

Class 4

‘Standing in Salah’

Takbeer Al Ihram

Upon “*Allahu Akbar*” - So what really happens at “*Allahu Akbar*”?

- But before we go into what really happens... Have you ever wondered why we start our prayer with “*Allahu Akbar*”? Why don’t we say “*Subhanallah*”, for instance?

“*Allahu Akbar*” is the key phrase because with it we affirm that Allah, before Whom we are about to stand, is greater than anything occupying us at that moment. He is greater than our job, greater than our business, greater than our sleep, our bills, our family and our children, greater than all that troubles or anything preoccupies us. And why do we raise our hands with it? We raise our hands to throw all of that behind us. We raise our hands, as a gesture of complete surrender.

When you announce “*Allahu Akbar*”, imagine that you are before the cameras and the red “ON THE AIR” button has now been switched on. But it is not ordinary people who are watching you, it is The King Himself. In His hands is everything you are and everything you will ever be. In His hands is the entire universe, running in perfect order.

Nothing however big or small, escapes His control. How will you stand? Feel your heart race!

- With “*Allahu Akbar*”, things we were permitted to do just moments before suddenly become forbidden... Like food, drink, talk, unnecessary movement. What happened? What is different now? Well, these acts are not befitting of a meeting of this nature.

For the servant has answered the call and now stands in humility before his Master. *You are on a much higher level now. Focus.*

Are you still drifting? This is why we repeat these great words, “*Allahu Akbar*” as we move to each position. It is a reminder, and a new chance to refocus. *Salute the King & Expel the Intruder.*

Lowering your gaze

When we pray we should lower our gaze, we should look at the place of prostration. We lower our gaze because:

- Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said we should do it.
- But we also do it because lowering your gaze is a sign of love. Out of the love that we have for Allah (swt) we lower our gaze.
- It is also a sign of humility. We stand humbly before Allah (swt).

- Sajdah is the most beautiful part of Salah. So when we are looking down at the place of prostration, it is as if we are longing to get to the place of prostration.

Dua Istiftaah:

The Du'aa recited after the opening Takbeer of the prayer and before al-Faatihah is called Du'aa' al-Istiftaah (opening supplication).

Majority of us are just used to reciting *“Subhaanaka Allahumma wa bi hamdika, wa tabaaraka ismuka, wa ta'aala jadduka wa laa ilaaha ghayruka”* whereas there are more authentic supplications from Sunnah, a couple are listed below. A Muslim should alternate between the Duas which keeps the Sunnah alive and bring in Khushoo in the prayer as it doesn't just come out as a habit, rather the heart is alive in Salah.

1. *Allahumma baa'id bayni wa bayna khataayaaya kama baa'adta bayna al-mashriqi wa'l-maghrib. Allahumma naqqini min khataayaaya kama yunaqqa al-thawb al-abyad min al-danas. Allahumma ighsilni min khataayaaya bi'l-thalji wa'l-maa'i wa'l-barad* (O Allah, put a great distance between me and my sins, as great as the distance You have made between the East and the West. O Allah, cleanse me of sin as a white garment is cleansed from filth. O Allah, wash away my sins with snow and water and hail)."
2. *“Wajjahtu wajhiya lilladhi fatara al-samawaati wa'l-ard haneefan musliman wa maa ana min al-mushrikeen. Inna salaati wa nusuki wa mahyaaya wa mamaati Lillaahi Rabb il-'Aalameen, laa shareeka lahu wa bidhaalika umirtu wa ana awwal ul-muslimeen, Allahumma anta al-malik... (I have set my face towards the Originator of the heavens and the earth sincerely [in Islam], and I am not among the Mushrikeen. Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, no partner has He. With this I have been commanded and I am the first of the Muslims (those who submit to Him). O Allah, you are the King...).”*

Surah Fatiha

When one meets up with his beloved, what is he first most likely to utter? It is the sweet sound of his Beloved's name! But this is no ordinary name. This is a name that blesses everything around it! Everything it falls upon! This is a name that lifts away any evil, harm and ache. With it we start, and with it we finish, and with it we taste the sweetness of this life and the sweetness of the next... *“Bismillah- Arrahman Arraheem”* (In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful). Feel it soothing your heart as it gently rolls off your lips. *“To Him (Allah) belong the most beautiful names...”* (59:24)

And when you love someone, you savor in how perfect they are. Don't you? No one deserves this more than Allah. For only He, is truly perfect! *“Alhamdulillah- Rabbilalameen!”* (All praise is due to Allah, The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!).

In praising Him, we are in essence establishing Allah's undeniable perfection. The Prophet ﷺ told us, "Alhamdulillah fills the scale!" Let gratitude fill our hearts when we utter it, He has blessed us with so much. Let's take it to another depth, when we say "Alhamdulillah", we are even praising and thanking Allah for blessing us with the ability to praise and thank Him. As even this ability is from Him! So in reality, Allah establishes praise for Himself, through us. Glorified is He. Feel your dependence and need for Him, feel the healing effects of the gift of remembering and praising Him.

Know that just like Salah is a gift for the Ummah, so is Surah Al-Fatihah. Probably the first Surah we all have memorized and also the one we recite the fastest, i.e. Surah Al-Fatiha. It is due to our lack of knowledge regarding the virtues, benefits and rewards of Surah al-Fatiha most of us end up reciting it just for the sake of recitation.

Not many of us know that al-Faatihah is an incredible Du'aa in and of itself where Allah the Almighty Himself instantly replies to each verse we recite. Hence the Sunnah is to give a gap or pause in between each verse and believe in and hear Allah's reply. This can increase the Khushoo' to another level and can immensely help us to attain the desired state of Ihsan (Level 1- worshipping Allah as if you can see Him, and although you cannot see Him, He can see you).

In a Hadeeth Qudsi recorded by Muslim states, Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever performs any prayer in which he did not read Umm Al-Qur'aan (surah al-fatihah), then his prayer is incomplete."

He repeated these words three times. Someone said to Abu Hurairah, "Even though we are behind the Imam?" He said: Recite it to yourself, for I have heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say:

Allah replies to each Ayah of Surah Fatiha we recite

Allah the Exalted said: I have divided prayer between Myself and My servant into two halves, and My servant shall have what he has asked for.

When the servant says: *Alhamdulillah Rabbil Aalimameen*

Allah says, "My servant has praised Me."

When the servant says, *Ar Rahman ir Raheem*

Allah says, "My servant has glorified Me."

When he says, *Maaliku Yawmi Deen*

Allah says, "My servant has glorified Me," or "My servant has related all matters to Me."

When he says, *Iyyaaka Na'budu Wa iyyaaka Nasta'een*

Allah says, "This is between Me and My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he sought."

When he says, *Ihdinas Siraat al Mustaqeem, Siraat al Ladheena an amta Alaihim, Ghayril maghdoobi Alayhim Wa-lad dhoaaleen*

Allah says, "This is for My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he asked for."

These are the words of An-Nasa'i, while both Muslim and An-Nasa'i collected the following wording, *"A half of it is for Me and a half for My servant, and My servant shall acquire what he asked for."*

Just a few key pointers for Surah Fatiha to keep you mindful

- Most of us have seen the video of the size of universe where we zoom out from a particle to seeing multiple galaxies light years away, so now when you pray think of all of that which is the first heaven and is like a ring in a desert compared to the heaven above, so think of the grandeur of Allah and think who is watching you. This should especially strike you when we recite *Rabbil Aalameen* (Lord of the Worlds).
- When you recite *Maaliki Yaumi-Deen*, think of the Day of Judgement and that you will be standing in front of Him hoping to get the book of good deeds in your right hand, you wouldn't be scratching your head and fidgeting or thinking of anything else that day.
- When you recite *Ihdinas Siraat al Mustaqeem* (Guide us to Straight Path), know that the Siraat of this life leads us to Allah and the Siraat of the next life leads us... to Jannah (Paradise). Do you now feel how serious this Dua is? *"Ihdina-Siraat Al-Mustaqeem"* - Our entire existence depends on it. The *"Ameen"* you'll pronounce now, after knowing the above, will be much more heartfelt, won't it?

So the next time you are in prayer reciting Al-Fatiha, remember to pause momentarily as the Prophet ﷺ did after every verse, because His Majesty- with His beautiful face to yours, is responding to you... think of your conversation with your Lord, that He will give what we ask Him of, that He will keep us on the path He is pleased with, only if we are mindful of what we are asking Him. Feel it! What an honor it is to be His servant!

Reciting Quran After Surah Fatiha

Do not just right away recite your regular Surahs, like Surah Ikhlas. Varying in reciting different Surahs in Salah is a Sunnah. The sunnah itself tremendously encourages us to memorize as many Surahs as possible. In fact, whoever memorizes Qur'aan and acts upon it, Allah will reward him and honour him greatly for that, so that he will rise in status in Paradise to a level commensurate with what he memorized of the Book of Allah.

This sunnah also makes the worshipper feel and ponder on new meanings (recommended to memorize with meanings so we can contemplate when we pray) cover different topics mentioned in the aayaat and adhkaar which would help us attain Khushoo. So we miss out on so much memorizing just a few Surahs.

If not all, we should at least try to memorize the Surahs the Prophet ﷺ used to recite frequently while performing each Salah according to authentic ahadeeth.

Fajr Prayer

The longer mufassal soorahs (soorahs from the last seventh of the Qur'aan), such as:

- Al-Waaqi'ah [Qur'aan 56]
- Al-Toor [Qur'aan 52]
- Qaaf [Qur'aan 50]
- al-Takweer also known as Idhaa al-shamsu kuwwirat [Qur'aa 81]
- Al-Zalzalah [Qur'aan 99],
- Al-Mi'wadhatayn [the last two soorahs]
- Al-Room [Qur'aan 30]
- Yaa-Seen [Qur'aan 36]
- Andal-Saaffaat [Qur'aan 37]
- In the Fajr prayers of Fridays he would recite Al-Sajah [Qur'aan 32] and Al-Insaan [Qur'aan 76].

Zohar Prayer

It was reported that in Salaat al-Zuhr, he ﷺ would recite the equivalent of thirty aayaat in each of the two rak'ahs, and that he recited:

- As Sajdah [Qur'aan 32]
- Inshiqaaq [Qur'aan 84]
- Al-Burooj [Qur'aan 85]
- Al-Taariq [Qur'aan 86]
- Al-Layl [Qur'aan 92]

It was also narrated that sometimes He ﷺ would recite two Surahs in the First two Rakahs of Zuhr prayer making the first one longer than the second Rakah.

Asr Prayer

In Salaat al-'Asr, he ﷺ would recite the equivalent of fifteen aayaat in each rak'ah, and he ﷺ would recite the soorahs already mentioned in connection with Salaat al-Zuhr.

Maghrib Prayer

In Salaat al-Maghrib, he ﷺ would recite short mufassal soorahs such as:

- Al-Teen [Qur'aan 95]
- Soorat Muhammad [Qur'aan 47]
- Al-Toor [Qur'aan 52]
- Al-Mursalaat [Qur'aan 77] and others.

Isha Prayer

In 'Ishaa' he ﷺ would recite medium-length mufassal soorahs, such as:

- Al-Qalam [Qur'aan 68]
- Al-Inshiqaaq [Qur'aan 84]
- Al-A'laa [Qur'aan 87]
- Al-Shams [Qur'aan 91]
- Al-Layl [Qur'aan 92]

Witr Prayer

When offering three Rakah, he ﷺ used to recite:

- Surah Al A'laa [Qur'aan 87] in first rak'ah
- Surah Al Kaafiroon [Qur'aan 109] in second rak'ah
- Surah Ikhlas [Qur'aan 112] in the third rak'ah

Night Prayers

In qiyaam al-layl, he ﷺ used to recite the long soorahs. It was reported that he ﷺ used to recite 200 or 150 aayaat, and sometimes he ﷺ used to shorten the recitation.

Optional Prayers In the following three Prayers:-

1. Two Rakah Sunnah Prayer of Fajr
2. Two Rakah Sunnah Prayer of Maghrib
3. Two Rakah offered after Tawaf.

He ﷺ used to recite:-

- Surah Kaafiroon [Qur'aan 109] in the first rak'ah
- Surah Ikhlas [Qur'aan 112] in the second rak'ah

- Taken from the works of Shaikh Albani (May Allah have mercy on him)

These are the ones that are reported through Authentic Ahadeeth, however, the prayers are not restricted to these surahs yet one should try to recite them thinking this is how Prophet ﷺ used to perform Salah.

Learn the Meanings of the Surahs you have memorised

Did you ever notice that any Quran recited in Salah is always recited when we are in the standing position? We are not allowed to recite Al-Fatiha or any other Sura in the sitting position, nor during our Rukuu (bowing), nor during our prostration. Why?

The standing position is man's most dignified, honorable and respectful position possible. And because this Quran speaks the most honorable and noble Speech, it is thus only befitting for the most noble Speech to be recited while in the most dignified and respectful of positions.

The Quran is the Speech of Allah, The Most High, and is due our utmost respect. But how many a time have we recited it absentmindedly, without any feeling or emotion, without any reflection on its powerful words? For many of us, if asked what of Allah's prohibitions did we just recite, we would have no answer. What of Allah's commands did we just recite? We cannot recall! People stand behind their Imam in prayer. He recites of Hell and Heaven, and they are off drifting of food and drink.

Remember, it is not in the quantity of Quran recited, but in the quality of how we recite and its effect on us. The sahaba would recite just one verse the entire night. So learn the meanings of the Surahs you recite in Salah and feel them. The Quran is greater than we know, Allah says in the Quran *"Had we sent down this Quran upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled, cleaving asunder from fear of Allah. And these examples we present to people that perhaps they may reflect."* (59:21)

May Allah give us the Hidayah, to understand, recite and feel Al Fatiha and Quran the way it should be.

TIPS FOR THE TEST

1. Do not have to memorize the Ayahs or Hadeeths word for word, get a good understanding of the message in it.
2. Remember the replies Allah gives when we recite Surah Fatiha in prayer.
3. Remember which Surahs did the Prophet ﷺ recite in which Salah.