

Salute the King & Expel the Intruder

Now you have officially entered Salah when you proclaimed “Allahu Akbar”. You lower your gaze to the place of your Sujood [prostration] and you now place your hands right over left and close to your heart/lower chest. Why? Imagine that you have walked into a royal palace and you enter upon a group of people standing in the distance. Some in the group fix their gaze boldly at you with their arms comfortably at their sides. The other group stands with their gaze to the ground and their hands clasped in front of them.

Just from the way they stand; you will easily be able to distinguish the royalty from the palace servants, wouldn't you? It is not befitting of us, as servants, but to stand in a position of humility when we face Our Lord. It is humbling when we remember who we really are before Him.

But let us remember that the humility due to Allah is a *dignifying* humility because, in essence, it liberates us from the undue humility to fellow man. As the Prophet ﷺ said, “*The one who humbles himself before Allah is elevated [by Allah] in honor!*”

It is only proper now, to salute The King:

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ وَتَبَارَكَ اسْمُكَ وَتَعَالَى جَدُّكَ وَلَا إِلَهَ غَيْرُكَ

“How perfect You are O Allah, praise be to You. Blessed is Your name and lofty is Your position and non has the right to be worshiped except You.”¹

There are several salutes to choose from which the Prophet has taught us. Each one adds a unique aspect to our prayer. Varying our salute with each prayer aids in better focus and concentration during these sacred moments.

Expelling the intruder:

As you stand in Allah's hands, during such sacred moments, during such a grand encounter, no one is more envious of you now than Satan. So his mission is to steal every sweet moment you might have with The One you love, to steal every reward! So that you will finish your prayer, but only 1/3rd or 1/9th or 1/10th has been accepted, or 1/5th since the sobering reality of the

¹ Transliterated: “*Subhanak Allahumma wa bibamdika wa tabarak kasmuka wata'la jadduka wa la ilaha ghayruk.*”

matter is: *Only the parts of Salah you are mindful of are accepted by Allah.* [One will come on the Day of Judgment with over 90 years of Salah under his belt, but to his devastating surprise, only 6 years will have been recorded to his name, or 5, or 4.]

It is because of Satan that we begin to drift. Do you not notice that every worldly thought, matter, issue, predicament suddenly makes its way to your thoughts in Salah? Items you have lost for days or months are suddenly remembered and maybe even found! Even the designs on the prayer rug start to tell all sorts of entertaining stories! What do you do? You try to fight him and refocus. But he comes back. You fight him again. He comes back like a fly that will not leave you alone.

What is the solution for we are so weak!? We seek the help of our *Beloved* from the evils of His creatures. With *His Name* is barakah! [blessing] With *His Name* is total protection from all harm. Thus, before we proceed in our prayer any further, we formally express with confidence:

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

“I seek Allah’s protection from Satan the accursed”.²

Feel its power as you say it!

The Essence and Heart of Salah

It was common that when the time for prayer came, the Prophet ﷺ would turn to Bilal [whose duty was to call out the Adhan – the call to prayer] and say, “*Relieve us with it, O Bilal*”. In other words, make the call, Bilal, for what will lighten our heavy burdens and will soothe and comfort us. For when the Prophet was troubled with a difficult matter or much worry, he would turn to prayer. After all, doesn’t Allah say: “*and seek [Allah’s] help with patient perseverance and prayer*”³

Every people have their own method of seeking comfort, relaxation and escape. Some use music, some use exercises like Yoga, and some unfortunately-alcohol. But for us Muslims, we attain the benefits of all of the above and

² Transliterated: “*Aoothu billabi mina-shaitan arrajeem.*”

³ Surah al-Baqarah 2:45.

more, from Salah. We resort to the source of all solutions and the source of all peace and relief, *Our Beloved, Our Creator*.

Now we have guarded ourselves from Satan's ways and ready to enter upon the most sacred part of our Salah, the essence of it all...*The Fatihah!* The greatest Surah in the Quran! The segment of Salah without which you cannot have prayed and your prayer would be nullified. The segment where Allah actually answers back to us at every verse! How can we ever drift in this part of the prayer?

But first, let us remind ourselves. Again, what brought us to stand here right now? Oh yes, our endless love and deep longing to be with Allah. And 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 ar-Rahman ar-Rabeem*" [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..*"⁴ 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 and always keep in mind that when we thank anyone in this world, we are in fact, thanking Allah Himself. He is the ultimate source, isn't He? 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.

A Journey Beyond Our Limits

⁴ Surah al-Hashr 59:24.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds”⁵

So with “*Alhamdulillah*”, we have affirmed Allah’s ultimate perfection and thanked Him for all that we are and *all that He is*. Now, most of us have received that Power Point email which zooms us out in powers of 10 from the cell world of a tiny plant leaf...all the way out to the planets, stars and galaxies that make up what lies beyond our planet earth, in this breathtaking universe! Now instead of starting out with that small leaf, start the zoom out process with the image of yourself as you stand before Allah in Salah. As you ponder over this image, think first of all of the physiological systems within your own body running in beautiful order to sustain you [blood system, immune system, nervous system, hormones, heart beats, respiration, firing neurons, skin cells, liver cells, spleen, kidneys, etc]. Move out now to what’s around you. The marvels of our plant world, the animal world, the seven seas, the insect world, the microbial world. Further out to what surrounds you. The miraculous precision of the planets and our sun - our solar system, our galaxy. Further out still to the infinite star constellations, nebulas, galaxies. Now what about the world of the unseen? The world of the angels, the jinn and whatever life that lies out there that we have not been able to reach.

This may not be the end of it, but we have reached the limits of our knowledge, so start zooming back down. Back through all of that and back to where you were standing in prayer. Would you say you’re just a speck in Allah’s canvas above? Nowhere even close....You are no longer even visible in relation to the magnificent size of Allah’s universe! And imagine, this is just our heaven. The Quran tells us there are six more! And Allah presides above all of that! And He is The One and Only, orchestrating the perfect order and function of it all!

How do you feel now as you stand before Him, praising Him and speaking to Him? How do you feel now being answered by Him as you recite every ayah? Do you still have it in you to defy some of His commands? Can you imagine yourself ever daring to commit another wrong against such Majesty and Might? Against such Omnipotence and such Sovereignty? How about *against such Love*? How much love must He have for us to select us out, given our in-

⁵ Transliterated: “*Alhamdu lillabi Rabbil alameen.*”

significance in the canvas of His creation, for this beautiful exchange and these beautiful terms of endearment that are in Salah?

After all, He has blessed us with *the ability* to answer the call to prayer and stand before Him. That's an honor unlike any other! How can we not give our best? Can we ever turn our backs on prayer again knowing we are missing out on such a privilege!?

The Prophet ﷺ tries to help us understand the Grandeur before which we stand... He says ﷺ that the foot of Allah's Throne [al-Kursi] extends over the heavens and the earth.⁶ And the seven heavens in comparison to Allah's Kursi, is like a small ring cast in the spans of a desert! And The Kursi, in comparison to the Throne itself, is a measure like it!

The next time you stand for prayer, view yourself from above and far away, so you can truly taste the meanings behind "*Rabbil Aalameen*" [Lord of the worlds!]

⁶ See al-Baqarah 2:255.

