

MIFTAAH SEMINAR

THE SECRETS OF PRAYER



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أسرار الصلاة - The Mysteries of Prayer

Reflections from Imam Al-Ghazali's Work

The Relevance of *Ihya Ulum al-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali

- **Personal Experience vs. Theoretical Knowledge**

- Imam Al-Ghazali's work is distinguished because it stems from his personal spiritual journey, adding depth and practical value to his discussions.
- Topics like خشوع (*khushu*, humility in prayer), حياء (*haya*, bashfulness), and reverence (هيبة or تعظيم) are defined not just theoretically but with a lived understanding.
- His personal transformation enriches the content, making it widely relevant and timeless.

- **Integration of Fiqh and Spirituality**

- *Ihya Ulum al-Din* uniquely blends legal rulings (fiqh) with spiritual insights.
- For example, while discussing prayer, Imam Al-Ghazali includes:
 - Fiqh: Conditions, pillars, and invalidators of prayer.
 - Spirituality: How to attain خشوع (focus and humility).
- This approach emphasizes that outward actions (fiqh) and inward states (spirituality) should coexist seamlessly in worship.

- **Unified Understanding of Worship**
 - Imam Al-Ghazali insists that worship involves both technical precision and heartfelt reflection.
 - Example: Saying "Allahu Akbar" correctly (fiqh) and understanding its profound meaning ("Allah is the Greatest") for personal transformation.

Structure of *Asrar al-Salah* in *Ihya Ulum al-Din*

1. Placement of the Chapter

- Found in the section on عبادات (Ibadat), covering pillars of Islam (prayer, fasting, zakah, hajj) after purification (طهارة).
- Each chapter begins with "The Secrets" (Asrar): Secrets of Purification, Secrets of Prayer, etc.

2. Subtopics in *Asrar al-Salah*

- **Virtues of Prayer:** Why prayer is central to a Muslim's life.
- **Outward Acts of Prayer:** Fiqh-based rulings on physical actions.
- **Inward Acts of Prayer:** Spiritual reflections and inner focus.
- **Congregational Prayer (Jama'ah):** Etiquettes and rulings for collective worship.
- **Friday Prayer (Jumu'ah):** Importance and related etiquettes.
- **Common Fiqh Issues:** Detailed legal rulings related to prayer.
- **Sunnah Prayers:** Non-obligatory but recommended acts of worship.

3. Focus of Session

- Concentrates on the third chapter: Virtues of Inward Acts of Prayer.

The Virutes of Inward Acts of Prayer

- **Conditions for Spiritual Validity**
 - Beyond physical prerequisites like facing the qibla and

- maintaining purity, Imam Al-Ghazali discusses inward conditions:
 - *Khushu* (humility and focus).
 - Presence of the heart (*Hudur al-Qalb*).
- **Maintaining Khushu in Salah**
 - Remedies and strategies for achieving focus in prayer.
 - Mindfulness in each part of the prayer, ensuring a consistent state of devotion.
- **Definitions and Differences**
 - *Khushu*: Often defined as humility, fear, stillness, or submission of the heart.
 - *Hudur al-Qalb*: The active presence of the heart, distinct yet interconnected with *khushu*.
- **Scholarly Perspectives on Khushu**
 - Some view it as solely a state of the heart.
 - Others see it as physical submission.
 - A balanced view: A combination of heart and body reflecting humility and focus.
- **Relation to Heedlessness (غفلة)**
 - Opposite of *khushu* is heedlessness, forgetting Allah's presence.
 - Heedlessness can lead to major sins, as highlighted in the hadith:
 - The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"A believer is not a believer while committing fornication."

 - Meaning: During major sins, one's faith is momentarily overshadowed by heedlessness.

Haith on Preoccupation in Prayer

- **Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:**

"Indeed, during the prayer, one is preoccupied." (Sunan Abi Dawood)

- Scholarly reflections on the hadith:
 - Physical preoccupation with the acts of prayer (e.g., bowing, prostration).
 - Mental preoccupation with the meanings and recitations.
- This dual focus—body and mind—defines the comprehensive nature of khushu in salah.

Imam Al-Ghazali on Khushoo' and the Presence of the Heart in Salah

The Stipulation of Khushoo'

- Imam Al-Ghazali introduces the concept of khushoo' (focus and humility in prayer) as a **stipulation** for the validity of Salah.
 - The term "stipulation" implies that khushoo' is a **condition for the validity** of prayer.
 - This assertion raises concerns about the validity of prayers lacking khushoo'.

Imam Al-Ghazali's Position

- Al-Ghazali argues that if *khushoo'* is absent, the Salah is invalid, as it fails to fulfill its primary purpose.
- He emphasizes this point through Quranic verses, Hadith, and rational arguments.

Majority Scholarly Opinion

- Most jurists disagree with Al-Ghazali's stance, considering khushoo':
 - **Sunnah**, not a condition for validity.
 - Essential for spiritual fulfillment but not for the legal validity of the Salah.
- Example:
 - A person may complete the obligatory prayers but lack focus in some; the prayers remain valid legally, though their spiritual

- value may diminish.

Quranic Evidences Cited by Imam Al-Ghazali

Surah Taha (20:14)

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

"Establish prayer for My remembrance"

- **Key Arguments:**

- **Command of Establishing Prayer:**
 - The verb "establish" (aqim) implies an obligation (wujub).
 - Usul al-Fiqh principle: Every command in the Quran defaults to obligation unless qualified otherwise.
- **Connection to Remembrance of Allah:**
 - The prayer must achieve remembrance of Allah; without it, the Salah is not "established" and thus invalid.
- **Possible Interpretations of "لِذِكْرِي":**
 1. Establish prayer to **remember Allah** during Salah.
 2. Establish prayer **exclusively for Allah's remembrance** (excluding all distractions).
 3. Establish prayer because **Allah has legislated it** for prior nations.
 4. Establish prayer to achieve **intense remembrance of Allah** (emphasis on quality).

Surah Al-A'raf (7:205)

وَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

"Do not be of the heedless"

- **Key Arguments:**

- **Prohibition Principle:**
 - Legal theory dictates that prohibitions indicate something is **haram** unless qualified otherwise.
- **Implication for Salah:**
 - Being heedless (*ghaflah*) in Salah is prohibited, implying

- that focus and khushoo' are mandatory.

Surah An-Nisa (4:43)

لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

"Do not approach prayer while intoxicated until you know what you are saying"

- **Key Arguments:**
 - **Reason for Prohibition:**
 - Intoxicated individuals cannot understand what they are saying, making their Salah invalid.
 - **Analogy to Distraction:**
 - A distracted person in Salah, whose mind is elsewhere, resembles an intoxicated individual in their lack of awareness.
- **Extended Metaphorical Meaning:**
 - Intoxication is not limited to alcohol:
 - **Love for worldly pleasures** or **burdens of life** can "intoxicate" the heart, causing distraction.
 - The verse warns against approaching Salah in such a spiritually "intoxicated" state.

Key Takeaways

- **Imam Al-Ghazali's Emphasis:**
 - Salah must fulfill its purpose of achieving dhikr (remembrance of Allah). Without khushoo', this goal is unmet.
- **Practical Implication:**
 - Al-Ghazali does not suggest abandoning Salah due to lack of khushoo':
 - Salah remains obligatory under all circumstances (e.g., physical incapacity or distraction).
 - The absence of *khushoo'* renders the spiritual connection

- weak but does not absolve one of the duty to pray.
- **Spiritual Perspective:**
 - Khushoo' is essential for:
 - Building a connection with Allah.
 - Experiencing the full spiritual benefit of Salah.

