

# MIFTAAH SEMINAR

## THE SECRETS OF PRAYER



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### SESSION 2

#### Reflections from Imam Al-Ghazali's Work

- The discussion centers on the third chapter of *The Mysteries of Prayers (Asrar al-Salah)* by Imam Al-Ghazali: الشروط الباطنة من أعمال القلب (*The Inward Actions of the Heart in Prayer*).
- The chapter emphasizes the significance of *khushoo* (humility and attentiveness) in salah, asserting that without *khushoo*, prayer may not be accepted by Allah. Imam Al-Ghazali provides both textual and rational evidence to support this view.

#### Evidence for the Necessity of Khushoo

##### Hadith Evidence

Imam Al-Ghazali cites several hadiths to demonstrate the importance of *khushoo* in prayer:

1. *“Those that pray and get nothing from their prayer but a sleepless night.” (Sunan Ibn Majah)*
  2. *“Whoever his prayer does not make him refrain from immorality and evil, it does not add to him but distance from Allah.” (Tabarani)*
  3. *“Prayer is modesty and humility.” (Tirmidhi and Nasa'i)*
- These narrations highlight that prayer without focus, humility, and transformative impact is devoid of true benefit.

## Rational Arguments

- **Comparison with Other Pillars of Islam:**
  - **Zakah:** Disciplines the human desire to hoard wealth by mandating a percentage of wealth be given to the needy.
    - Evidence: *“If the son of Adam had two valleys of gold, he would long for a third.”*
  - **Fasting:** Disciplines bodily desires (e.g., hunger, thirst, and sexual urges).
  - **Hajj:** Combines discipline over wealth (expenses for travel) and physical endurance.
- **Salah’s Unique Dimension:**
  - Unlike zakah, fasting, or hajj, salah involves minimal financial or physical exertion. This suggests its primary objective lies elsewhere—namely, in spiritual and mental engagement (*khushoo*).

## Core Components of Salah

Imam Al-Ghazali identifies three primary elements of salah:

1. **Dhikr and Recitation:**
    - Includes *Qur’an*, *du’a*, and general remembrance.
  2. **Rukoo’ (Bowling):**
    - Demonstrates reverence.
  3. **Sujood (Prostration):**
    - Reflects submission and humility before Allah.
- Each component requires internal engagement beyond mere physical movements.

## Dhikr and Recitation

- **Objective:** To commune with Allah.
- **Evidence:**
  - Surah Al-Fatiha emphasizes *adab* (etiquette) in *du’a*: praising Allah before making requests.

- Hadith: Allah responds to every verse recited from *Al-Fatiha*.
- Example:

الحمد لله رب العالمين

*"Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds"*

- prompts Allah's reply: *"My servant has praised Me."*
- **Reflection:** Recitation devoid of understanding becomes meaningless sound. True *dhikr* requires presence of the heart and mindfulness.

### Rukoo' (Bowing)

- **Objective:** To show reverence and utmost respect for Allah.

- **Evidence:**

- Surah Al-Mursalat:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَرْكَعُوا لَا يَرْكَعُونَ

*"And when they are told to bow, they do not bow." (77:48)*

- Surah At-Tawbah:

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ

*"But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, then let them go on their way." (9:5)*

- **Legal Implication:**

- Abandoning prayer is seen as disbelief. The Prophet ﷺ said: *"The covenant between us and them is prayer; whoever abandons it has disbelieved." (Tirmidhi)*

### Sujood (Prostration)

- **Objective:** To embody submission and humility before Allah.

- **Evidence:**

- Sujood holds no value if reduced to a mere physical act without heartfelt engagement.

Imam Al-Ghazali dismisses the idea that these actions are merely physical, as the physical exertion involved in salah is minimal and even exempted for those unable to perform it. This reinforces the idea that salah's core purpose is spiritual engagement.

## Legal and Spiritual Parallels

Imam Al-Ghazali draws parallels between salah and other acts of worship:

- **Oaths and Accountability:**
  - An unmindful person uttering an oath is not held accountable. Similarly, prayer without mindfulness holds no weight, as its true essence lies in intentional engagement.
- **Physical Movements:**
  - Salah is not just about moving the body but about disciplining the soul. For example, the legal concession (*rukhsah*) for those unable to perform physical movements indicates that salah's core essence transcends physicality.

## The Grave Consequences for Those Who Do Not Pray

### Categories of People Who Abandon Salah

#### 1. Denying Salah as Obligatory

- Such individuals reject salah as a pillar of Islam, which places them in a state of disbelief (*kufr*).
- **Important Note:** Declaring someone a *kafir* requires a formal process, and individuals lack the authority to make this judgment unilaterally.
- This category is rare, as most people who deny the obligation of salah openly dissociate from Islam.

#### 2. Neglecting Salah Out of Laziness or Heedlessness

- These individuals acknowledge salah's obligation but fail to perform it due to negligence or lack of proper upbringing.
- **Scholarly Opinions on Such Neglect:**
  - Some scholars classify this as *kufr*.
  - Others view it as a grave sin requiring a severe punishment

- (e.g., imprisonment or, historically, capital punishment).
- *Hudood* (Islamic punishments) are rarely applied due to stringent evidentiary requirements.

## Evidences Highlighting the Importance of Salah

### • Qur'an

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

*"What led you to the Hell-fire? They will say: We were not of those who prayed." (Surah Al-Muddaththir: 42-43)*

- This verse explicitly links the neglect of salah to punishment in Hell.

### • Hadith

*"The covenant that stands between us and them is the Salah; whoever abandons it has committed disbelief." (An-Nasa'i)*

- The hadith underscores the distinction of salah as a defining feature of a Muslim.

### • Consensus of the Companions

- It was reported that the Sahabah unanimously agreed that abandoning salah was the only action equated with disbelief.
- Abdullah ibn Mas'ood stated:

*"The person who neglects or abandons prayer, as if they do not have any deen."*

## Al-Ghazali's Reflections on Salah

### • Beyond Physical Movements

- Imam Al-Ghazali argued that the seriousness of abandoning salah indicates that it is not merely a physical act.
- He compared salah to *udhiyyah* (sacrificial slaughter), where Allah values *taqwa* (piety) over the outward action:

لَنْ يَتَنَا اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَتَالَهُ التَّقْوَى

*"It is not their meat or blood that reaches Allah, but it is your piety that reaches Him." (Surah Al-Hajj: 37)*

- **The Role of Khushoo' (Focus and Humility) in Salah**
  - Some early scholars, including the Sahabah and Tabi'een, held that salah without *khushoo'* is invalid.
  - Definitions of *khushoo'*:
    - A state of complete focus where one is unaware of surroundings.
    - Lack of *khushoo'* may indicate an incomplete connection with Allah.
- **Critique of Fiqh-Only Approaches**
  - Al-Ghazali emphasized integrating fiqh (legal rulings) with inward spirituality.
  - Jurists focus on outward acts, while scholars of the heart address internal dimensions like *khushoo'*.
- **Balancing Fatwa and Taqwa**
  - **Fatwa:** The minimum requirements for salah to be valid.
  - **Taqwa:** Striving for perfection in salah, including achieving *khushoo'*.
  - Al-Ghazali encouraged believers to reflect on both, aiming for greater piety and devotion.

## Conclusion

Imam Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the inward state of the heart (*khushoo*) is essential to the validity and acceptance of salah. Without mindfulness and understanding, prayer becomes an empty ritual rather than a transformative act of worship. *Khushoo* elevates salah from mere motions to a profound connection with Allah, fulfilling its ultimate objective of spiritual submission and humility. Salah comprises both a body (physical acts) and a soul (inner focus and sincerity). Neglecting either diminishes its essence. Al-Ghazali concluded that while the legal minimum suffices for validity, the true value of salah lies in its ability to connect the worshipper's heart with Allah, driven by *taqwa* and *khushoo'*.