements and distractions.

4. **Lack of Focus during Prayer:** It is essential to remain mindful and focused during *salah* to avoid distractions or drifting thoughts. Losing concentration can lead to forgetting the *surah* being recited or the number of *rak’ahs* (cycles) performed. One has to make a conscious and deliberate effort to remain focused while praying. *Salah* has to be performed with utmost humility (*khushu’*).

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾

“Indeed, the believers are successful, those who humble themselves in their prayer.” [al-Mu’minun, 23:1,2]

5. **Gazing Upward or Sideways:** During *salah*, one should avoid looking around or gazing upward. The recommended practice is to lower the gaze and focus on the point where the head rests during *sujud*. The Prophet (ﷺ) cautioned against raising the gaze during prayer. He (ﷺ) warned.

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ سَمُرَةَ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - “لِيَنْتَهَيْنَ قَوْمٌ يَرْفَعُونَ أَبْصَارَهُمْ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فِي الصَّلَاةِ أَوْ لَا تَرْجِعَ إِلَيْهِمْ” (رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ)

Jabir bin Samura (رضي الله عنه) narrates, “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, ‘Let those who raise their gaze up during prayer stop doing so, or else their sights would not return to them.’” (Muslim)

<sup>4</sup> Mishkat al-Masabih 902, Book 4, Hadith 326

- 6. Preceding ahead of the Imam in congregational prayers:** In congregational prayers, it is of utmost importance to follow the Imam and not precede or move before him in any actions during the *salah*. This is a significant aspect of proper etiquette and order in congregational prayer. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized the importance of following the Imam.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "أَمَّا يَخْشَى الَّذِي يَرْفَعُ رَأْسَهُ قَبْلَ الْإِمَامِ أَنْ يُجَوَّلَ اللَّهُ رَأْسَهُ رَأْسَ حِمَارٍ." (متفق عليه)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Does he who raises his head before the Imam not fear that Allah may change his head into a donkey's head?" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

The Prophet's statement in this *hadith* stresses the seriousness of not following the Imam's lead during congregational prayer. It serves as a reminder to worshippers to maintain proper alignment during prayer. In a congregational setting, the Imam sets the pace and leads the congregation through the various prayer postures, including the *takbirat al-Ihram* (opening *takbeer*), *ruku'* (bowing), and *sujud* (prostration).

To ensure the correctness of congregational prayer and to receive its full spiritual benefits, it is essential for the followers to synchronize their movements with those of the Imam. This unity in prayer demonstrates the collective submission of the congregation to Allah (ﷻ) and reflects the discipline and order inherent in Islamic worship.

- 7. Making improper *ruku'* and *sujud*:** Making improper *ruku'* (bowing) and *sujud* (prostration) during *salah* is a common mistake that affects the perfection of the prayer. The Prophet (ﷺ) emphasized the importance of performing these postures correctly. He (ﷺ) instructed the worshippers praying behind him,

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "أَقِيمُوا الرُّكُوعَ وَالسُّجُودَ، فَوَاللَّهِ إِنِّي لَأَرَأَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْذِي. وَرُبَّمَا قَالَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظَهْرِي. إِذَا رَكَعْتُمْ وَسَجَدْتُمْ." (البخاري)

On the authority of Anas b. Malik, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Perform the bowing and the prostrations properly. By Allah,

I see you from behind me (or perhaps he said from behind my back) when you bow or prostrate.” (al-Bukhārī)

In a *hadith* reported by Abu Abdullah al-Ash’ari (رضي الله عنه), the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saw a man who did not complete his bowing (*ruku'*) properly, and he was pecking in his prostration (*sujud*) while praying. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “If this man were to die in this state, he would die on a religion other than the religion of Muhammad (ﷺ).”

Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “The example of the one who does not complete his bowing properly and pecks in his prostration is like a hungry person who consumes a date or two, which do not benefit him in any way.” (al-Tabarani)

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ الْأَشْعَرِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رَأَى رَجُلًا لَا يُتِمُّ رُكُوعَهُ يَنْقُرُ فِي سُجُودِهِ وَهُوَ يُصَلِّي فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَوْ مَاتَ هَذَا عَلَى خَالِهِ هَذِهِ مَاتَ عَلَى غَيْرِ مِلَّةٍ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، مِثْلُ الَّذِي لَا يُتِمُّ رُكُوعَهُ وَيَنْقُرُ فِي سُجُودِهِ مِثْلُ الْجَائِعِ يَأْكُلُ الثَّمَرَةَ وَالثَّمَرَتَانِ لَا يُغْنِيَانِ عَنْهُ شَيْئًا.  
(المعجم الكبير للطبراني)

Another *hadith* reported by Abu Qatadah warns of stealing from one’s prayer.

عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "أَسْوَأُ النَّاسِ سَرِقَةً الَّذِي يَسْرِقُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ". قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكَيْفَ يَسْرِقُ مِنْ صَلَاتِهِ؟ قَالَ: " لَا يُتِمُّ رُكُوعَهَا وَلَا سُجُودَهَا". (رَوَاهُ أَحْمَدُ)

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “The worst thief is the one who steals from his prayer.” People asked, “O Messenger of Allah! How could one steal from his own prayer? He said: “By not completing its *ruku'* and *sujud*.” (Musnad Ahmad)<sup>5</sup>

To complete *ruku'* is to stay in that posture long enough to recite ‘*Subhana Rabbi al-Azeem*’ three times, slowly, and to complete *sujud* is to stay in that position long enough to recite ‘*Subhana Rabbi al-A'la*’ three times slowly. He (ﷺ) also announced: “O assembly of Muslims! Verily, the prayer is *not*

<sup>5</sup> Mishkat al-Masabih 885; Book 4, Hadith 309

valid of the one who does not settle his spine in *Ruku'* and *Sujud*." (Ibn Majah and Ahmad)

The Prophet (ﷺ) received specific instructions on the correct positions of *ruku'* and *sujud*, and he conveyed them to the Ummah.

عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنهما عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَسْجُدَ عَلَى سَبْعَةِ أَغْطَمٍ: عَلَى الْجَبْهَةِ وَأَشَارَ يَدَيْهِ عَلَى أَنْفِهِ، وَالْيَدَيْنِ، وَالرَّكْبَتَيْنِ، وَأَطْرَافِ الْقَدَمَيْنِ، وَلَا نَكُفِتِ الثِّيَابَ وَالشَّعْرَ." (متفق عليه)

Ibn 'Abbas (رضي الله عنه) informed, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'I have been commanded to prostrate on seven bones: the forehead (and he pointed to his nose), the hands, the knees, and the extremities of the feet, and not to tuck up the clothes and hair.'" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

In another *hadith*,

عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "اعْتَدِلُوا فِي السُّجُودِ وَلَا يَبْسُطْ أَحَدُكُمْ ذِرَاعَيْهِ انْبِساطَ الْكَلْبِ." (متفق عليه)

Anas ibn Malik (رضي الله عنه) reports, "The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Be straight in prostration and let none of you put his forearms on the ground like a dog.'" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

In a similar *hadith*,

عَنِ الْبَرَاءِ رضي الله عنه قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "إِذَا سَجَدْتَ، فَضَعْ كَفَّيْكَ وَارْفَعْ مِرْفَقَيْكَ." (مسلم)

Al-Barā' ibn 'Āzib (رضي الله عنه) reports, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said. When you prostrate yourself, place the palms of your hands on the ground and raise your elbows." (Muslim)

It is reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) kept his arms away from the body during *ruku'* and *sujud*, and that the whiteness of his armpits could be seen.

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ رَأَيْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَاجِدًا مُحَوَّيًّا حَتَّى رَأَيْتُ بَيَاضَ إِبْطَيْهِ. (أحمد)

Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) said, “I saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prostrating and folding his arms until I saw the whiteness of his armpits.” (Ahmad)

عَنْ مَيْمُونَةَ، قَالَتْ كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا سَجَدَ خَوَى بِيَدَيْهِ حَتَّى يَرَى وَضَحَ إِبْطَيْهِ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَإِذَا قَعَدَ اطْمَأَنَّ عَلَى فَخِذِهِ الْيُسْرَى . (النسائي)

Maimunah (رضي الله عنها) narrates, she said, “When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) prostrated, he would hold his arms out to his sides, so that the whiteness of his armpits could be seen from behind. And when he sat, he rested on his left thigh.” (al-Nasā’i)

Such guidelines may be summarized as follows:

- a. **Proper Ruku’ (Bowing):** When bowing in *ruku’*, worshippers should observe the following:
  - Keep the back straight and parallel to the ground.
  - Place both hands on the knees while keeping the fingers spread apart.
  - Look at the place of prostration during *ruku’*.
- b. **Proper Sujud (Prostration):** During *sujud*, worshippers should adhere to these guidelines:
  - Place the forehead, nose, both hands, both knees, and toes on the ground.
  - Keep the elbows above the ground and away from the body, ensuring that the upper arms are not touching the sides.
  - Avoid folding back the hair and clothing while prostrating.
  - The *sujud* position should be performed with humility and concentration.

Following these guidelines ensures that the worshipper maintains the proper form and alignment during *salah*, enhancing the spiritual connection with Allah (ﷻ) and fulfilling the requirements of the prayer.

- 8. Passing in front of someone who is praying:** According to most scholars, it is forbidden to pass in front of someone who is performing their *salah* (prayer), whether or not there is a physical barrier (*sutrah*) in place. This prohibition is rooted in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in which he emphasized the seriousness of crossing in front of a person who is praying.

عن أبي جُهَيْمِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ بْنِ الصِّمَّةِ الْأَنْصَارِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ مَرْفُوعًا: "لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الْمَارُّ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ الْمُصَلِّيِّ مَاذَا عَلَيْهِ لَكَانَ أَنْ يَقِفَ أَرْبَعِينَ خَيْرًا لَهُ مِنْ أَنْ يَمْرُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ."  
قال أَبُو النَّضْرِ: "لَا أَدْرِي: قَالَ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا أَوْ شَهْرًا أَوْ سَنَةً." (متفق عليه)

Abu Juhaim ibn al-Harith ibn al-Simma al-Ansari (رضي الله عنه) mentioned (to Abu al-Nadr, one of the narrators), "(The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said,) 'If the person who passes in front of someone who is praying knew the burden (or sin) he bears, it would be better for him to stand still for forty than to pass in front of him.' Abu al-Nadr said, 'I do not know whether he (the Prophet) said forty days, months, or years.'" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

The *hadith* signifies the severity of the matter and serves as a reminder of the importance of not disrupting someone's prayer.

Avoiding passing in front of a person who is praying is a sign of respect for the act of worship and the worshipper's concentration. It is considered an act of courtesy and good manners in Islamic etiquette.

While it is generally highly discouraged to pass in front of someone who is praying, there may be situations where it becomes necessary due to space constraints or other unavoidable circumstances. In such cases, one should do so discreetly and only when there is a genuine need. This is especially relevant in the Grand Mosque of Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah.

- 9. Missing a Congregational Prayer:** Muslim males are obligated to perform their *salah* (prayers) in congregation whenever feasible, particularly for those who reside near a masjid. The significance of congregational prayer in Islam is emphasized through various sayings of the Prophet



Muhammad (ﷺ), highlighting its importance and the reward it carries. Here are some key points regarding the obligation and virtues of congregational prayer:

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا، عَنْ النَّبِيِّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - قَالَ: "مَنْ سَمِعَ الْبَدَاءَ فَلَمْ يَأْتِ فَلَا صَلَاةَ لَهُ إِلَّا مِنْ عُذْرٍ". (رَوَاهُ ابْنُ مَاجَهَ، وَالدَّارَقُطْنِيُّ، وَابْنُ جَبَّانَ، وَالحَاكِمُ)

Ibn ‘Abbas (رضي الله عنه) narrates, he said, “Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said, ‘Whoever hears the call for prayer and does not come (to the masjid for prayer), his prayer is invalid, unless he has a (legitimate) excuse.’” (Ibn Mājah, al-Dāraqūṭnī, Ibn Ḥibbān, and al-Ḥākim)

The *hadith* stresses the importance of congregational prayer and serves as a strong encouragement for attending it. With the exception of women, however, the ruling on whether missing the congregational prayer invalidates one’s individual prayer varies, with most scholars considering the individual prayer still valid but less virtuous if done without a valid excuse.

#### a. Obligation of Congregational Prayer:

- Many scholars, including those from the Hanbali school, consider congregational prayer for men to be obligatory (*wajib*) when they hear the adhan, especially for those who live close enough to hear the call without amplification. They argue that this *hadith* implies that failing to attend the congregational prayer without a valid excuse renders one’s prayer deficient or not accepted.
- The Shafi’i and Hanafi schools generally view congregational prayer as highly recommended (*sunnah mu’akkadah*) rather than obligatory, though they acknowledge that it is strongly emphasized.

#### b. Validity of Prayer:

- According to most scholars, the prayer of a person who prays individually is still valid even if they do not attend the congregation, though it is considered less meritorious than praying in congregation.
- The *hadith* is often understood to encourage participation in congregational prayer and to highlight its importance rather than to declare individual prayer invalid.

### c. Exceptions:

- The phrase “except for those who have an excuse” indicates that there are valid reasons (e.g., illness, fear, weather, or other difficulties) that exempt a person from attending the congregational prayer without affecting the validity of their individual prayer.

As for the popular *hadith* narrated by Imam Ahmad, among others that states, “there is no *salah* for a person living near a masjid except in the masjid,” the scholars of *hadith* classified it as a weak *hadith*.

Nevertheless, the previous *hadith* stated above highlights the obligation of attending the masjid for prayers for those who reside within a reasonable distance from the masjid.

The Prophet (ﷺ) expressed his strong desire to enforce congregational prayer, even to the extent of considering setting the house of someone who did not attend on fire. This statement signifies the seriousness with which the Prophet regarded congregational prayer.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "إِنَّ أَثْقَلَ صَلَاةٍ عَلَى الْمُنَافِقِينَ صَلَاةُ الْعِشَاءِ وَصَلَاةُ الْفَجْرِ وَلَوْ يَعْلَمُونَ مَا فِيهِمَا لَأَتَوْهُمَا وَلَوْ حَبَوًّا وَلَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ أَنْ أُمَرَ بِالصَّلَاةِ فَتُقَامَ ثُمَّ أُمِرَ رَجُلًا فَيُصَلِّيَ بِالنَّاسِ ثُمَّ أَنْطَلِقَ مَعِيَ بِرَجُلٍ مَعَهُمْ حُزْمٌ مِنْ حَطَبٍ إِلَى قَوْمٍ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الصَّلَاةَ فَأُحَرِّقَ عَلَيْهِمْ بُيُوتَهُمْ بِالنَّارِ". (مسلم)

Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) reports, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “The most burdensome prayers for the hypocrites are the night (*Isha*) prayer and the dawn (*Fajr*) prayer. If they were to know the blessings that are in them, they would have come to them, even if they had to crawl. Certainly, I felt like ordering the

prayer to be established and commanding a man to lead the people in prayer, then I would go with some men with firewood to the people who have not attended the prayer (in congregation) and I would burn their houses with fire.” (Muslim)<sup>6</sup>

Praying in congregation carries immense rewards and virtues. The Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned that the prayer of a man in congregation is significantly superior in reward compared to praying elsewhere. It is reported that praying in congregation can be 25 to 27 times more superior in reward than praying alone.

Prayer (*salah*) in congregation is accompanied by numerous spiritual benefits and blessings as highlighted in the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ).

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " صَلَاةُ الْجَمِيعِ تَزِيدُ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِ فِي بَيْتِهِ، وَصَلَاتِهِ فِي سُوقِهِ خَمْسًا وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً، فَإِنْ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ وَأَتَى الْمَسْجِدَ، لَا يُرِيدُ إِلَّا الصَّلَاةَ، لَمْ يَخْطُ خُطْوَةً إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةً، وَحَطَّ عَنْهُ خَطِيئَةٌ، حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ الْمَسْجِدَ، وَإِذَا دَخَلَ الْمَسْجِدَ كَانَ فِي صَلَاةٍ مَا كَانَتْ تَحْسِبُهُ، وَتُصَلِّي. يُعْنِي عَلَيْهِ. الْمَلَائِكَةُ مَا دَامَ فِي مَجْلِسِهِ الَّذِي يُصَلِّي فِيهِ اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَهُ، اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْهُ، مَا لَمْ يُخْذِثْ فِيهِ ". (البخاري)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The prayer offered in congregation is twenty five times more superior (in reward) to the prayer offered alone in one's house or in a business center, because if one performs ablution (*wudu'*) and does it perfectly, and then proceeds to the masjid with the sole intention of praying, then for each step he takes (towards the masjid), Allah will elevate him one degree and one sin is erased from him until he enters the masjid. When he enters the masjid, he is considered to be in prayer as long as he is waiting for the prayer. And the angels pray for him provided that he remains in the place where he is praying, saying, 'O Allah, forgive him. O Allah, have mercy on him,' as long as he does not lose his ablution (*wudu'*)."

(al-Bukhārī)

<sup>6</sup> A similar *hadith* is narrated by al-Bukhārī

Spiritual elevation and honor are granted to those who actively participate in communal worship.

The worshipper who has come to the masjid and is waiting for the prayer is considered to be in a state of prayer (*salah*). This indicates that the rewards and blessings associated with the act of worship continue as long as one remains in the masjid, even before the formal congregational prayer begins.

While awaiting the congregational prayer, angels continue to pray for the individual. Their supplications include asking Allah to bless and have mercy upon the person. Forgiveness serves as a means of purification and expiation of past wrongdoings, bringing the believer closer to Allah's mercy.

The constant angelic invocation highlights the significance of being in a state of worship and devotion.

In essence, attending the masjid for congregational prayer is not limited to the physical act of performing *salah*. It is a comprehensive spiritual journey that involves elevation in rank, forgiveness of sins, continuous supplication by angels, and the ongoing accrual of rewards as long as one remains in the masjid. These aspects emphasize the profound spiritual significance of participating in congregational prayer within the Muslim community.

The rewards and virtues associated with congregational prayer serve as a motivation for Muslims to establish this practice in their daily lives.

In a saying, wrongfully attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ), Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه) declares, "A Prayer of a neighbor of a masjid is only accepted in the masjid." Someone asked, "Who is a neighbor of a masjid?" He said, "Whoever hears the call to Prayer."

Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (رضي الله عنه), the fourth Caliph, who was raised by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), emphasized the importance of performing *salah* (prayer) in the masjid, especially for those who live close enough to hear the call to prayer (*Adhān*). His statement, "A prayer of a neighbor of a masjid is only accepted in the masjid," stresses the importance

of communal worship and the virtue of attending the masjid for prayers.

When asked who is considered a “neighbor of the masjid,” he clarified that it is anyone who can hear the *Adhān*. This implies that if a person hears the call to prayer, they are close enough to the masjid and are encouraged, if not obligated, to perform their prayers there. In the West and America specifically, where calls to prayer are performed indoors, scholars assert that anyone within a 5 to 10-minute drive to the masjid is considered a neighbor to the masjid and must do their best to attend congregational prayers.

### **Importance of Congregational Prayers:**

**Community and Congregation:** Praying in the masjid fosters a sense of community, unity, and brotherhood among Muslims. It allows for communal worship, which holds greater spiritual and social benefits.

**Reward and Virtue:** Praying in the masjid, particularly in congregation, carries greater rewards than praying individually at home. The *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) mentioned earlier states that praying in congregation is twenty-five times more rewarding than praying alone.

**Encouragement:** Ali’s statement serves as an encouragement for Muslims to prioritize their prayers and attend the masjid whenever possible, promoting regular attendance and active participation in communal worship.

**Discipline and Consistency:** Attending the masjid for prayers helps in maintaining discipline and consistency in one’s prayer routine, ensuring that prayers are performed on time and in the best manner. Allah (ﷻ) says,

إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْفُوتًا ﴿٢٠٣﴾

*“Indeed, prayer (salah) has been decreed upon the believers to be performed at prescribed times.” (al-Nisa’, 4:103)*

Believers are encouraged to take advantage of the spiritual and communal benefits of praying in congregation.

**10. Not performing prayers because of illness or while travelling:** Prayers are to be performed in all conditions including when one is ill, travelling, and even when engaged in war.

*Salah* (prayer) is an essential and obligatory act of worship, and it holds a significant place in the life of a Muslim.

However, Islamic jurisprudence recognizes that there are specific circumstances where concessions are permitted to accommodate various conditions individuals may face.

Performance of *salah* in unique situations may include:

**Praying While Ill:** Even when a person is unwell, it is obligatory to perform *salah*. However, if performing *wudu'* (ablution) with water is harmful due to the illness, one is allowed to perform *tayammum* (dry ablution) using clean earth or dust. Additionally, if a person is unable to stand during prayer due to their illness, they can pray while sitting or lying down.

**b. Praying While Traveling:** A traveler (*musafir*) is defined as someone who intends to travel.

During journeys, Muslims are granted certain concessions in their *salah*.

One may combine two *salahs* (Dhuhr and Asr or Maghrib and Isha) when traveling, in the way that is easier for him/her, either praying them at the time of the earlier prayer (*taqdim* تقديم) or the time of the later prayer (*ta'khir* تأخير) which is known as *Jam'* جمع. Additionally, the four-*rak'ah salahs* (Dhuhr, Asr, and Isha) can be shortened to two *rak'ahs* while traveling, which is known as *qasr* قصر. Note that in the Hanafi school, a traveler must shorten the four-*rak'ah* prayers to two but is generally not allowed to combine prayers except in the specific context of Hajj.

The minimum distance that qualifies as "travel (*safar*)" for the purpose of receiving concessions like shortening prayers (*qasr*) varies slightly among the different schools of thought.

**Hanafi School:** A person intending to travel 48 miles (77.25 km) or more is considered a traveler (*musafir*) and is eligible for the concessions related to travel, such as shortening the

four-rak'ah prayers to two rak'ahs. The only time prayers can be combined is at Arafat and Muzdalifah during the Hajj pilgrimage. At Arafat, Dhuhr and Asr can be combined during the time of Dhuhr. At Muzdalifah, Maghrib and Isha can be combined during the time of Isha.

Outside of these exceptions, the prayers should be performed at their respective times, even while traveling.

The shortening of prayers is not just a concession but is an obligation for the traveler within the Hanafi school.

**Maliki School:** The Malikis regard a journey of 50 miles (81 km) or more as sufficient for the traveler to be eligible for concessions. The traveler can shorten prayers but is generally discouraged from combining prayers outside of specific circumstances.

Combining prayers while traveling is allowed if the journey is sufficiently long. The traveler can combine prayers if they anticipate difficulties in performing the prayers on time during the journey.

If there is a significant hardship in performing the prayers separately due to factors like bad weather or illness, combining prayers is allowed.

Combining prayers should not be the norm but is reserved for situations where praying on time would be difficult making combining prayers a concession rather than a standard practice.

**Shafi'i School:** Similar to the Maliki school, the Shafi'i scholars recognize a journey of 50 miles (81 km) or more as valid for concessions. Travelers can shorten and, under certain conditions like the Malikis, combine prayers.

**Hanbali School:** The Hanbalis also consider a journey of 50 miles (81 km) or more as qualifying for travel-related concessions. The Hanbali school is more lenient about combining prayers compared to the Hanafi school.

In all schools, the intention to travel the specified distance must be present before embarking on the journey.

**Duration of Stay:** If a traveler plans to stay at a destination for 15 days or more (Hanafi), 4 days or more (Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali), they must pray in full and are not considered travelers for the purposes of concessions.

As-Sayyid Sabiq, in his *Fiqh us Sunnah* writes, "A traveler may shorten his *salah* as long as he is on a journey. Likewise if he stays in some place for business or some other affair, then he may shorten his *salah* as long as he is there, even for years. If the person intends to stay in a place for a certain amount of time then, according to Ibn al-Qayyim, he remains a traveler, regardless of whether he plans to stay there for a long or short time, as long as he does not plan to stay [i.e., reside and not return] in the place that he has traveled to. The scholars differ on this point. Summing up and giving his own opinion, Ibn al-Qayyim says: "The Messenger of Allah stayed in Tabuk for twenty days and during that time he shortened his *salah* and he did not say that one may not shorten his *salah* if he stays longer than that, although there is agreement that he did stay there for that period of time."<sup>7</sup>

Travelers must adhere to the principle of praying on time and, where possible, find suitable places to offer *salah* while on their journey.

Shortening the prayer while traveling is a legal concession that highlights Islam's flexibility and ease in worship. The Prophet (ﷺ) consistently shortened his prayers during his journeys.

عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ أَنْ تُؤْتَى رُحَصُهُ كَمَا يَكْرَهُ أَنْ تُؤْتَى مَعْصِيَتُهُ. (رَوَاهُ أَحْمَدُ)

On the authority of Ibn Umar (رضي الله عنه), Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "Allah loves for His concessions to be observed, just as He dislikes acts of disobedience being committed against Him." (Ahmad)

**c. Praying During War or Combat:** Even during times of war or combat, the obligation to perform *salah* remains. The

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<sup>7</sup> As-Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh us Sunnah*, Vol. 2, section 2.112



Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) demonstrated this commitment by not missing his *salah* during battles. However, flexibility is allowed in terms of how *salah* is performed under such circumstances, considering the urgency and potential danger.

These concessions in Islamic jurisprudence aim to facilitate the practice of *salah* for individuals facing specific challenges or conditions. They emphasize the importance of maintaining a connection with Allah (ﷻ) through prayer regardless of the circumstances one may encounter in life.

## 11. Consuming food of bad smell such as garlic or onion before coming to prayer:

عن جابر رضي الله عنه قال: قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: " مَنْ أَكَلَ ثُومًا أَوْ بَصَلًا فَلْيَعْتَزِلْنَا، أَوْ لِيَعْتَزِلْ مَسْجِدَنَا". (متفق عليه)

Jabir (رضي الله عنه) narrates, "The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Whoever has eaten garlic or onion should stay away from us and our mosques.'" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

A similar narration in sahih Muslim by the same narrator, Jabir (رضي الله عنه) said,

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَقْلَةِ الثُّومِ - وَقَالَ مَرَّةً مَنْ أَكَلَ الْبَصَلَ وَالثُّومَ وَالْكُرَّاثَ - فَلَا يَفْرَبَنَّ مَسْجِدَنَا فَإِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَتَأَذَّى بِمَا يَتَأَذَّى مِنْهُ بَنُو آدَمَ ". (مسلم)

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever has eaten onions, garlic, or leeks should not come near our masjid, for the angels are also offended (by the strong smell) that offend the children of Adam." (Sahih Muslim)

While this *hadith* primarily mentions (raw) garlic and onion, which are known for their strong odors, it conveys the general idea that one should avoid coming to the masjid with offensive smells. It is a sign of respect for the sanctity of the masjid and consideration for fellow worshippers.

Regarding wearing perfume before coming to the masjid, it is considered a recommended act of personal hygiene, especially when attending congregational prayers. However, it is essential to use perfumes that are not overpowering and

are permissible in Islamic guidelines, for strong or distracting scents may also be disruptive during prayers.

## 12. Performing *salah* while needing to relieve oneself:

Performing *salah* while needing to relieve oneself is strongly discouraged, for it compromises both concentration (*khushu'*) and the quality of the prayer.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " لَا يَحِلُّ لِرَجُلٍ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ أَنْ يُصَلِّيَ وَهُوَ حَقْنٌ حَتَّى يَتَخَفَّفَ ". (ابو داود)

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) narrates on behalf of the Prophet (ﷺ), "It is not permissible for a man who believes in Allah and the Last Day to offer prayer while he needs to answer the call of nature until he becomes light (by relieving himself)." (Abu Dawud)

It is essential to be in a state of purity and physical comfort as well as free from any distractions, such as the urge to answer the call of nature, before starting the prayer engaging in worship to maintain focus and devotion. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized that one should not pray when experiencing the urge to relieve oneself, as this can distract from the spiritual essence of the prayer.

This practice contributes to the focus and reverence required during *salah*. These guidelines remind us of the etiquette and cleanliness required in Islamic worship, helping us maintain the sanctity and concentration during our prayers.

## 13. Covering the 'Awrah:

Indeed, covering one's 'awrah properly during *salah* is essential, and it is crucial to avoid common mistakes in this regard.

'Awrah is defined as parts of the body that are private and must be covered in public thus maintaining a sense of modesty, dignity, and respect.

The concept of 'awrah varies between men and women.

The definition of men's and women's 'awrah:

Men's *'awrah* typically includes the area between the navel and the knees. While women's *'awrah* includes the entire body except for the face and hands and some jurists include the feet. This means that Muslim women should wear loose, modest clothing that covers their entire body, including the hair. Many Muslim women also choose to cover their faces.

It's obligatory to cover the *'awrah* during prayer.

Common mistakes among men include wearing clothing that is too short or allowing the clothing to ride up during *salah*, leaving the *'awrah* exposed.

It's important for both men and women to ensure that their clothing is clean, modest, and free from any images or slogans that are inappropriate for prayer. Additionally, making sure that clothing is not see-through and doesn't reveal the shape of the body is essential.

Carelessness in covering the *'awrah* during *salah* can invalidate the prayer, and it's a matter of modesty and respect in front of Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, Muslims should pay careful attention to their attire to ensure that they fulfill this aspect of their prayer correctly.

#### **14. Making a collective *du'a* after the *tasleem* at the end of *salah*:**

Considering the collective *du'a* made by the Imam after *tasleem* to be an integral part of *salah* is indeed a mistake and an innovation (*bid'ah* بدعة). This practice is not found in the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

While the Imam may, on occasion, make a special *du'a* either on his own initiative or upon the request of the congregation for a specific purpose, it should not be considered an integral part of the formal *salah*, as it deviates from the established *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet (ﷺ).

It is important to recognize these common mistakes in *wudu'* and *salah* and strive to correct them to the best of our ability. Achieving excellence in our acts of worship is a continuous journey of self-improvement and spiritual growth. It is also a sign of our devotion and respect for the guidance provided in Islam.

May Allah (ﷻ) guide us all to perfect our *wudu'* and *salah*, and may He accept our prayers, pardon our mistakes, and grant us His mercy and forgiveness. Ameen.

## Friday Congregational Prayer

### *Salah al-Jumu'ah* صلاة الجمعة

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

*"O you who believe, when the call to prayer (Adhān) is made on the Day of Congregation (Jumu'ah – Friday), hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trade. That is better for you, if only you knew."* [al-Jumu'ah, 62:9]

*Jumu'ah* (Friday) holds a special place in the heart of Islam, distinguished as the most blessed day of the week for Muslims. It is a day designated for communal worship, where the weekly congregational prayer (*Salah al-Jumu'ah*) replaces the regular *dhuhr* prayer.

The significance of *Jumu'ah* is emphasized in both the Qur'an and *hadith*, highlighting its virtues and the special rewards that come with observing this sacred day.

#### *Jumu'ah* in the Qur'an

The importance of *Jumu'ah* is directly mentioned in the Qur'an in *surat al-Jumu'ah* (62), *ayāt* 9-10.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

*"O you who believe, when the call to prayer (Adhān) is made on the Day of Congregation (Jumu'ah – Friday), hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trade. That is better for you, if only you knew. Once the prayer is*

*concluded, disperse throughout the land and seek Allah's bounty, and remember Him often so that you may succeed."* [al-Jumu'ah, 62:9,10]

These *ayāt* emphasize the command to hasten towards the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) when the call to prayer is made and to leave off worldly distractions such as trade. This command stresses the importance of the *Jumu'ah* prayer, prioritizing it over daily activities. It is a time for communal worship and reflection.

When the *Jumu'ah* prayer is concluded, Muslims are encouraged to return to their worldly pursuits while continuing to remember Allah (ﷻ) frequently.

The following instructions provide valuable guidance on how Muslims should balance their spiritual and worldly responsibilities:

**1. Return to Worldly Activities:**

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ

The *ayah* starts with, "Once the prayer is concluded, disperse throughout the land." This implies that after completing the congregational prayer (*salah al-Jumu'ah*), Muslims are encouraged to return to their regular activities and daily endeavors, whether that involves work, business, or any lawful pursuit.

**2. Seek the Bounty of Allah:**

وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ

The phrase "and seek Allah's bounty (*fadl*)" emphasizes that it is not only permissible but encouraged to seek sustenance, wealth, and success through lawful means. The term "bounty" refers to all forms of blessings, whether they are material, such as wealth and provision, or spiritual, such as knowledge and inner peace. This seeking should be done with the understanding that all provisions come from Allah (ﷻ), and our efforts are a means to attain them.

The Practical Implication of such understanding is:

- 1) Gratitude: Recognizing that earnings are *fadl* from Allah (ﷻ) cultivates gratitude. Every provision, no

matter how small or large, is seen as a blessing from Allah (ﷻ).

2) Contentment: This mindset brings contentment, knowing that whatever one has is sufficient and is what Allah (ﷻ) has deemed best for them.

3) Humility: It prevents arrogance or pride in one's achievements, as the believer acknowledges that their success is not solely due to their own efforts but is a favor from Allah (ﷻ).

Therefore, having this understanding, that our earning is not *kash* but rather *fadl* from Allah (ﷻ), you are acknowledging that while you engage in the necessary effort to earn a living, you recognize and are grateful that the ultimate source of your provision is Allah's grace. This perspective encourages humility, gratitude, and reliance on Allah (ﷻ) in all aspects of life.

The phrase "*and seek Allah's bounty (fadl)*" suggests that life should be a balance between fulfilling spiritual obligations (*salah*) and engaging in worldly responsibilities. Muslims are not required to abandon their work or pursuits of livelihood after the Friday congregational prayer; instead, they are reminded that seeking sustenance is also a part of their worship if done with the right intention.

### 3. Continuous Remembrance of Allah:

وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

*"and remember Allah often so that you may succeed."*

Even as believers disperse and engage in worldly activities, Muslims are reminded to "*remember Allah often so that they may succeed.*" This is a crucial element of the *ayah*, signifying that success in life comes from always keeping Allah (ﷻ) in one's heart and mind. The continuous remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) helps maintain a strong connection with the Creator, guiding one's actions and decisions throughout the day. Allah (ﷻ) reveals the importance of *dhikr* (remembrance).

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿٢١٥﴾

*"So, remember Me; I will remember you. And be thankful to Me and never be ungrateful."* [al-Baqarah, 2:152]

Allah (ﷻ) is instructing the believers to remember Him, to keep Him in their thoughts and hearts, and in return, Allah will remember them. When Allah says He will remember us, it means that He will shower His mercy, blessings, protection, and guidance upon those who remember Him. It shows a reciprocal relationship, a mutual *dhikr*. When we acknowledge Allah (ﷻ), He will favor us with His care and support and will turn to us in the Hereafter. It is a form of divine reassurance that Allah (ﷻ) is always close to His servants who remember Him.

When we are mindful of Allah, it brings a sense of humility, recognizing that everything we have comes from Him alone. When a believer engages in the remembrance of Allah, they inevitably become aware of His countless blessings, which leads to sincere gratitude.

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ ﴿٢١٥﴾

*"So, remember Me; I will remember you. And be thankful to Me and never be ungrateful."* [al-Baqarah, 2:152]

The *ayah* stresses the importance of being grateful to Allah (ﷻ) and warns against ingratitude. Allah (ﷻ) commands us to be grateful for His favors.

وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢١٦﴾

*"And be grateful to Allah, if it is (indeed) Him that you worship."* [al-Baqarah, 2:172]

Gratitude is a key characteristic of the believer, as they understand that Allah's blessings are countless.

وَإِنْ تَعْلَمُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا ﴿٢١٧﴾

*"And should you try to count the blessing(s) of Allah, you would not be able to count them."* [al-Nahl 16:18]

*Dhikr* is the foundation of gratitude. Regular *dhikr* helps one develop a heart full of *shukr* (gratitude). A heart filled with

the remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) is naturally grateful, as it recognizes that every moment and every blessing is from Allah (ﷻ).

Notice how whenever Allah (ﷻ) mentions *Dhikr* (remembrance of Him), it is often accompanied by the command to do so frequently, abundantly, and consistently. In *surat Ta Ha*, *ayāt* 33 and 34, Allah says,

كَيِّ نُسَبِّحُكَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَنَذْكُرُكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

*"So that we may glorify You much and remember You often."*  
[Ta Ha, 20:33,34]

Likewise, in *surat al-Shu'ara'*, *ayah* 227, Allah (ﷻ) describes the believers who are saved as:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٢٢٧﴾

*"Except for those who believe, do righteous deeds, and remember Allah frequently,"* [al-shu'ara', 26:227]

In *surat al-Ahzab*, *ayah* 41, Allah (ﷻ) commands the believers:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿٤١﴾

*"O you who believe, remember Allah with much remembrance."*  
[al-Ahzab, 33:41]

But why is the emphasis placed on frequent and abundant remembrance of Allah? The answer lies in the fact that there are those who claim to be Muslims, yet they mention Allah (ﷻ) very little. These are the hypocrites, as Allah (ﷻ) describes them in *surat al-Nisa'*,

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾

*"Surely the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. When they rise to pray, they rise reluctantly showing off to the people and do not remember Allah except a little."* [al-Nisa', 4:142]



The distinguishing factor between the true believers and the hypocrites is the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allah (ﷻ). True believers engage in it constantly, while hypocrites do so only minimally and superficially.

وَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

"And remember Allah often so that you may succeed." [al-Jumu'ah, 62:10]

Thus, frequent *dhikr* is a mark of true faith and a pathway to success, while neglecting it is a sign of hypocrisy. The constant remembrance of Allah (ﷻ) not only elevates one spiritually but also secures their connection to Him and ensures His guidance and blessings.

#### 4. Attaining True Success:

وَأَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

"And remember Allah often so that you may succeed." [al-Jumu'ah, 62:10]

The *ayah* concludes with the phrase "that you may succeed." True success (*falah*) is not just about material wealth or worldly achievements but is deeply tied to spiritual well-being and fulfilling one's duties to Allah (ﷻ). The constant remembrance of Allah, along with lawful efforts to seek His bounty, leads to complete success in both this life and the hereafter.

### Virtues of *Salah al-Jumu'ah*

Numerous *hadiths* highlight the virtues and significance of *Jumu'ah*.

#### 1. Special Time of Acceptance:

عن أبي هريرة -رضي الله عنه- قال: "أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَكَرَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ، فَقَالَ: فِيهِ سَاعَةٌ، لَا يُؤْفِقُهَا عَبْدٌ مُسْلِمٌ، وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي، يَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى شَيْئًا، إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ وَأَشَارَ بِيَدِهِ يَقُولُهَا". (متفق عليه)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه), the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said, "There is a time on Friday at which a Muslim, while he is praying and asking Allah for

something good, will be granted what he is asking for.”  
And (the Prophet) indicated with his hand how small it may be. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

This *hadith* highlights that on *Jumu'ah*, there is a specific time during which supplications (*dua*) are accepted. Although scholars differ on when exactly this time occurs, it is generally recommended to be vigilant in prayer and supplication throughout the day, particularly in the hour before Maghrib.

## 2. Forgiveness of Sins:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "الصَّلَاةُ الْخُمْسُ، وَالْجُمُعَةُ إِلَى الْجُمُعَةِ، كَفَّارَةٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُنَّ مَا لَمْ تُغَشَّ الْكَبَائِرُ". (رواه مسلم)

On the authority of by Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه), the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “The five daily prayers, and one Friday (prayer) to the next Friday (prayer), are an expiation (for the sins) between them, as long as major sins are avoided.” (Muslim)

Another *hadith* by Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) states,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "مَنْ اغْتَسَلَ ثُمَّ أَتَى الْجُمُعَةَ فَصَلَّى مَا قُدِّرَ لَهُ، ثُمَّ أَنْصَتَ حَتَّى يَفْرَغَ مِنْ خُطْبَتِهِ، ثُمَّ يُصَلِّيَ مَعَهُ، عُفِّرَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجُمُعَةِ الْأُخْرَى وَفَضْلُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ". (رواه مسلم)

“Whoever takes a bath, then comes to the Friday (*Jumu'ah*) prayer, then prays what is fixed for him, then keeps silent until (the Imam) finishes his sermon (khutbah), and then prays along with him - his (minor) sins (committed) between that time and the next Friday will be forgiven, with an addition of three days more.” (Muslim)

This *hadith* demonstrates the immense reward for those who attend the *Jumu'ah* prayer with full attentiveness and proper etiquette. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) indicated that sincere participation in the *Jumu'ah* prayer can lead to the forgiveness of minor sins committed over the past week and three additional days.

### 3. Blessed Day:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه قال: قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: "خَيْرُ يَوْمٍ طَلَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ الشَّمْسُ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ، فِيهِ خُلِقَ آدَمُ، وَفِيهِ أُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ، وَفِيهِ أُخْرِجَ مِنْهَا". (رواه مسلم)

"The best day on which the sun has risen is Friday; on it Adam was created, on it he was admitted to the garden, and on it he was expelled from it. And the Last Hour will take place on no day other than Friday" (Muslim)

This *hadith* emphasizes the blessed nature of Jumu'ah as a day that holds several significant events in the history of humanity and the future.

### Etiquette of *Salah al-Jumu'ah*

The etiquette of *Salah al-Jumu'ah* (Friday congregational prayer) are essential for maximizing the spiritual benefits of this significant weekly gathering. Here are the key etiquettes and practices that a Muslim should observe in preparation for and during *Salah al-Jumu'ah*:

#### 1. Performing Ghusl (Full Body Purification)

It is recommended (*Mustahab*) to perform *ghusl* (a ritual bath) on Friday before going to the masjid for *Jumu'ah* prayer.

عن أبي سعيد الخدري رضي الله عنه، قال: أشهد على رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه قال: "الغسل يوم الجمعة واجب على كل محتلم، وأن يستن، وأن يمس طيباً إن وجد". (متفق عليه)

On the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri (رضي الله عنه) says that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Taking a bath on Friday is required for every male Muslim who has attained the age of puberty and (also) the cleaning of his teeth with *siwak*, and the using of perfume if it is available." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

## 2. Wearing Clean and Good Clothes

Wearing clean and presentable clothes is part of the *sunnah* on Fridays. It is recommended to wear one's best clothes and apply perfume or scent, as the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) emphasized cleanliness and presenting oneself well for *Jumu'ah*.

يَبْنَىءِ آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ ﴿٣١﴾

*"O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every place of worship"* [al-A'raf, 7:31]

## 3. Arriving Early at the Masjid

It is encouraged to go early to the masjid for *Jumu'ah* prayer. The earlier one arrives, the greater the reward.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "مَنْ اغْتَسَلَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ غُسْلَ الْجَنَابَةِ ثُمَّ رَاحَ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَرَّبَ بَدَنَهُ، وَمَنْ رَاحَ فِي السَّاعَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَرَّبَ بَقَرَةً، وَمَنْ رَاحَ فِي السَّاعَةِ الثَّالِثَةِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَرَّبَ كَبْشًا أَفْرَنَ، وَمَنْ رَاحَ فِي السَّاعَةِ الرَّابِعَةِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَرَّبَ دَجَاجَةً، وَمَنْ رَاحَ فِي السَّاعَةِ الْخَامِسَةِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَرَّبَ بَيْضَةً، فَإِذَا خَرَجَ الْإِمَامُ حَضَرَتْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الذِّكْرَ". (متفق عليه)

On the authority of Abu Hurairah who said, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever performs *ghusl* (ritual purification) on Friday like the *ghusl* of *janabah* (after marital relations) and then goes to the masjid (for the Friday prayer), it is as if he has sacrificed a camel. Whoever goes in the second hour, it is as if he has sacrificed a cow. Whoever goes in the third hour, it is as if he has sacrificed a horned ram. Whoever goes in the fourth hour, it is as if he has sacrificed a chicken. And whoever goes in the fifth hour, it is as if he has sacrificed an egg. And when the Imam comes out (to deliver the sermon), the angels present themselves to listen to the remembrance." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

## 4. Walking Calmly and Humbly to the Masjid

When walking to the masjid, one should do so calmly, without rushing. This reflects humility and reverence for the act of worship.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ " إِذَا أُقِيمَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَلَا تَأْتُوهَا تَسْعَوْنَ، وَأَتُوهَا تَمْشُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ السَّكِينَةُ، فَمَا أَذْرَكْتُمْ فَصَلُّوا، وَمَا فَاتَكُمْ فَأَتُوا " . (البخاري)

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) saying, 'When the prayer is established (i.e., the prayer has started), do not come to it rushing, but come walking with calmness and dignity. Whatever you catch of the prayer, pray, and whatever you miss, complete it.'" (al-Bukhārī)

## 5. Reciting *Surat al-Kahf*

It is recommended to recite *surat Al-Kahf* (18<sup>th</sup> *surah* of the Qur'an) on Fridays.

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "مَنْ قَرَأَ سُورَةَ الْكَهْفِ فِي يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ أَضَاءَ لَهُ مِنَ النُّورِ مَا بَيْنَ الْجُمُعَتَيْنِ" . (البيهقي)

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reports, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever recites *surat al-Kahf* on Friday, a light will shine for him from one Friday and the next." (al-Baihaqi)

## 6. Listening Attentively to the *Khutbah* (Sermon)

During the *Khutbah*, it is obligatory to listen attentively and avoid any form of distraction. Speaking, playing, or using mobile devices during the *Khutbah* is prohibited.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "إِذَا قُلْتَ لِصَاحِبِكَ أَنْصِتْ . يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَالْإِمَامُ يَخْطُبُ فَقَدْ لَعَوْتَ " . (متفق عليه)

Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: "If you say to your companion, 'Be quiet,' while the Imam is delivering the *Khutbah*, you have engaged in idle talk." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "مَنْ تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ الوُضُوءِ ثُمَّ أَتَى الْجُمُعَةَ فَاسْتَمَعَ وَأَنْصَتَ غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَزِيَادَةُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ وَمَنْ مَسَّ الْحَصَى فَقَدْ لَعَا" . (رواه مسلم)

Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) reports, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, 'Whoever performs ablution (*wudu*) and perfects

it, then comes to the Friday prayer, listens attentively, and remains silent, will have his sins forgiven between that Friday and the next, with an additional three days (of forgiveness). And whoever touches the pebbles has engaged in idle action (*laghw*).” (Muslim)

There is a warning against touching the pebbles (which was a common practice during the Prophet’s time while delivering the *khutbah*). This act is used symbolically to represent any form of distraction or idle behavior during the *khutbah*. Engaging in such behavior invalidates the spiritual benefit of the prayer and nullifies the reward. The term “*laghw*” refers to any speech or action that is frivolous or unproductive, especially during a time when one should be focused on worship.

In *surat al-Mu’minun*, Allah (ﷻ) describes the believers who are promised success as follows:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آلِهَافٍ مَّعْرُضُونَ ﴿٣﴾

“Indeed, the believers are successful. They are those who are humbly submissive in their prayers and turn away from all that is frivolous.” [al-Mu’minun, 23:1-3]

## 7. Performing *Tahiyyat al-Masjid* (Greeting the Masjid)

Upon entering the masjid, one should pray two units of *Tahiyyat al-Masjid* (the greeting of the masjid).

عَنْ أَبِي قَتَادَةَ السَّلَمِيِّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: "إِذَا دَخَلَ أَحَدُكُمُ الْمَسْجِدَ فَلْيَرْكَعْ رُكْعَتَيْنِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ". (متفق عليه)

Abu Qatada (رضي الله عنه) reported Allah’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, “When one of you enters the masjid, he should pray two *rak'ahs* before sitting down.” (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

## 8. Avoiding Stepping Over People

If the masjid is crowded, one should avoid stepping over people to reach the front rows. This is considered disrespectful to others who have arrived early.

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّهُ قَالَ " مَنْ اغْتَسَلَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَمَسَّ مِنْ طِيبِ امْرَأَتِهِ - إِنْ كَانَ لَهَا - وَلَبَسَ مِنْ صَالِحِ ثِيَابِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتَخَطَّ رِقَابَ النَّاسِ وَلَمْ يَلُغْ عِنْدَ الْمُوعِظَةِ كَانَتْ كَفَّارَةً لِمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَنْ لَغَا وَتَخَطَّى رِقَابَ النَّاسِ كَانَتْ لَهُ ظُهُرًا ". (ابو داود)

Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As (رضي الله عنهما) reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, "Whoever washed himself on Friday and applies perfume of his wife if she has one, and wears good clothes and does not step over the necks of the people (in the masjid to sit in the front row) and does not indulge in idle talk during the sermon, that will atone (for his sins) between the two Fridays. But he who indulges in idle talk and steps over the necks of people (in the masjid), that (Friday) will be for him like the noon prayer." (Abu Dawud)

## 9. Making Du'a on Friday

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) mentioned that there is a special hour on Friday during which a believer's supplication is accepted.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ذَكَرَ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ فَقَالَ فِيهِ سَاعَةٌ لَا يُؤَافِقُهَا عَبْدٌ مُسْلِمٌ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي يَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ وَأَشَارَ بِيَدِهِ يُقَلِّلُهَا. (متفق عليه)

Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) reports, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), mentioned the day of Friday and he said, 'In it is an hour in which no Muslim stands to pray and ask Allah for something but that he will be given it,' and he indicated with his hand that the time is very short.'" (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Although the exact time is not confirmed, many scholars suggest making Du'a during the last hour after Asr prayer or during the time the Imam sits between the two Khutbahs.

## 10. Sending Blessings upon the Prophet (Salawat)

Sending blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad

(ﷺ) frequently on Friday is encouraged. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "اَكْثِرُوا الصَّلَاةَ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ وَلَيْلَةَ الْجُمُعَةِ فَمَنْ صَلَّى عَلَيَّ صَلَاةً صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَشْرًا". (السنن الكبرى للإمام البيهقي)

Anas (رضي الله عنه) reports, "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Increase your supplications for me on the day and night of Friday. Whoever blesses me once, Allah will bless him ten times." (al-Sunan al-Kubra by Imam al-Baihaqi)

## 11. Maintaining the Serenity of the Masjid

Maintaining a calm and respectful atmosphere in the masjid is important. Avoid engaging in unnecessary conversation.

## 12. Engaging in *Dhikr* and Qur'an Recitation Before the *Khutbah*

Before the Imam ascends the minbar (pulpit) for the *Khutbah*, one should engage in *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and recitation of the Qur'an, focusing on spiritually preparing for the prayer.

## 13. Leaving the Masjid Quietly and Respectfully

After the conclusion of the Jumu'ah prayer, one should leave the masjid quietly, allowing others to continue their worship. Engaging in idle talk or crowding the exits should be avoided.

By observing these etiquettes, a Muslim can ensure that they are fully prepared to gain the immense rewards associated with *Salah al-Jumu'ah* and maintain the sanctity and solemnity of this important weekly act of worship.

The *Jumu'ah Khutbah* is a vital part of the Friday prayer, serving not only as a religious obligation but also as a means of community guidance and education. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would deliver the *khutbah* in a way that was direct, clear, and filled with wisdom.

The style of the Prophet's *khutbah* was characterized by "*wa'z wa tadhkir* وعظ وتذكير" (admonition and reminder). His *khutbahs* were intended to remind the listeners of their responsibilities toward Allah (ﷻ) and each other, encouraging them to adhere to righteousness and avoid wrongdoing.



The *hadith* narrated by Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh describes the demeanor of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) when he delivered a *khutbah*.

عن جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا خَطَبَ احْمَرَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَعَلَا صَوْتُهُ وَاشْتَدَّ غَضَبُهُ. (مُسْلِمٌ)

Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh (رضي الله عنه) said, “When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) delivered a *khutbah*, his eyes would become red, his voice would be raised, and his anger would intensify.” (Muslim)

His eyes would become red - احمرت عيناه: This indicates the deep emotional and spiritual intensity with which the Prophet would speak. The redness of his eyes signifies his deep concern, passion, and the seriousness of the message he was conveying. It shows that the Prophet (ﷺ) was not delivering a mere speech but was deeply affected by the message he was delivering, showing both his sincerity and his profound sense of responsibility.

His voice would be raised - علا صوته: This reflects the urgency and importance of the message. The Prophet (ﷺ) would raise his voice to ensure that the message was heard clearly by everyone present. Raising his voice also conveyed the significance of what he was saying, emphasizing that it was not something to be taken lightly.

His anger would intensify - واشتد غضبه: This refers to the righteous anger of the Prophet (ﷺ) when addressing matters of grave importance, such as when warning against sin, injustice, or disobedience to Allah (ﷻ). The intensity of his anger was not personal but was driven by his concern for the well-being of the community and their adherence to the path of righteousness. This also served as a powerful reminder to the listeners of the seriousness of the issues being addressed.

The *hadith* highlights the Prophet’s deep commitment to his role as a messenger and leader of the Muslim community. His *khutbahs* were delivered with emotional intensity, a raised voice, and righteous anger, all of which stress the importance of the message he was conveying and his earnest desire for his followers to heed his words and live according to the teachings of Islam.

In conclusion, the *Jumu’ah* prayer is a cornerstone of Islamic worship, serving as a weekly reminder of a Muslim’s duties towards Allah (ﷻ) and the community. The Qur'an and *hadith*

emphasize the special status of this day, encouraging Muslims to take full advantage of its blessings. The Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) style of delivering the khutbah provides a model for contemporary imams, highlighting the need for clarity, relevance, and spiritual encouragement. By observing *Jumu'ah* with sincerity and devotion, Muslims can attain forgiveness, spiritual elevation, and the pleasure of Allah (ﷻ). The virtues of *Jumu'ah* are numerous, and its proper observance is a key to achieving success in both this life and the hereafter.

Believers attending the *Jumu'ah* prayer and adhere to the guidance of the Qur'an and *sunnah* are granted immense spiritual rewards, including the forgiveness of sins.

May Allah (ﷻ) forgive us our shortcomings and help us become true servants of His in all our thoughts and actions, inwardly and outwardly. Ameen

## *Zakat* الزكاة

This section will delve into the essential aspect of obligatory charity, known as *zakat*, its meaning, profound significance, identifying who the recipients of *zakat* are according to Islamic jurisprudence, and some common misconceptions surrounding *zakat*, all while emphasizing the Qur'anic perspective on wealth.

Indeed, it is essential to draw a clear distinction between charity (*sadaqah*) and *zakat*. Charity, or *sadaqah*, is an act of giving driven by love and compassion for fellow human beings, regardless of their faith or background. It is a noble practice encouraged in Islam to help those in need.

On the other hand, *zakat* is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and holds a unique religious significance. It is obligatory for eligible Muslims to give a portion of their wealth (usually 2.5%) to specific categories of recipients as a form of purification of wealth and a means of social justice. *Zakat* is intrinsically linked with *salah*, emphasizing the importance of both acts of worship in a believer's life.

*Salah* purifies one's soul and strengthens their connection with Allah (ﷻ), while *zakat* purifies one's wealth and serves as a means

to support the less fortunate. This purification, both of the soul and wealth, is closely tied to the belief in the hereafter, as evident in various *ayāt* of the Qur'an.

طس تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾ هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ  
وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

*"Ta Sin. These are the ayāt (messages) of the Qur'an and a clear (plain) Book. It is guidance and good news for the believers who establish regular prayers (salah), give the obligatory charity (zakat) and have firm belief in the Hereafter."* [al-Naml, 27:1-3]

The same idea resonates in the first few *ayāt* of *surat al-Baqarah*.

ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا  
رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾

*"This is the Book in which there is no doubt, a guide for the God-conscious; those who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend from what We have provided for them; those who believe in the revelation sent down to you (O Prophet), and in what was sent before you; and those who have firm faith in the Hereafter."* [al-Baqarah, 2:2-4]

Indeed, the awareness of accountability before the Creator in the hereafter is a fundamental motivator for true believers to diligently observe their *salah* and fulfill their *zakat* obligations. This connection stresses the universal nature of Islamic practice, where faith, worship, and social responsibility are interwoven aspects of a believer's life.

Indeed, *zakat* is a concept of charity and wealth purification that extends beyond the ummah (community) of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). It is a practice that has been prescribed for past nations, as demonstrated in the Qur'anic *ayah* mentioning Isma'il (عليه السلام), the son of Ibrahim (عليه السلام).

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿١٢٦﴾

*"He used to instruct his family to pray and give zakat, and his Lord was well pleased with him."* [Maryam, 19:55]

The *ayah* highlights the piety of Isma'il (عليه السلام) who not only stressed the importance of *salah* but also emphasized the giving of *zakat*. His actions were pleasing to Allah (ﷻ), signifying the universality of *zakat* as a righteous practice.

The practice of giving *zakat* was enjoined upon Isa (Jesus) the son of Mary (عليهما السلام).

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ۝

*“He made me blessed wherever I may be and enjoined upon me salah and zakat as long as I live.”* [Maryam, 19:31]

This universal aspect of *zakat* aligns with the broader Islamic belief that the message of monotheism and moral conduct, including acts of charity and social responsibility, was conveyed to various nations through different prophets and messengers.

These principles, including *zakat*, are part of the common thread that runs through the teachings of these prophets and is considered a means of purifying one’s wealth and supporting those in need.

The prescription of *zakat* to nations before the ummah of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) highlights the continuity and consistency of this practice in promoting social justice, compassion, and the fulfillment of communal responsibilities across different times and places. It serves as a reminder that the essence of *zakat* is rooted in the shared moral values upheld by multiple prophetic traditions.

Indeed, it is worth noting that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) lived a life of simplicity and contentment. His lifestyle was marked by humility and selflessness, and he often lived at a subsistence level, having little in terms of worldly possessions. As a result, he did not accumulate wealth that would have met the *nisab* نصاب, which is the minimum threshold of wealth required for a Muslim to be eligible to pay *zakat*.

This aspect of the Prophet’s life serves as a powerful example of detachment from materialism and a focus on the spiritual and moral aspects of life. It highlights his dedication to the worship of Allah (ﷻ) and his commitment to helping those in need through acts of charity and kindness, even when he himself did not possess much material wealth.

Prophet Muhammad’s (ﷺ) life provides a profound lesson in the prioritization of spiritual and moral values over worldly possessions, and it continues to inspire Muslims to live lives of humility, generosity, and devotion to Allah (ﷻ).

**Zakat:** The term *zakat*, derived from the Arabic root meaning ‘to increase,’ ‘to purify,’ and ‘to bless,’ has a significant role in Islam. *Zakat* can be defined as a specific portion of one’s wealth that is designated as obligatory charity for certain categories of people and specific purposes. To understand the concept of *zakat* fully, it is essential to grasp the Qur’anic perspective on wealth, which can be summarized as follows:

1. **Ownership Belongs to Allah (ﷻ):** According to Islamic belief, all wealth ultimately belongs to Allah (ﷻ). People are entrusted with this wealth as stewards (*khalifahs*) on earth. They are responsible for how they acquire, use, and distribute it.

This concept is deeply rooted in various *ayāt* of the Qur’an and *hadith*. The *ayah* from *surat al-Nur*, for instance, beautifully reinforces this idea.

وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِّن مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

*“and give them out of the wealth of Allah which He has given you.”*  
[al-Nur, 24:33]

The *ayah* reminds believers that even the wealth they possess is ultimately granted to them by Allah (ﷻ). This understanding has significant implications for one’s approach to wealth, emphasizing humility, gratitude, and a sense of responsibility.

وَلِلَّهِ خَزَائِنُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

*“The treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah.”*  
[al-Munafiqun, 63:7]

Indeed, the *ayah* reinforces the concept of ultimate ownership by Allah (ﷻ). It reminds believers that all the treasures, wealth, and resources of the heavens and the earth belong solely to Allah (ﷻ).

Recognizing that all things belong to Allah (ﷻ) encourages believers to manage their wealth with wisdom, compassion, and generosity. It fosters a mindset of giving, sharing, and helping those in need, as one understands that they are merely custodians of these resources during their worldly life. We are entrusted with these resources as a test and a means of responsibility.

2. **Wealth as a Gift from Allah (ﷻ):** What we have in terms of worldly possessions is in fact a gift from Allah (ﷻ).

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

*“And when the (Friday congregational) prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah.”*

[al-Jumu’ah, 62:10]

The *ayah* beautifully encapsulates the Islamic perspective on wealth and earnings. It emphasizes that what we have, including our material wealth and provisions, is not merely the result of our efforts and earnings (*kasb* كسب). Instead, it is described as “God’s bounty” or “God’s grace (*fadl* فضل)”. This perspective stresses that all the resources and blessings we possess are ultimately a gift from Allah.

After the conclusion of the Friday congregational prayer (*salah al-Jumu’ah* صلاة الجمعة), believers are encouraged to disperse in the land and actively seek out of Allah’s bounty. This guidance implies that while we engage in our worldly pursuits, we should always remember that our efforts are dependent on Allah’s grace. Seeking Allah’s bounty means engaging in lawful and ethical means of earning a livelihood while recognizing that our success ultimately comes from Him.

In practical terms, this *ayah* encourages a balanced approach to wealth and livelihood. It acknowledges human effort and initiative in acquiring sustenance but reminds us that success, prosperity, and the sustenance we receive are ultimately blessings from Allah (ﷻ). Therefore, gratitude, humility, and ethical conduct should characterize our endeavors, and we should be mindful of our duty to share with those in need and fulfill our obligations, such as *zakat*.

Moreover, the *ayah* reinforces the importance of remembering Allah (ﷻ) frequently (*dhikr* ذكر) in all aspects of life, including our pursuit of wealth and success. This remembrance serves as a source of guidance, protection from wrongdoing, and a means of spiritual growth, ultimately leading to success in both this world and the hereafter.

3. **Out of the gift (fadl) of Allah (ﷻ), one's legitimate right is one's basic needs:** One may enjoy the basic needs of shelter, food, clothing, transport etc. These basic needs are considered essential rights, and it is incumbent upon an individual to fulfill them according to their social status and circumstances. It is important to note that Islam acknowledges and respects differences in social and economic statuses, and individuals are encouraged to live within their means while maintaining moderation.

Wasteful expenditure (*israf* إسراف) has to be avoided.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا اٰدَمُ خُذْ زِينَتَكَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

*"O Children of Adam! Dress (and adorn yourselves) well at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but do not waste. For He does not like the wasteful."* [al-A'raf, 7:31]

Squandering one's wealth, spending extravagantly on non-essential items, or indulging in conspicuous consumption i.e. spending money on luxury goods and services to publicly display wealth and social status, rather than to fulfill basic needs is considered a sign of ingratitude (*kuf* كفر) to Allah (ﷻ).

وَعٰتِ ذَا الْقُرْبٰى حَقُّهٗ وَالْمَسْكِيْنَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيْلِ وَلَا تَبْذِرُوْا اَمْوَالَكُمْ اِذْ هِيَ اٰوٰىكُمْ اِلٰى نَفْسِكُمْ ۚ كٰذٰبًا ۚ اِذَا اَلْفَضْلُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ فَاسْفُوْا ۚ اِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِيْنَ كَانُوْا اِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۗ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطٰنُ لِرَبِّهٖ كَفُوْرًا ﴿٢٧﴾

*"Give close relatives their due, as well as the poor and (needy) travelers and do not squander your wealth extravagantly. Indeed, the squanderers are brothers of the devils, and the devil (satan) is most ungrateful to his Lord."* [al-Isra', 17:26,27]

Islam places great emphasis on moderation, contentment, and gratitude for the blessings received. Wastefulness not only harms individuals but also has broader negative consequences, including contributing to economic imbalances and social disparities.

It is important for believers to recognize and fulfill their basic needs as a legitimate right, living within one's means, and avoiding wastefulness as an expression of gratitude and responsible stewardship of the blessings provided by Allah (ﷻ).

4. **Others have a legitimate right over one's wealth and possessions:** In addition to one's basic needs, there are others who may have a legitimate right over one's wealth and possessions.

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

*"And those in whose wealth there is a known share for the beggars and the deprived."* [al-Ma'arij, 70:24-25]

The beggars (*sa'il*, السَّائِلِ) include those who are in need, often to the extent of begging for sustenance, and the deprived (*mahrum* المحروم) are those who are deprived of basic necessities or have limited means to support themselves and their families. They may not necessarily beg but still require assistance to meet their essential needs.

It is the responsibility of those who have the means to provide for such individuals, either through regular charity (*zakat*) or spontaneous acts of kindness.

This allocation, the share in the wealth of individuals, which is intended for the benefit of these specific groups, is a fundamental aspect of Islamic social justice and the concept of wealth distribution.

In essence, this concept demonstrates the importance of sharing one's wealth with those less fortunate and fulfilling the rights of others in society. It is a reminder that wealth and property are not solely for personal accumulation but come with a responsibility to assist those in need and address social inequalities.

Islamic teachings encourage acts of charity (*sadaqah*) and regular giving (*zakat*) as means to fulfill these rights. By sharing their wealth with the beggars and the deprived, individuals not only support those in need but also purify their wealth and demonstrate compassion and empathy for others.

5. **Wealth is a Test:** Wealth is considered a test from Allah (ﷻ). How individuals manage and share their wealth reflects their faith and character. It is a means of assessing their accountability in the Hereafter.



Indeed, Allah (ﷻ) is the All-Wise, and He is the One who bestows provisions upon His creation as He wills. The following *ayah* reminds us of this divine wisdom.

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ﴿١٣٦﴾

*"Allah gives abundant provision to whoever He wills and restricts it (for others)." [al-Ra'd, 13:26]*

This *ayah* emphasizes that the distribution of wealth and sustenance is in the hands of Allah (ﷻ), and He grants it to individuals according to His divine wisdom. Some may receive abundant provisions, while others may have less. This distribution serves as a test for all human beings, regardless of their material possessions.

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

*"And know that your wealth and children are a trial and that there is an immense reward with Allah." [al-Anfal, 8:28]*

The *ayah* stresses that wealth and children, which are often considered blessings, are, in fact, a test from Allah (ﷻ). They serve to assess how individuals utilize their resources, whether they are grateful, charitable, and just in their dealings with others.

Every person is responsible for what they have been given, whether it's wealth, knowledge, abilities, or any other blessing. On the Day of Judgment, individuals will be held accountable for how they managed and used these gifts.

In summary, the Qur'anic concept of wealth and provisions highlights the need for responsible stewardship and accountability for the blessings and resources one has been granted in this world, with the understanding that there will be a reckoning on the Day of Judgment.

*Zakat*, one of the pillars of Islam, is an obligatory form of charity that every eligible Muslim is required to give. The following conditions and guidelines outline how *zakat* is calculated and when it should be paid:

1. ***Zakat Calculation:*** *Zakat* is calculated as 2.5% of one's wealth including all assets. *Zakat* is based on the surplus wealth that a

person possesses beyond their essential needs such as food, clothing, housing, vehicles, and other essential living costs.

2. **Eligibility:** One is eligible to pay *zakat* if one's wealth and assets are equal to or above the *nisab* threshold or *zakat* bracket.
3. ***Nisab* Threshold:** The *nisab* is usually defined as the equivalent of three ounces of gold (87.48 grams) or an amount of money equivalent to that value. It is essential that a person's wealth is equal to or exceeds this *nisab* threshold before *zakat* becomes obligatory.
4. **Identify *Zakatable* Assets:** *Zakat* is not restricted to cash alone. Identify all the assets and savings that are eligible for *zakat*. These typically include cash, bank savings, investments, business profits, 401K, precious metals like gold and silver, which can take the form of coins, jewelry, bullions, ingots, or dust, and other valuable assets. Debts owed to you by others to be paid within the next year should also be considered.
5. **Deduct Outstanding Debts:** Before calculating *zakat*, subtract any outstanding debts, fees, penalties from the total value of assets. *Zakat* is calculated on the net savings after settling outstanding debts.
6. **Calculate Total *Zakatable* Assets:** Add up the total value of all *zakatable* assets. This is the cumulative amount (surplus wealth) on which *zakat* is calculated.
7. **Determine the *Zakat* Rate:** *Zakat* is typically calculated at a rate of 2.5% of total *zakatable* assets. *Zakat* is also payable on agricultural goods, precious metals, minerals, and livestock at a rate varying between 2.5 and 20 percent, depending on the type of goods.
8. **Calculate *Zakat* Amount:** Multiply the total value of *zakatable* assets by the *zakat* rate (2.5%). The result is the *zakat* amount one is required to pay.  
$$\text{Zakat Amount} = (\text{Total Zakatable Assets}) \times (2.5\% \text{ Zakat Rate})$$
9. ***Zakat* Payment Timing:** *Zakat* is calculated and payable only after a complete Islamic lunar (*hijri*) year has passed over the wealth on which *zakat* is applicable. This means that the wealth

should be held for a full lunar year before *zakat* becomes obligatory.

### Recipients of *Zakat*

The *ayah* from *surat al-Tawbah* explicitly outlines the eight categories of individuals eligible to receive *zakat*.

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٩٠﴾

*“(Prescribed) Charity (zakat) is for: the poor, the destitute, those who collect it, reconciling people’s hearts, freeing slaves, those in debt, spending in the Way of Allah, and (needy) travelers. It is a legal obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.” [al-Tawbah, 9:60]*

### The First and Second Categories

#### “The Poor and The Destitute”

(*Al-Fuqara*, الْفُقَرَاء and *Al-Masakin*, الْمَسْكِين)

*Zakat* funds are directed toward those who are truly in need or facing financial hardship. “*Faqir* (poor) فقير” and “*Miskin* (destitute مسكين)” are two categories of individuals who are eligible to receive *zakat*. Typically, people who fall in these categories are individuals who don’t have enough means or income to support themselves and their families.

***Faqir* (فقير):** A *faqir* is someone who is considered poor or needy but might still have some means to support themselves. They don’t possess enough wealth to meet their basic needs fully, and they may struggle to make ends meet.

***Miskin* (مسكين):** A *miskin* is typically someone in a more dire financial situation than a *faqir*. *Miskins* are often destitute, meaning they lack the essential resources required to maintain a basic standard of living. They have little or no income or assets to rely on.

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "ليس المسكين الذي يطوف على الناس تردُّه القمَّةُ واللُّقْمَتانِ، والتَّمْرَةُ والتَّمْرَتانِ، ولكنَّ المسكينُ الذي لا يجدُ غنا يُغنيه، ولا يُفْطِنُ فيتصدَّقُ عليه ولا يقومُ فيسألُ النَّاسَ." (متفق عليه)

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “A destitute ( *miskin* ) is not the one who goes from door to door, begging and is turned away with a morsel or two or with a date or two. But a destitute is the one who does not have enough to live upon, and neither from his appearance it occurs that he is needy and should be given alms, nor does he himself beg anything from others.” [al-Bukhārī and Muslim].

These two categories, ‘*faqir*’ and ‘ *miskin* ’ with varying degrees of financial need within the Muslim community are eligible for  *zakat* .

Any person who meets the  *nisab*  threshold is not eligible for  *zakat* . In a  *hadith*  reported by Abu Dawud, and al-Nasā’ī, ‘Ubaidullah bin ‘Adi bin al-Khiyar reports,

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبْدِ بْنِ الْخِيَارِ قَالَ: أَخْبَرَنِي رَجُلَانِ أَهْمَا أَتَيَا النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ فِي حُجَّةِ الْوَدَاعِ وَهُوَ يُقَسِّمُ الصَّدَقَةَ فَسَأَلَاهُ مِنْهَا فَرَفَعَ فِينَا النَّظَرَ وَخَفَضَهُ فَرَأَانَا جُلْدَيْنِ فَقَالَ: "إِنْ شِئْتُمَا أَغْطِيْتُكُمَا وَلَا حَظَّ فِيهَا لِعَيْنِي وَلَا لِقَوِيٍّ مَكْتَسَبٍ". رَوَاهُ أَبُو دَاوُدَ وَالتَّيَمِيُّ

“Two men came to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) and asked for  *zakat* . He looked at them closely and found them strong and able, he (ﷺ) said, ‘If you want, I will give you. But you should know that the wealthy or an able person who can work has no share in  *zakat* .’” (Abu Dawud, al-Nasai’)

### The Third Category

#### “Those Who Collect *Zakat* ”

(الْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا,  *al-‘Amilina ‘Alaiha* )

The third category of  *zakat*  recipients, often referred to as “those who collect it,” includes individuals involved in the administration and distribution of  *zakat* . These individuals play a crucial role in managing the  *zakat*  funds and ensuring that they are distributed to eligible recipients.

**Roles and Responsibilities:** Those who collect  *zakat*  funds and administer the institution of  *zakat*  have various roles and responsibilities. These roles may include collecting  *zakat*  contributions from the community, maintaining records of  *zakat*

recipients, assessing eligibility, and distributing *zakat* funds accordingly.

**Compensation:** These individuals are allowed to receive compensation or wages from the *zakat* funds for their services, even if they are financially well-off. This compensation is typically considered a legitimate expense of the *zakat* administration. It ensures that knowledgeable and trustworthy individuals are available to manage the *zakat* process efficiently.

**Transparency and accountability:** Transparency and accountability are essential in the administration of *zakat*. It is crucial to maintain clear records and documentation of all *zakat*-related transactions to ensure that funds are distributed correctly and that there is no misappropriation.

The administration of *zakat* should adhere to Islamic principles of fairness and justice. Those responsible for *zakat* collection and distribution should be trustworthy and knowledgeable about *zakat* rules and regulations.

It is permissible for wealthy individuals to be involved in *zakat* administration and receive compensation for their services. However, their involvement should not prevent eligible recipients from receiving their rightful share of *zakat*.

Overall, this category of *zakat* recipients ensures the effective and organized distribution of *zakat* funds to those in need while upholding the principles of transparency and fairness in the process.

### The Fourth Category

#### “Reconciling People’s Hearts”

(*Al-Mu'allafati Qulubuhum*, الْمُؤَلَّفَةُ قُلُوبُهُمْ)

This is one of the categories of individuals eligible to receive *zakat*. This category is often understood to include:

1. **New Converts to Islam:** Those who have recently embraced Islam, often referred to as “new Muslims” or “reverts,” and are

in need of financial or moral support to solidify their faith and adjust to their new way of life.

2. **Individuals Inclined Towards Islam:** It can also encompass individuals who show an inclination or interest in Islam but have not formally converted. These individuals may be exploring the faith, attending Islamic gatherings, or seeking knowledge about Islam.

The primary purpose of allocating *zakat* to this category is to:

**Strengthen Faith:** Provide financial assistance, education, and support to new Muslims to help them strengthen their faith or guide those considering Islam in their understanding of Islamic principles.

**Prevent Apostasy:** Ensure that individuals who have recently embraced Islam are not driven back to their previous beliefs due to financial hardship or other difficulties. Providing for their basic needs can help secure their commitment to Islam.

**Facilitate Integration:** Assist new converts in integrating into the Muslim community and adapting to Islamic practices and rituals.

**Promote Brotherhood and Solidarity:** By supporting these individuals, the Muslim community demonstrates its commitment to welcoming new members and fostering a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood among believers.

**Charity and Outreach:** Providing assistance to new converts is a form of charitable work that aligns with the spirit of *zakat* and compassion for fellow believers. Supporting new converts to Islam through *zakat* funds is an important aspect of community care and outreach.

The specific forms of support provided under this category may include financial aid, educational resources, mentorship, counseling, and other assistance aimed at nurturing and preserving the faith of new converts and those interested in Islam.

In essence, the “Reconciling People’s Hearts” category serves to ensure that those who are exploring or have recently embraced Islam receive the necessary support to maintain and grow in their faith, thereby strengthening the Muslim community.

## The Fifth Category

### “Freeing of Slaves”

(في الرِّقَاب, *Fi al-Riqab*)

*Zakat* in this category needs to be understood in its historical context.

In the early days of Islam, slavery was prevalent in various societies, and the Qur'an aimed to gradually eliminate this practice. The category of “freeing of slaves” was an essential aspect of this effort. In certain cases, the act of expiation for specific sins, like breaking certain oaths or vows, involves the redemption of slaves or captives, thereby promoting their emancipation.

Today, with the worldwide abolition of slavery, this specific category no longer applies in the traditional sense. However, Islamic scholars and jurists have provided guidance on how this aspect of *zakat* should be understood and implemented in contemporary times.

In many modern interpretations of *zakat*, the category of “freeing of slaves” can be extended to encompass financial support for individuals who may be in situations of exploitation, bondage, or severe financial hardship. This can include assisting individuals who are trapped in debt, facing human trafficking, or suffering under exploitative labor conditions.

Additionally, *zakat* funds can be directed toward organizations and initiatives that work to combat human trafficking and modern-day forms of slavery. These efforts focus on rescuing and rehabilitating victims and preventing human trafficking.

*Zakat* can also be used to support organizations and projects that promote and protect human rights, especially those related to labor rights, fair employment practices, and the prevention of exploitative working conditions.

*Zakat* can be allocated to provide legal aid and assistance to vulnerable individuals who may be unfairly detained or facing legal difficulties.

Part of the modern interpretation of this category involves using *zakat* to fund awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts against practices that exploit and abuse individuals.

*Zakat* funds should be utilized to assist Muslim prisoners of war whose release hinges on a ransom payment and individuals who may have unintentionally caused the death of someone and lack the means to compensate for the blood money.

It is essential to emphasize that while the specific category of “freeing of slaves” may not exist in the literal sense today, the underlying principle of helping those in vulnerable or exploitative situations remains a core aspect of *zakat*. Scholars and organizations have adapted the application of *zakat* to address contemporary issues related to social justice, human rights, and the well-being of individuals who may be in situations analogous to slavery or exploitation.

When in doubt, consult jurists to obtain a legal edict regarding this category.

## **The Sixth Category**

### **“Those in Debt” (*Al-Gharimin*, وَالْغَارِمِينَ)**

The category of “Those in debt” as recipients of *zakat* signifies individuals who find themselves ensnared by financial obligations and are unable to settle their debts due to various reasons, typically financial hardship. This category recognizes the pressing need of these individuals to free themselves from the shackles of debt, which may have accrued from various sources, such as loans, credit, or unforeseen expenses like medical bills.

The inclusion of “Those in debt” among *zakat* recipients aligns with the compassionate and supportive nature of *zakat* in Islam. By assisting those burdened by debts, *zakat* aims to provide relief and ensure their financial stability. It’s important to note that these individuals are not in debt due to reckless spending or extravagance but have genuinely fallen into financial distress, making it difficult for them to repay their creditors.



*Zakat* funds allocated to this category can serve as a means to lift the weight of indebtedness from their shoulders, allowing them to regain their financial footing and return to a more stable and secure financial situation.

This provision underscores the principle of solidarity and mutual support within the Muslim community, emphasizing the duty of those with means to aid their fellow believers in times of financial hardship.

In summary, “Those in debt” as a category of *zakat* recipients encompasses individuals grappling with financial obligations beyond their capacity to repay. *Zakat* is intended to alleviate their distress by helping them clear their debts, allowing them to regain financial stability and security.

### **The Seventh Category**

#### **“In the Way of Allah” (*Fi Sabil Allah*, فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ)**

Historically, the category of “Spending in the Way of Allah (*Fi Sabil Allah*, فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ)” within *zakat* indeed encompassed funding activities related to *jihad*, which referred to the struggle for the sake of Allah, including offensive/defensive efforts to advance Islam and protect the Muslim community. The term “*jihad*” itself has a broader meaning in Islam, encompassing the struggle for self-improvement, the propagation of Islam, and the defense of the faith when necessary.

In modern times, as the nature of conflicts and the understanding of Islamic teachings have evolved, the allocation of *zakat* under this category has also evolved to encompass a wide range of various righteous causes and endeavors including charitable and educational activities. These activities are aimed at promoting and supporting the well-being of the Muslim community and advancing the cause of Islam.

Below is an elaboration on this category of *zakat*:

**Defensive Jihad vs. Peaceful Activities:** The traditional concept of defensive jihad involving armed conflict is understood within its historical context to support the defense of the Muslim community, including funding military expeditions (*jihad*) to protect the Muslim lands and spread the message of Islam. Today, the vast majority of Muslims and Islamic scholars prioritize peaceful efforts, such as education, interfaith dialogue, and community development, as means to promote and protect Islam.

**Islamic Outreach and Dawah:** Funds allocated to this category may be used for *dawah* activities, including printing and distributing Islamic literature, organizing seminars, conferences and community events, inviting people of other faiths to learn about Islam and supporting initiatives that aim to promote and clarify the teachings of Islam.

**Islamic Education:** *Zakat* can be allocated to the establishment and maintenance of educational institutions, including Islamic schools, universities, and institutions that provide Islamic education, promote Islamic values, and foster a deeper understanding of Islam among Muslims.

**Masjid Construction and Maintenance:** Building and maintaining *masajid* especially in the West such as the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia, is another common application of *zakat* within this category according to some scholars.

The debate hinges on how broadly the term “*fi sabil Allah*” is interpreted and whether the building of *masajid* is seen as essential to the community’s spiritual and social well-being.

*Masajid* serve as centers for worship, community gatherings, and religious education, making them pivotal to the practice and preservation of Islam especially in Western countries.

While some scholars argue that *zakat* can be used for masjid construction under certain conditions, others insist on limiting *zakat* to its traditionally understood categories such as, helping the poor, the needy, freeing captives, aiding those in debt, supporting new Muslims, and other direct humanitarian needs.

In his renowned book *Fiqh al-Zakat*, Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (May Allah have mercy on him, رحمه الله) extensively discusses the issue of using *zakat* funds for various community needs. His *fatwa*

concludes that in non-Muslim countries, it is permissible to allocate *zakat* funds towards building Islamic Centers, schools, and hospitals.<sup>8</sup> This ruling highlights the adaptability of *zakat* in addressing essential communal needs where Muslims are a minority, as long as the projects serve the broader interests of the Muslim community.

To put congregants at ease, the heads of Islamic centers seeking to raise *zakat* funds for masjid construction or expansion should obtain a formal *fatwa* from a reputable Islamic jurisprudential authority. Trusted bodies such as The European Council for Fatwa and Research based in Dublin, the Fiqh Council of North America, or the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America are trustworthy institutions to consult. These organizations can provide well-grounded guidance, ensuring that the funds are used in accordance with *shariah* and meet the proper requirements for *zakat* distribution.

**Social and Welfare Services:** A significant portion of *zakat* in modern contexts is used to provide social and welfare services to the Muslim community. This includes financial assistance for those in need, healthcare services, housing support, and programs to address poverty and unemployment.

**Relief and Humanitarian Efforts:** In contemporary times, this category may extend to humanitarian endeavors, including providing aid to Muslims facing crises such as natural disasters, conflict, or economic hardship. *Zakat* can be used to offer food, shelter, medical assistance, and other necessities to those in need.

In summary, while the historical context of spending in the way of Allah (*fi sabil Allah*) included aspects of offensive/defensive *jihad*, the modern interpretation emphasizes peaceful and constructive efforts to advance the cause of Islam, promote religious education, and promote the welfare of Muslims and society at large.

The allocation of *zakat* under this category is typically determined by Islamic scholars, religious authorities, or reputable organizations with expertise in *zakat* distribution. Their goal is to ensure that *zakat*

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<sup>8</sup> *Zakat Money Used to Construct Islamic Centers* - Fiqh (islamonline.net) - <https://fiqh.islamonline.net/en/zakat-money-used-to-construct-islamic-centers/>

is used effectively and in accordance with Islamic teachings to benefit the broader Muslim community and humanity at large.

## The Eighth Category

### Travelers

(*Ibn al-Sabil*, وَابْنُ السَّبِيلِ)

The eighth category of *zakat* recipients is travelers who find themselves stranded in another country or land, irrespective of their social or monetary status, and have exhausted their financial resources. In this situation, they are eligible to receive financial assistance from *zakat* funds to help them return to their home country.

**Traveler's Plight:** This category applies to individuals who are temporarily away from their home or usual place of residence and face unforeseen financial difficulties during their travels. Such circumstances may include the loss of funds, theft, unexpected expenses, or other emergencies.

**Financial Support:** *Zakat* funds can be allocated to assist stranded travelers by providing them with the necessary financial support to cover the expenses required for their journey back to their home country. This assistance helps ensure their safe return and relieves them from the burden of being stranded in a foreign land without the means to travel.

**Universal Application:** Importantly, this category does not discriminate based on social or monetary status. It recognizes that anyone, regardless of their financial situation, can face difficulties while traveling. Therefore, the focus is on providing aid to travelers in need, emphasizing the universal humanitarian aspect of *zakat*.

**Compassion and Assistance:** Islam encourages compassion and assistance to those who find themselves in distress, especially during travel when individuals may be more vulnerable due to their unfamiliarity with the local environment and limited resources. Providing *zakat* to stranded travelers exemplifies this principle of compassion and support.

**Facilitating Safe Return:** By offering financial aid to travelers in dire situations, *zakat* ensures that individuals can return safely to their families and communities, reducing the hardships they might face if left stranded far from home.

In summary, the eighth category of *zakat* recipients encompasses travelers who are stranded in foreign lands and facing financial difficulties that prevent them from returning home. *Zakat* serves as a means of providing the necessary financial support to facilitate their safe return, reflecting the compassionate and humanitarian values of Islam.

### Conclusion

It is important to note that the distribution of *zakat* should be carried out in accordance with Islamic principles and guidelines. Additionally, *zakat* recipients should meet the specific criteria for each category, and the funds should be distributed with the intention of helping them fulfill their needs and improve their well-being.

*Zakat* is an individual obligation, meaning each eligible Muslim calculates and pays *zakat* separately based on their wealth. It is not combined with family members.

Accurate record keeping of financial transactions, savings, and assets is crucial for calculating *zakat* correctly.

One may seek guidance from knowledgeable scholars or Islamic financial advisors if one has complex financial situations or investments to ensure *zakat* is calculated accurately.

Paying *zakat* is not just a financial obligation but a spiritual one that purifies one's wealth and helps those in need within the Muslim community.

It is important to note that *zakat* serves a vital function in Islamic society by redistributing wealth and assisting those in need. Properly observing *zakat* ensures economic equity and social welfare within the Muslim community.

Giving *zakat* is believed to bring blessings to one's wealth and increase it. It is seen as a means of inviting Allah's favor and *barakah* (divine blessings) into one's life.

Practicing *zakat* cultivates qualities like generosity, empathy, and compassion in individuals. It reinforces the values of selflessness and concern for the well-being of others.

*Zakat* is a communal obligation that fosters a sense of unity and solidarity among Muslims. It encourages them to support one another in times of need.

In summary, the concept of *zakat* in Islam is deeply rooted in the Qur'anic understanding of wealth as a divine trust. It serves both as a means of purifying wealth and as an instrument of social justice, aiming to alleviate the suffering of the less fortunate while promoting spiritual growth and communal well-being.

## **Paying *Zakat* in Advance**

Paying *zakat* in advance is a permissible and commendable practice in Islam. This approach recognizes the constant needs of the poor and needy throughout the year rather than confining *zakat* payments to a specific time, such as during the month of Ramadan.

Poverty and financial difficulties exist year-round, not just during specific months. By paying *zakat* in advance, Muslims can address the needs of the less fortunate as soon as possible, providing them with essential support when they require it.

Paying *zakat* in advance offers flexibility in helping those in need. It allows for a more immediate response to emergencies, unforeseen circumstances, or urgent requirements faced by individuals or communities.

Paying *zakat* in advance simplifies the process for individuals, as they can contribute as they earn income or acquire wealth, rather than waiting for a specific time. This simplification can lead to increased charitable giving.

To ensure accuracy and fairness, it is important to keep detailed records of *zakat* payments made in advance. This record-keeping helps track the amounts paid and ensures that any shortfall in *zakat* obligations can be addressed before the due date.

If someone pays more *zakat* than they owe, it is considered an act of generosity and charity. Such excess contributions are highly

rewarded by Allah (ﷻ), and they serve as a means of earning additional blessings and rewards.

## Common Misconceptions about Zakat

These misconceptions about *zakat* need to be clarified to ensure that Muslims understand and fulfill their *zakat* obligations correctly.

1. **Tax as Zakat:** Taxes levied by any government or authority is in no way to be construed as *zakat*. *Zakat* is a religious obligation (mode of worship), while taxes serve various secular purposes. Paying taxes does not fulfill one's *zakat* obligation.
2. **Zakat al-Fitr and Zakat al-Mal:** *Zakat al-Fitr*, given at the end of Ramadan, is separate from *zakat al-mal* (obligatory annual almsgiving). They have different purposes and are calculated separately.
3. **Islamic Calendar for Zakat:** *Zakat* calculations are based on the Islamic lunar calendar, not the Gregorian calendar. Muslims should determine their *zakat* due date based on the completion of Islamic year (*hawl*).
4. **Deferred Zakat:** Deliberately delaying *zakat* payments without a valid reason contradicts Islamic principles. Muslims are encouraged to pay *zakat* promptly when it becomes due.
5. **Zakat Funds as Loans:** *Zakat* funds should not be used to provide loans to others. *Zakat* is meant to directly benefit the eligible recipients and should not be extended as loans.
6. **Spending on Dependents:** *Zakat* cannot be used to fulfill obligatory financial responsibilities toward one's dependents, such as parents, children, and spouses. These responsibilities are separate from *zakat*.
7. **Supporting Masjid:** While it is preferable to support masjid and Islamic centers with non-*zakat* funds, scholars may permit *zakat* funds to be used for this purpose in non-Muslim or Western countries where the Muslim community faces financial challenges.
8. **Calculating Assets:** When determining *zakat* eligibility, not only cash is considered in the calculation of *zakat*, but all assets, including cash, savings, investments, jewelry, and

other valuables, should be considered in the calculation of one's net worth.

9. **Zakat as Wages for Workers or Employees:** Wages for workers or employees cannot be paid out of *zakat* funds. *Zakat* has specific eligible recipients, as outlined in Islamic jurisprudence. It is primarily meant to assist those in need, such as the poor, destitute, debtors, and others who qualify for *zakat*. Wages or salaries for employees are typically considered a contractual obligation between employers and their workers, and they should be paid from the employer's funds or business revenue, not from *zakat*. It is important to maintain the integrity of *zakat* by ensuring it reaches the intended beneficiaries as specified by Islamic law.

Clarifying these misconceptions helps ensure that *zakat* is given its due importance as a fundamental pillar of Islamic faith and a means of supporting those in need in the Muslim community.

### Women's Jewelry

Regarding the issue of whether *zakat* is payable on women's gold and silver jewelry is a matter of differing opinions among Islamic jurists (*fuqaha*). The difference in views stems from variations in the interpretation of Islamic texts. Here's a summary of the differing opinions:

**Opinion of Imams Abu Hanifa and Ibn Hazm:** They argue that *zakat* is applicable to women's gold and silver jewelry, regardless of its value. They base their opinion on a *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) advised two women wearing gold bracelets to give *zakat* on their jewelry. They believe this *hadith* indicates that *zakat* should be paid on such items.

**Opinion of Imams Malik, Shafi', and Ahmad:** These scholars hold that *zakat* is not obligatory on women's jewelry, regardless of its value. They argue that the *hadith* in question may not apply to all types of jewelry, and they emphasize the voluntary nature of *zakat*. In their view, women's jewelry is exempt from *zakat*.

**Sheikh Qaradawi's Opinion:** Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (May Allah have Mercy on him رحمه الله) presents a middle-ground opinion. He suggests that jewelry that women wear regularly or on special occasions is exempt from *zakat*. However, any additional



jewelry that is stored or exceeds what they typically wear may be subject to *zakat*.

It's important to note that these differences in opinion are a part of the broader discussions within Islamic jurisprudence, and different Islamic communities and individuals may follow varying interpretations based on the guidance of their local scholars and the specific context in which they live.

Indeed, *zakat* is an important obligation in Islam, and Muslims are urged to fulfill it with sincerity and diligence. The following *ayah* and *hadith* emphasize the significance of paying *zakat* and the consequences for those who neglect this duty.

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ يَوْمَ يُخْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فُتُكُوىٰ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ ۖ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَأُخْرُؤُهُمْ هَٰذَا مَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ فُتُكُوىٰ مَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ ۖ تَكْنِزُونَ ۝

*"As for those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the Way of Allah, give them the news (O Prophet) of a painful punishment. On the Day when it will be heated in the fire of hell and used to brand their foreheads, sides, and backs (and it will be said to them), 'This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you were hoarding!'" [al-Taubah, 9:34-35]*

Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) narrates:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "مَا مِنْ صَاحِبِ ذَهَبٍ وَلَا فِضَّةٍ لَا يُؤَدِّي مِنْهَا حَقَّهَا إِلَّا إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ صُفِّحَتْ لَهُ صَفَائِحُ مِنْ نَارٍ فَأُخْرِجَ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فُيُكُوىٰ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ وَجَبِينَهُ وَظَهْرَهُ كُلَّمَا بَرَدَتْ أُعِيدَتْ لَهُ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ حَتَّىٰ يُقْضَىٰ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ فَيَرَىٰ سَبِيلَهُ إِمَّا إِلَىٰ الْجَنَّةِ وَإِمَّا إِلَىٰ النَّارِ." (مشكاة المصابيح)

The Prophet (ﷺ) warned, "If any owner of gold or silver does not pay what is due on him, when the Day of Resurrection would come, plates of fire would be beaten out for him; these would then be heated in the fire of Hell and his sides, his forehead and his back would be cauterized with them. Whenever these cool down, (the process is) repeated during a day the extent of which would be fifty thousand years, until judgment is pronounced among servants, and he sees whether his path is to take him to Paradise or to Hell." (Mishkat al-Masabih 1773)

The *ayah* and *hadith* serve as a powerful reminder of the consequences of neglecting one's *zakat* obligations. It vividly illustrates the severity of the punishment that awaits those who hoard their wealth and fail to fulfill this important duty.

The imagery of plates of fire being heated in Hell and then used to cauterize a person's sides, forehead, and back, with the process being repeated over an extended period, conveys the intensity of the punishment for such negligence. It emphasizes the importance of wealth purification through *zakat* and the consequences for those who deny others their rightful share.

Another *hadith* narrated by Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) reflects the fate of the miserly person who possesses wealth but fails to pay the due *zakat*.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ”مَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ مَالًا، فَلَمْ يُؤَدِّ زَكَاتَهُ مُتِلَّ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ شُجَاعًا أَقْرَعَ، لَهُ رَيْبَتَانِ، يُطَوَّقُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، ثُمَّ يَأْخُذُ بِلَهْزَمَتَيْهِ . يَعْنِي شِدْقَيْهِ . ثُمَّ يَقُولُ أَنَا مَالُكَ، أَنَا كَنْزُكَ “ ثُمَّ تَلَا [ وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ ]

الآيَةَ. (البخاري)

Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, “Anyone whom Allah has given wealth but does not pay its *zakat*, that wealth will appear to him on the Day of Resurrection in the form of a bald snake with two black spots over its eyes. It will encircle his neck and bite his cheeks, saying, ‘I am your wealth; I am your treasure.’” Then the Prophet (ﷺ) recited the *ayah*, “And let not those who miserly withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them.” – the *ayah*. (al-Bukhārī)

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُمْ ۚ بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ۚ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

“And let not those who miserly withhold what Allah has granted them of His bounty think that it is better for them. Rather, it is bad for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Judgement. And to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is well aware of what you do.” [Aal ‘Imran, 3:180]

The *hadith* and *ayah* are meant to instill fear and a sense of responsibility in the hearts of believers, motivating them to fulfill their *zakat* obligations with sincerity and generosity. It serves as a

reminder of the ultimate accountability on the Day of Judgement, where one's actions, including the payment of *zakat*, will be subject to scrutiny.

Paying *zakat* not only fulfills a religious obligation but also serves as a means of wealth purification and redistribution to those in need. It helps to reduce economic disparities within the Muslim community and ensures that the wealth circulates to benefit society as a whole.

May Allah (ﷻ) guide us all to fulfill our *zakat* obligations and grant us the ability to do so with a sincere and generous heart and protect us from such severe consequences. Ameen



## FULFILLMENT OF COVENANTS

وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا

*“(those) who keep pledges whenever  
they make them.”*

Another aspect of truly virtuous and righteous believers is their commitment to fulfilling their covenants. Such believers are:

وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ﴿٢٧٧﴾

*“(those) who keep pledges whenever they make them.”* [al-Baqarah, 2:177]

A similar *ayah* appears in *surat al-Ra’d*,

الَّذِينَ يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْفُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ ﴿٢٠﴾

*“Those who fulfill the agreements they make in God’s name and do not break their pledges.”* [al-Ra’d, 13:20]

An alternative translation is,

*“Those who fulfill their covenant made with Allah and do not break the pledge.”* [al-Ra’d, 13:20]

Honoring and fulfilling covenants, pledges, and promises must be upheld both with the One who is worshipped (*al-ma’bud* المعبود) and with the servants of Allah (*al’Ibad* العباد). Before delving into the details of fulfilling promises, pledges, oaths, agreements, deeds, pacts, trusts, and all other covenants we make with others, it is vital to understand the primary covenant (*mithaq* ميثاق) that all humankind has made with Allah (ﷻ).

The Qur’an reminds us that, in our primordial spiritual forms before our earthly existence, Allah (ﷻ) took a covenant from all potential human beings, affirming that He was their Lord.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

“And (mention O Prophet) when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify against themselves, (saying), ‘Am I not your Lord?’ They said, ‘Indeed (You are), we testify’ – lest, on the day of Resurrection, you say, ‘We were heedless of this.’” [al-A’raf, 7:172]

This divine covenant with Allah (ﷻ) from a primordial state before earthly life stipulates that the entire humankind inherently recognizes Allah (ﷻ) and accepts Him as the Lord and Master. In Qur’anic terminology, this phenomenon is called *fitrah* and refers to the natural, inborn nature of man.

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ﴿٣٠﴾

“Then turn (with steadfastness) to the true religion in an upright (and devoted) manner, (it is) the innate nature (*fitrah*) of Allah instilled in (all) people.” [al-Rum, 30:30]

The phrase - *fitrat Allah* - فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ - “the innate nature of Allah” refers to the natural, pure disposition and inclination toward worship and moral awareness that Allah (ﷻ) has embedded in every human being. In other words, humans are created with a predisposition toward faith and righteousness, aligning them with the divine will and encouraging a life in harmony with God’s guidance.

According to a *hadith qudsi*, speaking on behalf of Allah (ﷻ), the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

عن الله تعالى : إِنِّي خَلَقْتُ عِبَادِي حَقَاءَ فَاجْتَالَتْهُمْ الشَّيَاطِينُ فَحَرَمْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا أَحَلَلْتُ لَهُمْ وَأَمَرْتُهُمْ أَنْ يُشْرِكُوا بِي مَا لَمْ أُنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا. (مسلم)

“Indeed, I created My servants upon the true religion (*hunafa'* احنفاء), but the devils turned them away from it, forbidding them what I had permitted for them and commanding them to associate with Me that for which I have sent down no authority.” (Sahih Muslim)

This narration speaks of the inherent *fitrah* (natural disposition) upon which Allah created humanity, inclined toward monotheism and righteousness. However, it explains how the influence of devils leads people away from this innate path, promoting prohibitions Allah did not decree and encourages idolatry without divine

justification. This *hadith* underscores both the purity of human nature at creation and the corrupting effects of external influences.

According to an authentic *hadith*, everyone is born a believer in the true and natural faith (*fitrah*) and that it is the person's parents who uproot him from the natural faith and transform him into a Jew, a Christian or a Zoroastrian.

عن أبي هريرة، رضي الله عنه، قال: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ، فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ أَوْ يُنَصِّرَانِهِ، أَوْ يُمَجِّسَانِهِ. (البخاري)

The Prophet (ﷺ) on the authority of Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said, "Every child is born upon the *fitrah* (natural disposition), but his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian (Zoroastrian)." (al-Bukhārī)

This *hadith* highlights the inherent monotheistic nature in all humans and how external influences, such as upbringing and environment, shape one's religious identity.

We learn through another *hadith* narrated by Anas (رضي الله عنه) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said,

"أَنَّ اللَّهَ، يَقُولُ لِأَهْوَنِ أَهْلِ النَّارِ عَذَابًا لَوْ أَنَّ لَكَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ كُنْتَ تُقْتَدِي بِهِ قَالَ نَعَمْ. قَالَ فَقَدْ سَأَلْتُكَ مَا هُوَ أَهْوَنُ مِنْ هَذَا وَأَنْتَ فِي صُلْبِ آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكَ بِي. فَأَبَيْتَ إِلَّا الشِّرْكَ." (مسلم)

"Allah will say to the person with the least punishment in Hell: 'If you had all that is on the earth, would you give it as ransom to save yourself (i.e. save yourself from this Fire)?' He will reply, 'Yes.' Then Allah will say, 'But I asked you for something far simpler than this while you were still within Adam's loins: that you not associate anything with Me, but you insisted on committing shirk (associating partners with Me).'" (Muslim)

This *hadith* highlights the fundamental importance of monotheism (*tawhid*) and the gravity of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah). It emphasizes that the requirement to worship Allah (ﷻ) alone was a primordial covenant taken by all humans even before their earthly existence. Despite the simplicity of this demand, many still fall into the sin of *shirk*, leading to severe consequences in the Hereafter.

These narrations further confirm the first and original covenant we took with Allah (ﷻ). As a consequence, recognizing Him and accepting Him as our Lord is embedded in our very beings.

Associating others with Allah (ﷻ) is considered *shirk*, which can be either manifest (*al-shirk al-jali* الشرك الجلي) or hidden (*al-shirk al-khafi* (الشرك الخفي)). An example of manifest *shirk* is attributing divinity or godhood to Jesus, as the Christians do. Hidden *shirk*, on the other hand, is very elusive and its inconspicuous nature has been described by the Prophet (ﷺ) as “the creeping of a black ant on a black rock in the pitch darkness of the night.”

Individuals, including Muslims, may sometimes succumb to their lustful desires to the extent that they become enslaved by them. This phenomenon is addressed in the Qur’an, where Allah (ﷻ) says,

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهُهُ هَوَاهُ ۖ

“Have you (O Prophet) seen one who takes his whims and desires as his god?” [al-Jathiyah, 45:23]

Thus, it is essential for us to avoid and guard ourselves against any form of *shirk*. Moreover, we should continually seek Allah’s (ﷻ) forgiveness for any lapses.

The Master Supplication for seeking forgiveness (*Sayyid al-Istighfar*), as taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) is narrated by Shaddad Bin Aws.

عَنْ شَدَّادِ بْنِ أَوْسٍ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "سَيِّدُ  
الْإِسْتِغْفَارِ، أَنْ يَقُولَ الْعَبْدُ: اَللّهُمَّ اَنْتَ رَبِّي، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، خَلَقْتَنِي، وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى  
عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ عَلَيَّ، وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ  
بِدُنْيِي، فَاعْفُرْ لِي؛ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ". (البخاري)

“O Allah! You are my Lord! There is no god except You. You created me and I am Your slave, **and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as best as I can.** I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So, forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You.” (al-Bukhārī)

The term “covenant” mentioned in the *hadith* refers to the primordial covenant with Allah (ﷻ) mentioned above.

The “promise” referred to in the *hadith* is the pledge we make to Allah (ﷻ) daily while reciting *surat al-Fatiha* in our prayers:

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿١﴾

*“It is You (alone) we worship (and obey); and it is You we ask for help”*  
[al-Fatihah, 1:5]

Fulfilling pledges and contracts is paramount in Islam. The foremost pledge is our oath of allegiance to Allah (ﷻ):

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١﴾

*“Say (O Prophet): ‘My salah and my rites, my life and death, are for Allah (alone), the Lord of all the worlds.’”* [al-An’am, 6:162]

A conscientious, true, and righteous believer comprehends the depth and magnitude of this pledge with Allah (ﷻ). This pledge is further emphasized in the two testimonies of faith (*shahadatayn*):  
“There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.”

Adherence to pledges and contracts is essential:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ﴿١﴾

*“O you who believe, fulfill your contracts”* [al-Mā'idah, 5:1]

Allah (ﷻ) holds in high regard those who honor their pledges:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١﴾

*“Certainly, whoever fulfills his pledge and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who are righteous.”* [Aal 'Imran, 3:76]

Conversely, He (ﷻ) condemns those who do not:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَا خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

*Surely, those who sell out their pledges made in the name of Allah and their oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come. Allah will neither speak to them, nor look at them on the Day of Judgment, nor will He purify them, and they will suffer a painful punishment.”* [Aal 'Imran, 3:77]



Oaths made to Allah (ﷻ) can be categorized into two types: conditional and unconditional. A conditional oath refers to a vow (*nazar* نذر) made to perform a specific action contingent upon the fulfillment of a particular supplication or wish. In contrast, an unconditional oath arises from one's intrinsic desire to undertake a good deed, without any attached conditions.<sup>9</sup>

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْفُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٩﴾

*"Fulfill any pledge you make in the name of Allah and do not break your oaths after they have been confirmed, for you have made Allah a witness over you. Verily, Allah knows all that you do."* [al-Nahl, 16:91]

It is imperative to note that the contracts and transactions that must be honored are only those that are lawful and permissible according to Islamic principles. Engaging in any dealings that involve what Allah (ﷻ) and His Messenger (ﷺ) have explicitly forbidden or deemed undesirable is considered sinful. For instance, entering into contracts or purchase agreements related to prohibited items such as pork, intoxicants, or participating in activities involving pornography, human trafficking, or other sinful endeavors is strictly impermissible.

A breach of lawful contracts can occur either intentionally or unintentionally. Entering into a contract with the intention of violating it from the outset is a clear and deliberate act of dishonesty. Such behavior is indicative of a liar, and lying is considered a grave sin, classified among the traits of a hypocrite (*munafiq* منافق).

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<sup>9</sup> For Muslims living in America, it is imperative to honor all oaths, covenants, and pledges made with the U.S. government. The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA), comprising highly reputable Muslim jurists, has permitted American Muslims to abide by the oaths they have taken as U.S. citizens, which includes respecting the U.S. Constitution and laws. Adhering to these oaths does not undermine our submission to Allah (ﷻ), whom we solely worship, obey, and recognize as the ultimate authority (*wilayah*). Breaching a pledge made to one's country indirectly constitutes a breach of one's pledge to Allah (ﷻ), as He commands the fulfillment of all pledges.

The Prophet (ﷺ) warned about these characteristics in a *hadith*, stating:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ . عَنْ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ، إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا أُؤْتِمِنَ خَانَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ " . (البخاري)

"The signs of a hypocrite are three, whenever he speaks, he lies, if he is entrusted, he betrays, and whenever he makes a promise, he breaks the promise." (al-Bukhārī)

In another version, the Prophet (ﷺ) added:

" آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ وَإِنْ صَامَ وَصَلَّى وَزَعَمَ أَنَّهُ مُسْلِمٌ " .

"The signs of a hypocrite are three even if he fasts, prays and claims to be a Muslim."

Furthermore, the Prophet (ﷺ) emphasized:

عن عبد الله بن عمرو بن العاص رضي الله عنهما أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: " أَرْبَعٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ كَانَ مُنَافِقًا خَالِصًا، وَمَنْ كَانَ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنَ الْيَفَاقِ حَتَّى يَدْعَوْهَا: إِذَا أُؤْتِمِنَ خَانَ، وَإِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا عَاهَدَ عَدَرَ، وَإِذَا خَاصَمَ فَجَرَ " . (متفق عليه)

Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin Al-‘As (رضي الله عنهما) said the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Whoever possesses these four qualities is a pure hypocrite; and anyone who possesses one of them possesses a characteristic of hypocrisy until he gives it up. These are: when he is entrusted with something, he proves dishonest; when he speaks, he tells a lie; when he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous; and when he quarrels, he behaves in very imprudent, evil, insulting manner." (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

The gravity of hypocrisy is emphasized in the Qur’an.

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ يَجِدَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾

"The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell and you will find no one to help them." [al-Nisa', 4:145]

This emphasizes the severe consequences awaiting those who embody these hypocritical traits, particularly when they involve the deliberate violation of lawful contracts.

Such admonitions urge us to consistently evaluate our intentions and actions, ensuring that we exercise ample care and caution when entering into contracts and dealing with others.

An unintentional breach of contract occurs when a person is completely sincere and truthful in their intentions and actions, yet inadvertently does something that violates the contract or pledge. Even in these cases, it is crucial to be as careful and cautious as possible to avoid such breaches.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ

*"Be mindful of Allah as much as you can."* [al-Taghabun, 64:16]

Anyone who shows negligence or insincerity in honoring and fulfilling pledges and promises will be held accountable on the Day of Reckoning.

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا

*"Fulfill your pledges, for you will surely be held accountable for them."* [al-Isra', 17:34]

A significant lesson can be drawn from a *hadith* that emphasizes the importance of fulfilling pledges, contracts, and debts of a deceased person if they were unable to do so during their lifetime. It is narrated on the authority of Jabir Ibn Abdullah (رضي الله عنهم) that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said,

عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ . رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ . قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " لَوْ قَدْ جَاءَ مَالُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ، قَدْ أُعْطِيَكَ هَكَذَا وَهَكَذَا . فَلَمْ يَجِئْ مَالُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَتَّى فُيْضَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ مَالُ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَمَرَ أَبُو بَكْرٍ فَنَادَى مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ عِنْدَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ عِدَّةٌ أَوْ دَيْنٌ فَلْيَأْتِنَا . فَأَتَيْنَاهُ، فَقُلْتُ إِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لِي كَذَا وَكَذَا، فَحَتَّى لِي حَتْبَةٌ فَعَدَدْتُهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ خَمْسُمِائَةٍ، وَقَالَ خُذْ مِنْلَيْهَا " . (البخاري)

*"When the wealth of Bahrain arrives, I will surely give you this much, and this much, and this much."* However, the Prophet (ﷺ) passed away before the wealth of Bahrain arrived. When the wealth of Bahrain finally arrived, Abu Bakr announced, 'Whoever the Prophet (ﷺ) had promised something or owed something to, let them come to us.' So I went to him and said, 'The Prophet (ﷺ) had promised me such-and-such.' Abu Bakr then gave me a handful (of

wealth), and when I counted it, it was five hundred (dirhams). Then he said, 'Take twice as much.'" (al-Bukhārī)

This narration highlights the importance of fulfilling promises and upholding generosity. Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) demonstrated profound care and kindness in honoring the Prophet's commitments even after his passing. It emphasizes the responsibility of fulfilling the promises and obligations made by others, ensuring that the deceased's commitments are honored and their debts settled. This reflects the values of trustworthiness and compassion deeply rooted in Islamic ethics.

The *ayāt* from *surat al-Saff* warns.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١﴾ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

"O you who (profess to) believe, why do you say what you do not do? It is most hateful to God that you say what you do not do." [al-Saff, 61:2-3]

These *ayāt* serve as a potent reminder to maintain sincerity and truthfulness in our intentions, actions, and interactions. This divine message emphasizes the gravity of inconsistency between one's words and deeds. The essence of this *ayah* is echoed in the *hadith* narrated by Anas (رضي الله عنه), where the Prophet (ﷺ) stated,

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَلَّمَا خَطَبَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِلَّا قَالَ: "لَا إِيمَانَ لِمَنْ لَا أَمَانَةَ لَهُ وَلَا دِينَ لِمَنْ لَا عَهْدَ لَهُ". (البيهقي)

Anas (رضي الله عنه) said, "Seldom, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) addressed us without saying, 'He who is not trustworthy has no faith (*iman*), and he who does not keep his covenant (and promise) has no religion (*deen*).'" (al-Baihaqi)

This highlights the critical importance of integrity and faithfulness in both our promises to others and our commitments to Allah (ﷻ).

When describing the true believers, Allah (ﷻ) says that they are:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

"Those who honor their trusts and their pledges." [al-Mu'minun, 23:8]

This *ayah* emphasizes the significance of fulfilling obligations and being faithful to one's promises and agreements as defining characteristics of true believers.



## STEADFASTNESS IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITIES

وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ

*“(those) who are steadfast in misfortune,  
adversity, and times of conflict (and war)”*

Another quality that righteous believers possess is their patience and endurance in the face of calamities, hardships, adversities, conflicts, and dangers.

*Ayah al-Birr* describes them as,

وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ﴿١٧٧﴾

*“(those) who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of conflict (and war).”* [al-Baqarah, 2:177]

This statement highlights the importance of remaining resilient and patient during life’s challenges as a hallmark of true faith.

Incidentally, the fourth and final condition of success and salvation mentioned in *surat al-’Asr* is mutual support in patience (*sabr*).

وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

*“By the (fleeting) time, man is surely in a state of loss, except for those who have believed, done good deeds, enjoined one another to the truth, and enjoin one another to patience (and steadfastness).”* [al-’Asr, 103:1-3]

Literally, the Arabic word *sabr* means “to hold” or “to tie.” In the context of the Qur’an and *Sunnah*, *sabr* refers to the effort made to control and restrain oneself from actions or responses that are temperamentally unfavorable. Thus, *sabr* encompasses patience, perseverance, steadfastness, endurance, fortitude, forbearance, and self-control.

Scholars have categorized patience (*sabr*) into three distinct types: (1) patience in obeying Allah (ﷻ) (*sabr 'ala al-ta'a* صبر على الطاعة), (2) patience in abstaining from what is forbidden (*sabr 'an al-ma'siyah* صبر عن المعصية), and (3) patience in enduring adversities (*sabr 'ala al-ibtila'* صبر على الإبتلاء). Islam offers a profound psychological tool in the form of patience to cope with life's challenges. Consequently, patience must be embraced by believers as a fundamental way of life.

Patience in obeying Allah (ﷻ), refers to the perseverance and endurance needed to face the potential challenges associated with performing various acts of worship, such as prayer (*salah*) and fasting (*siyam*). These challenges may arise due to changes in climate, fluctuations in prayer timings, lack of amenities, long hours of fasting, or disruptions to sleep. Despite these difficulties, the obligatory rituals of worship must be carried out with patience and persistence, regardless of how demanding they may seem.

Patience in abstaining from what is forbidden involves exercising self-control by refraining from engaging in anything that is unlawful (*haram*), despite any strong desires or temptations one may feel. This requires a continuous internal struggle to resist the urge to commit sins and to maintain a steadfast commitment to avoiding actions that are prohibited.

Patience in enduring adversities refers to the patience required when facing hardships and adversities. Enduring afflictions, trials, and tribulations with patience, perseverance, and steadfastness are fundamental aspects of true virtue and piety. Life is filled with various tests, and it is through the exercise of this form of patience that believers demonstrate their faith and resilience.

Allah (ﷻ) has assured the believers that they will face various trials throughout their lives.

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

*"We shall certainly test you with fear and hunger, and loss of property, lives, and crops. And give good news (O Prophet) to those who patiently endure."* [al-Baqarah, 2:155]

Qualities such as fortitude and forbearance are essential when confronting adversities like fear, hunger, loss of life, loss of wealth,

and situations of conflict. In each of these challenging circumstances, patience is crucial.

Believers are encouraged to seek Allah's help through patience and prayer.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

*"O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer, for Allah is with the patient."* [al-Baqarah, 2:153]

Believers who endure trials with patience are not only acknowledged but also rewarded by Allah (ﷻ). They understand that all trials originate from Him and affirm that they belong to Him and will ultimately return to Him. Such individuals are blessed, deserving of Allah's mercy, and are guided on the right path.

الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

*"The (patient) ones (are those) who, when afflicted with a calamity, they say, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.' It is they who will have blessings and mercy from their Lord; and it is they who are guided."* [al-Baqarah, 2:156-157]

True righteous believers also have faith in and find solace in the divine assurance,

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿١٥٦﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿١٥٧﴾

*"So indeed, with hardship there is ease; truly with hardship there is ease."* [al-Inshirah, 94:5-6]

Patience and restraint are crucial when confronting oppression, repression, and injustices, which can sometimes escalate into severe physical and mental torment. This form of patience is referred to as patience in the face of adversity (*sabr 'ala al-iza'* الإيذاء). The Prophet (ﷺ) exemplified this virtue through his remarkable endurance and fortitude during his prophetic mission, despite enduring numerous hardships. As a model of patience, the Prophet (ﷺ) not only demonstrated this quality himself but also instilled it in his companions, guiding them to maintain composure and perseverance in the face of trials.



The noble companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) faced severe persecution for their unwavering commitment to the truth of *tawhid*. Their intense and deep-rooted faith (*iman*) enabled them to endure various forms of persecution, including verbal and physical abuse, inflicted by the staunch enemies of Islam, such as Abu Jahal and the Prophet's own uncle, Abu Lahab.

Among these companions, Bilal, Mus'ab ibn Umair, Ammar, and his parents Yasir and Sumaiyah (رضي الله عنهم) experienced brutal torture, and some were martyred. Ammar's mother, Sumaiyah (رضي الله عنه), was killed by Abu Jahal, becoming the first woman to be martyred in Islam's history. Yasir, Ammar's father (رضي الله عنه), also died due to relentless torture. During these trials, the Prophet (ﷺ) would offer solace, urging them to remain patient with the assurance that Paradise awaited them.

Despite facing verbal abuse, constant harassment, and numerous plots against his life, the Prophet (ﷺ) exhibited extraordinary patience and perseverance, setting a profound example for his followers.

The Prophet Muhammad's (ﷺ) words of comfort and encouragement to his companions, urging them to endure trials with patience and fortitude, had a profound impact, bringing solace to their suffering. His guidance aligned with the divine command in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

*"O you who believe, be patient, help one another to patiently endure and remain resolute and (always be) mindful of Allah, so you may succeed."*  
[Aal 'Imran, 3:200]

This directive calls for perseverance, mutual support, and vigilance in faith, emphasizing that such dedication will lead to success and fulfillment.

The companions of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) exemplified the criteria for success described in *surat al-'Asr*.

وَالْعَصْرِ ﴿١﴾ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٣﴾

*"By the (fleeting) time, man is surely in a state of loss, except for those who have believed, done good deeds, enjoined one another to the truth, and enjoin one another to patience (and steadfastness)." [al-'Asr, 103:1-3]*

Their profound faith led them to perform righteous deeds, advocate for the truth, and face persecution with unwavering patience. They not only adhered to these principles themselves but also supported each other in enduring trials, embodying the essence of patience and perseverance as prescribed in the Qur'an. Their success and resilience were direct outcomes of their commitment to these foundational values.

In contemporary contexts, Muslims face significant challenges such as racial profiling, heightened scrutiny, and various forms of harassment and abuse. For instance, in the aftermath of 9/11, federal agencies interrogated approximately 700,000 Muslims without uncovering any connections to the events of 9-11. This ongoing conflict and the resulting mistreatment demand that Muslims exhibit exemplary patience and resilience.

However, patience should not translate into passivity. Muslims are also called to actively work towards justice and oppose anti-Islamic sentiments and policies. The struggle for justice (*jihad*) and patience (*sabr*) are complementary. Muslims are encouraged to engage in *jihad* through the Qur'an, as articulated in the *ayah*:

فَلَا تُطِيعُوا الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدُوهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا ۝

*"So do not give in to the disbelievers and strive against them with it (the Qur'an), a mighty struggle." [al-Furqan, 25:52]*

The *ayah* highlights the importance of actively working to counteract falsehoods and injustice with the guidance provided by the Qur'an.

We are also reminded not to become complacent but to continue striving in Allah's cause while maintaining steadfastness. The Qur'an states:

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخِلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ ۝

*"Did you think you would enter Paradise? Not until Allah knows who among you strove for His cause and remain steadfast?" [Aal 'Imran, 3:142]*

The *ayah* emphasizes that entry into Paradise is not granted without first demonstrating sincere effort and perseverance in the face of trials and challenges.

After detailing the essence of true virtue, *ayah al-Birr* concludes by featuring the key characteristic of those who embody real virtue, righteousness, and piety:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

“It is they who are truthful, and it is they who are the righteous.” [al-Baqarah, 2:177]

This concluding statement encapsulates the essence of the *ayah*’s message and highlights the core qualities of true righteousness.

1. **Truthfulness (*Sidq* صدق):** The term "صَدَقُوا" (*sadaqu*) means “they are truthful” or “they have spoken the truth.” This indicates that the individuals described in the *ayah* are sincere and genuine in their beliefs and actions. Their adherence to righteousness and virtue is not superficial but is rooted in authentic faith and integrity.
2. **Piety (*taqwa* تقوى):** The term "التَّقَوَّى" (*taqwa*) refers to piety, consciousness of Allah, and adherence to His commands. It embodies a state of being mindful of Allah (ﷻ) in all aspects of life, leading to actions that are in line with His guidance. *Taqwa* is a reflection of a person’s inner commitment to live righteously and in accordance with divine principles.

The ultimate measure of righteousness is not merely in outward actions but in the sincerity and piety that guide a person’s life.



## Reflections and Takeaways

*Ayah al-Birr* gives us the most comprehensive Qur'anic concept of real virtue and piety. It outlines the essence of true righteousness in Islam. *Al-Birr* (real virtue and piety) combines beliefs and all acts of righteousness and obedience, both inward and outward. Whoever has these qualities is indeed the righteous believer who will succeed with Allah (ﷻ).

The *ayah* presents righteousness not as a single act or belief but as a comprehensive way of life that encompasses belief, worship, ethical conduct, and social responsibility.

The *ayah* deals with leading a balanced life and outlines the practical manifestation of belief in Allah (ﷻ), belief in the hereafter, and belief in the institution of prophethood. Such beliefs are demonstrated through acts of kindness and sympathy toward fellow human beings, observing Allah's rights of *salah* and *zakat*, honoring and fulfilling pledges, and being steadfast in times of hardships and conflicts.

The *ayah* begins by challenging the notion that righteousness is limited to mere rituals, such as turning one's face toward the east or west during prayer. True righteousness goes beyond formalities and rituals. It requires sincere faith, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. It's a reminder not to get caught up in the outward forms of worship without understanding and implementing the deeper spiritual and moral values.

The *ayah* emphasizes belief in key articles of faith—Belief in Allah, the Last Day, Angels, the Book, and the Prophets.

A holistic understanding of faith is crucial. Belief in these fundamental articles forms the foundation of a Muslim's worldview, guiding how they interact with the world and perceive life's purpose.

True righteousness encompasses social responsibility.

The *ayah* highlights the importance of giving to those in need, the relatives, orphans, the needy, travelers, those who ask, and freeing those in captivity. Righteousness is not just about personal piety but also about social justice and compassion. It calls Muslims to actively engage in alleviating the suffering of others and contributing to the welfare of society.

Establishing prayer (*salah*) and giving charity (*zakat*) are key acts of worship mentioned in the *ayah*. These acts represent a balance between one's duties to Allah (ﷻ) (through prayer) and duties to fellow human beings (through charity). This balance is essential for a righteous life.

The *ayah* mentions the importance of fulfilling promises and commitments. Integrity and honesty are central to Islamic ethics. Keeping one's word and fulfilling covenants are markers of a person's true character and righteousness.

Patience (*sabr*) in the face of hardship, illness, and during conflict is highlighted as a key attribute of the righteous.

Life is filled with challenges, and how one responds to these trials is a measure of one's faith. Patience is a virtue that is highly valued in Islam, and it is necessary for spiritual growth and resilience.

The *ayah* concludes by describing those who embody these qualities as being truthful and possessing *taqwa* (piety and God-consciousness).

True righteousness is deeply tied to honesty and a profound consciousness of Allah (ﷻ) in all aspects of life. *Taqwa* drives a person to consistently align their actions with their faith.

Righteousness is a dynamic, all-encompassing concept in Islam. It requires continuous effort to live in a way that reflects the teachings of Islam in every aspect of life—beliefs, actions, and interactions with others.

The *ayah* serves as a moral and spiritual guide for Muslims, emphasizing the interconnectedness of faith, worship, and ethical behavior.

Muslims are encouraged to reflect on this *ayah* regularly to assess their own lives, ensuring that their faith is not just theoretical but is actively reflected in their actions and treatment of others.

*Ayah al-Birr* is a powerful reminder that true righteousness in Islam is not about external appearances or isolated acts of worship but is about a comprehensive approach to life that integrates faith, morality, and social responsibility.



## Dua

*"O Allah! Guide us to true righteousness, that which goes beyond mere outward appearances and rituals.*

*O Allah! Grant us the sincerity to believe in You, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets with our whole hearts.*

*O Allah! Help us to show our faith through our actions by giving generously to those deserving charity – the orphans, the needy, and the travelers in need – and by fulfilling our promises and covenants.*

*O Allah! Strengthen us to be steadfast in prayer, patient in the face of adversity, and true in our commitments. Instill in us the courage to stand for justice, to be compassionate towards others, and to uphold the truth, no matter what the challenges we face.*

*O Allah! Make us among those who are truthful in their words and actions and among those who possess taqwa (piety). Protect us from hypocrisy and insincerity, and guide us to be among the righteous, those who are truly guided and who earn Your pleasure and mercy."*

*Ameen.*



## Appendix I

It may be useful to mention the pillars (*arkan* اركان) of *salah*, without which *salah* is invalid, its obligatory parts, followed by some of its *sunnahs*,

**Pillars (*arkan*) of *Salah*:** The term “Arkan of Salah” (pillars of prayer) refers to the essential elements of the prayer (*salah*) that must be performed for the prayer to be valid. These are actions and recitations that are compulsory within the *salah*, and if any of them is deliberately omitted, the prayer is considered invalid and must be repeated.

**Obligatory (*wajib*) of *Salah*:** *Wajib* refers to actions or elements that are necessary (obligatory) to perform, though they are of a slightly lesser degree of obligation compared to the compulsory (*fard*) acts. According to Islamic jurisprudence, if a *wajib* act is intentionally omitted, the *salah* is considered deficient but not entirely invalid; however, corrective measures such as *sujud al-sahw* (prostration of forgetfulness) should be performed to compensate.

If the *wajib* is missed unintentionally, performing the *sujud al-sahw* at the end of the prayer can make up for the omission. Deliberately neglecting a *wajib* act, however, can make the *salah* invalid according to some scholars.

***Sunnahs* of *Salah*:** The *Sunnahs* of *Salah* refer to actions and practices during the prayer that the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) performed regularly but which are not obligatory (*fard*) or necessary (*wajib*). Although omitting the *sunnah* acts does not invalidate the *salah*, performing them enhances the prayer's spiritual quality and brings additional rewards.



The following pillars (*arkan*), *wajib*, and *snunahs* of *salah* are based on the book *Daleel al-Ta'alib*, which is a well-known summary used by Hanbali school of thought.<sup>10</sup>

### **Pillars (*arkan*) of *Salah***

There are 14 pillars of prayer which are as follows:

1. Standing during obligatory prayers if one is able
2. The opening *takbeer* (saying “*Allahu akbar*”)
3. Reciting *surat al-Fatihah*
4. *Ruku'* (bowing), the least of which means bending so that the hands can touch the knees, but the most complete form means making the back level and the head parallel with it
5. Rising from bowing and standing up straight
6. *Sujud* (prostration), the most perfect form of which is placing the forehead, nose, palms, knees and toes firmly on the ground, and the least of which is placing a part of each of these on the ground.
7. Rising from prostration
8. Sitting between the two prostrations. However one sits is good enough, but the *sunnah* is to sit *muftarishan*, which means sitting on the left foot and holding the right foot upright with the toes pointing towards the *qiblah*.
9. Being at ease in each of these physical pillars
10. The final *tashahhud*, sitting to recite the final *tashahhud*
11. The two *salams*. This means saying twice, “*al-salamu ‘alaykum wa rahmat-Allah* (Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah).”

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<sup>10</sup> There are differing opinions among the scholars (*fuqaha'*) on various aspects of Islamic rulings. What is considered obligatory by some may be deemed *sunnah* by others. These variances are thoroughly explored in the books of *fiqh*, where jurists present their interpretations based on their respective methodologies and schools of thought. Differences in understanding arise due to how certain texts are interpreted, the context of the Prophet's actions, and the application of principles of jurisprudence.

Note: In *nafl* prayers it is sufficient to say one *salam*; the same also applies to the funeral prayer.

12. Performing the pillars of prayer in the correct sequence. If a person deliberately performs a prostration before bowing (*ruku'*), the prayer is invalidated. However, if this happens unintentionally, the person must go back, perform the bowing, and then continue with the prostration.

### **Obligatory (*wajib*) of *Salah***

The obligatory (*wajib*) parts of *salah* are eight. They are as follows:

1. *Takbeers* other than the opening *takbeer*
2. Saying “*Sami’a Allahu liman hamidah* - سمع الله لمن حمده (Allah hears those who praise Him)” - for the Imam and for the one who is praying alone
3. Saying “*Rabbana wa laka’l-hamd* - ربنا ولك الحمد (Our Lord, and to You is all praise)”
4. Saying the *tasbeeh* “*Subhana rabbiyal-’azeem* - سبحان ربي العظيم (Glory be to my Lord, the Most Great)” while bowing
5. Saying “*Subhana rabbiyal-a’la* - سبحان ربي الأعلى (Glory be to my Lord, the Most High)” while prostrating
6. Saying “*Rabbi ighfir li* - ربي اغفر لي (My Lord forgive me)” between the two prostrations
7. The first *tashahhud*
8. Sitting for the first *tashahhud*

### ***Sunnahs of Salah***

The *sunnahs* parts of *salah* are divided into verbal and actions.

**The verbal *sunnahs* of *salah* are:**

1. *Dua’ al-istiftah* (opening *dua’*): Saying after the opening *takbeer*, “*Subhanaka Allahumma wa bi hamdika, wa tabaraka ismuka, wa ta’ala jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruka,* سبحانك اللهم وبحمدك وتبارك اسمك - (وتعالى جذك ولا إله غيرك)

Glory be to You, O Allah, and praise is Yours. Blessed is Your Name, and exalted is Your Majesty. There is no god besides You”

2. Seeking refuge with Allah: Saying “‘A’uthu Billahi minash shaitanir rajeem, (أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم) - I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed devil”
3. *Basmalah*: Saying “*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim*, (بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ) - In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful”
4. Saying *Ameen* after reciting *surat al-Fatihah*
5. Reciting a *surah* after *al-Fatihah*
6. Reciting out loud, in the case of the Imam
7. Saying after the *tahmeed* (*Rabbana wa laka'l-hamd* (ربنا ولك الحمد), for one who is not praying behind an imam:  
“*Mil' al-samawaati wa mil' al-ard wa mil' ma shi'ta min shay'in ba'd*, (مِلْءَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمِلْءَ الْأَرْضِ وَمِلْءَ مَا شِئْتَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدُ) - O Allah, praise is Yours filling the heavens and filling the earth and filling whatever else you wish” (The correct view is that it is also *sunnah* for one who is praying in congregation)
8. Saying the *tasbeeh* while bowing, and it can be repeated more than once<sup>11</sup>
9. Saying the *tasbeeh* in prostration (*sujud*), may be repeated more than once<sup>12</sup>
10. Saying “*Rabbi-ghfir li* (رب اغفر لي) - My Lord, forgive me” between the two prostrations, and it can be repeated more than once<sup>13</sup>
11. In the last *tashahhud* (the sitting position in the final *rak'ah* of *salah*), it is *sunnah* to send salutations upon the Prophet (ﷺ) and his family<sup>14</sup> followed by *du'a*

<sup>11</sup> The minimum is once. Repeating it three times is recommended. Additional repetitions are encouraged if desired for more devotion.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid*

<sup>14</sup> The wording of the salutation is commonly known as the *Salah al-Ibrahimiyya* - الصلاة الإبراهيمية.

اللهم صل على محمد، وعلى آل محمد، كما صليت على إبراهيم، وعلى آل إبراهيم، وبارك على محمد، وعلى آل محمد، كما باركت على إبراهيم، وعلى آل إبراهيم في العالمين، إنك حميد مجيد.

“*Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala aali Muhammad, kama sallayta 'ala Ibrahima wa 'ala aali Ibrahima. Allahumma barik 'ala Muhammadin wa 'ala aali Muhammad, kama barakta 'ala Ibrahima wa 'ala aali Ibrahima, innaka Hamidun Majid.*”

### The *sunnah* actions of *salah* include:

1. Raising the hands while saying the opening *takbeer* (*Takbirat al-Ihram* - تكبيرة الإحرام)
2. Raising the hands when going into bowing (*ruku'*)
3. Raising the hands when rising from the bowing position
4. Dropping the hands after raising them
5. Placing the right hand over the left
6. Looking towards the place of prostration
7. Standing with the feet apart
8. Holding the knees with fingers spread apart when bowing. Additionally, the back should be kept straight, making the head parallel with the back
9. Placing the parts of the body on the ground Firmly During Prostration. However, it is discouraged (*makrooh*) to press the knees too firmly onto the ground
10. Keeping the elbows away from the sides during prostration (*sujud*); the stomach should not touch the thighs, and the thighs should not rest on the calves; keep the knees apart and slightly separated; Keep the feet upright with the toes pointing toward the Qibla; the hands placed at shoulder level or in line with the ears, with the fingers spread and directed toward the Qibla.
11. Sitting posture *Iftirash* and *Tawarruk* الإفتراش والتورك . sitting *muftarishan* between the two prostrations in the first *tashahhud*, and sitting *mutawarrikan* in the second *tashahhud*.<sup>15</sup>

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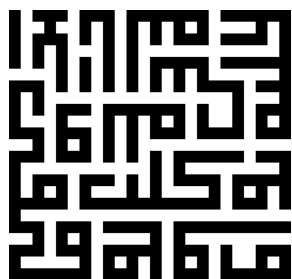
“O Allah, send prayers upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent prayers upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. O Allah, send blessings upon Muhammad and upon the family of Muhammad, as You sent blessings upon Ibrahim and upon the family of Ibrahim. Indeed, You are Praiseworthy, Glorious.”

<sup>15</sup> *Iftirash* (الإفتراش): This is done between the two prostrations and during the first *tashahhud*. In this posture, one sits on their left foot, which is laid flat, while the right foot is kept upright with the toes pointing toward the Qibla. The hands rest on the thighs and knees.

*Tawarruk* (التورك): This is practiced during the final *tashahhud* (in prayers with more than two *rak'ahs*). Here, the worshipper sits with their left hip on the ground, extends their left foot under the right leg, and keeps the right foot upright. This posture signifies the completion of the prayer.

12. Placement of hands on the thighs: The hands are placed on the thighs with the fingers together, without separating them between the two prostrations.  
During the *tashahhud* the pinkie and ring fingers are folded, a circle is formed with the middle finger and the thumb, and the forefinger (index finger) is used for pointing, particularly when mentioning the name of Allah or during the testimony of faith (*shahada*).
13. Turning to the right and left when saying the *salam*, “*As-Salamu ‘Alaikum wa Rahmatullah*” (May peace and mercy of Allah be upon you).

Allah knows best.



*But the achievement of my aim depends on Allah alone.  
In Him have I placed my trust,  
and unto Him do I always turn!  
(Hud, 11:88)*





## About the Author

Mustapha Elturk immigrated to the United States in 1976, amid the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War, to pursue higher education. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics from Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield, Michigan, and a Master of Liberal Arts in Social Justice from Marygrove College in Detroit, Michigan.

### **Islamic Scholarship, Religious Leadership, and Interfaith Advocacy**

Mustapha Elturk is a dedicated student of the late Dr. Israr Ahmad (d. 2010), *rahimahullah* رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ, a renowned Islamic thinker, scholar, and one of the most revered contemporary teachers of the Qur'an in Southeast Asia. Under Dr. Ahmad's guidance (1995–2000), Elturk deepened his knowledge in the Fundamentals of Faith, with a focus on Iman (*Aqidah* – Creed), *Tawheed* (the Unity of God), as well as Qur'anic sciences, exegesis (*Tafsir*), and the life of Prophet Muhammad (*Sirah*).

Elturk's passion for learning and teaching the Qur'an began in 1993, when he attended a lecture by Dr. Israr Ahmad during his tour in America. This encounter profoundly inspired him to study the Qur'an's deeper meanings and wisdom.

### **Islamic Leadership and Community Engagement**

In 1995, Elturk joined the Islamic Organization of North America (IONA) – then known as T.I.N.A. (Tanzeem-e-Islami North America) – and became actively involved in propagating the message of the Qur'an to both Muslims and people of other faiths. Through Friday sermons, lectures, and educational programs, he contributed to Islamic outreach across America and internationally.

- 1998–2003: Served as IONA's Education and Training Director
- 2003–Present: Appointed Ameer (Imam and President) of IONA, headquartered in Warren, Michigan



- 2007: Transitioned from a thriving career as an electronics engineering consultant to lead the IONA Masjid and Learning Center (Warren, Michigan) full-time.

### **Interfaith Leadership & Social Justice Activism**

As a publicly engaged leader and a leading interfaith activist, Imam Elturk played a significant role in fostering religious understanding and social justice initiatives across Metro Detroit. He served as:

- Executive Board Member & Treasurer – InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit (IFLC)
- President and Board Member – Interfaith Center for Racial Justice (ICRJ), a nonprofit promoting the ideals and universal values of freedom, equality and justice promoted by the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Co-founder & Instructor – Muslim Chaplaincy Program at the Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS) in Detroit, where he taught theology, worship practices, and Qur’anic studies.
- Executive Board Member – Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC)
- Member – Church-Police-City (CPC) Steering Committee, Warren, Michigan

### **Current Leadership Roles**

Imam Elturk continues to dedicate his efforts to Islamic education, interfaith collaboration, and social justice, striving to build bridges between communities and promote a just and equitable society. He continues to serve in several key leadership capacities:

- Co-chair – Imams Council of Michigan (ICM)
- Board Member – University Islamic Center, Wayne State University
- Co-founding Member – American Human Rights Council (AHRC)

- Advisory Board Member – Michigan Coalition of Human Rights (MCHR)
- Member – Interfaith Justice Committee of the People’s Water Board Coalition (PWBC), advocating for clean, accessible, and affordable water for all.
- Member – Religious Leaders Forum of the Abrahamic Faiths of Metropolitan Detroit
- President – American Society for Religious and Cultural Understanding (ASRCU), an outreach organization focused on prison chaplaincy and correctional facility programs.

### **Awards & Recognitions**

Imam Elturk’s contributions to faith-based leadership, interfaith collaboration, and social justice have been widely recognized:

- 2013 Spirit of Unity Award – Ecumenical Theological Seminary (ETS)
- 2020 Robert A. Bruttell Interfaith Leader Award – InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit (IFLC) - For outreach to Detroit’s diverse religious communities
- 2025 Samantha Woll Faith in Action Award – For interfaith work and bridge-building

### **Personal Life**

Imam Mustapha Elturk resides with his family in Troy, Michigan and can be reached at [ameer@ionaonline.org](mailto:ameer@ionaonline.org).



———— NOTES ————

## Paths of Righteousness

*By Mustapha Elturk*

What does it truly mean to be righteous? *Paths of Righteousness* explores the profound message of Ayah 177 of Surah Al-Baqarah, a single ayah that encapsulates the essence of virtue in Islam. Mustapha Elturk delves into this powerful ayah, uncovering its comprehensive definition of righteousness — not just in ritual and belief, but in moral conduct, social responsibility, and perseverance in the face of hardship.

Through deep reflection and insightful analysis, this book illuminates the many paths to righteousness, guiding readers toward a faith that is rooted in action, integrity, and compassion. Whether you seek to strengthen your understanding of Islam or enrich your spiritual journey, *Paths of Righteousness* offers an inspiring roadmap to a life of purpose, faith, and virtue.

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