

Articles:

## What is Solah (prayer)?

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*“Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, says: ‘My slave has a promise from Me, if he establishes prayer on time, that I will not punish him, and that I will admit him to paradise without reckoning.’” Narrated from ‘Aa’ishah.*

Solah, also known as prayer, stands as the essence of religion. It constitutes the second pillar of Islam, mandatory for all mature Muslims on a daily basis. Within the Islamic faith, Solah holds significant importance, serving as a cornerstone. Without prayer, the purification of the soul remains unattainable. Remove prayer from the world, and religion loses its essence, for it is through prayer that humanity attains consciousness of God, fosters selfless love for others, and cultivates inner piety. Prayer is, therefore, the first, the highest, and the most solemn phenomenon and manifestation of religion.

The significance of prayer in Islam cannot be overstated. It is the initial pillar of Islam, emphasized by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) immediately after affirming the testimony of faith, marking one's entrance into the Muslim community. According to the Hadith of the Prophet (Solallahu alayhi wasalam):

*Abu Hurayrah (radiyallahu'anhu) narrated that the Prophet (Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam) said: "The first thing a person will be held accountable for on the Day of Judgment is his Solat. If they are complete, it will be written for him that they are complete, but if there is a deficiency in them, Allah would say: "See if My Slave has any supererogatory prayers." Allah would also say: "Make up the deficiency in My Slave's obligatory prayers from the supererogatory prayers;" and then other actions will be accounted for accordingly." This is recorded by An-Nasa'ie and others.*

*Be ever mindful of prayers, and of praying in the most excellent way;  
and stand before God in devout obedience.*

*[Qur'an 2:238]*

*Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers: those who humble themselves in their prayer, and who turn away from all that is frivolous, and who are intent on inner purity.*

*[Qur'an 23:1-4]*

Likewise, the obligation of prayers was established upon Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) during his miraculous journey to heaven. Moreover, when Allah commends the believers, as seen in the opening of Surah al-Muminun (Qur'an 23), one of the foremost attributes mentioned is their commitment to prayers.

*Once a man asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) about the most virtuous deed. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated that the most virtuous deed is the prayer. The man asked again and again. The first three times, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) again answered, "The prayer," then on the fourth occasion he stated, "Jihad in the way of Allah." [This is from a hadith recorded by Ahmad and ibn Hibban. According to al-Albani, the hadith is hasan. Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani, Sahih al-Targhib wa al-Tarhib (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami, 1982), vol. 1, p. 150]*

*"And I have chosen you, so listen to that which is inspired to you. Verily, I am Allah! There is none worthy of worship but I, so worship Me and offer prayer perfectly for My remembrance."*

*[Qur'an 13-14]*

In reality, if the prayer is performed properly – with true remembrance of Allah and turning to Him for forgiveness – it will have a lasting effect on the person. After he finishes the prayer, his heart will be filled with the remembrance of Allah. He will be fearful as well as hopeful of Allah. After that experience, he will not want to move from that lofty position to one wherein he disobeys Allah. Allah has mentioned this aspect of the prayer when He has said,

*"Verily, the prayer keeps one from the great sins and evil deeds" (al-Ankabut 45). An-Nadwi has described this effect in the following eloquent way,*

Its aim is to generate within the subliminal self of man such spiritual power, light of faith and awareness of God as can enable him to strive successfully against all kinds of evils and temptations and remain steadfast at times of trial and adversity and protect himself

against the weakness of the flesh and the mischief of immoderate appetites. [an\_Nadwi, p. 24]

The overall effect that the properly performed prayers should have upon humans is described in other verses in the Quran:

*"Verily, man was created impatient, irritable when evil touches him and withholding when good touches him. Except for those devoted to prayer those who remain constant in their prayers..."*  
(al-Ma'arij 19-23).

As for the Hereafter, Allah's forgiveness and pleasure is closely related to the prayers. The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said,

*"Allah has obligated five prayers . Whoever excellently performs their ablutions, prays them in their proper times, completes their bows, prostrations and khushu` [Khushu` in the prayer is where the person's heart is attuned to the prayer. This feeling in the heart is then reflected on the body. The person remains still and calm. His gaze is also lowered. Even his voice is affected by this feeling in the heart. For more details on this concept (as well as the difference between it and khudhu`), see Muhammad al-Shayi', al-Furuq al-Laughawiyyah wa Atharaha fi Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ubaikan, 1993), pp. 249-254.] has a promise from Allah that He will forgive him. And whoever does not do that has no promise from Allah. He may either forgive him or punish him." [Recorded by Malik, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, al-Nasai and others. According to al-Albani, it is sahih. Al-Albani, Sahih al-Jami', vol. 1, p. 616.]*  
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The act of prayer serves as a form of purification for individuals, allowing them to connect with their Lord five times a day. As mentioned earlier, this regular communion with Allah is intended to deter one from committing sins throughout the day. Moreover, prayer serves as an opportunity for remorse and repentance, as individuals earnestly seek forgiveness for their transgressions. Additionally, the act of prayer itself is considered a virtuous deed that helps erase some of the wrongdoings committed. These aspects are emphasized in the following Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

*"If a person had a stream outside his door and he bathed in it five times a day, do you think he would have any filth left on him?" The*

*people said, "No filth would remain on him whatsoever." The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) then said, "That is like the five daily prayers: Allah wipes away the sins by them." (Recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)*

In another hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said,

*"The five daily prayers and the Friday Prayer until the Friday prayer are expiation for what is between them." (Recorded by Muslim)*

And Allah knows best.