

## Salah project - Why is Salah important?

What is Salah and what does it mean?

The word Salah means 'prayer'. Salah is the second of the 5 pillars along with the Shahadah, Zakat, Sawm and Hajj. It is an act of spiritual worship that Muslims perform 5 times a day.

How Salah is performed:

When a Muslim performs Salah (prays) they do it standing on a prayer mat as if they are in the presence of Allah. They must make sure that when they stand, they face the Qiblah, this is direction towards the Ka'bah in Mecca. The position that they are standing in is called the "Qiyaam". They do this because Mecca is Muhammad's hometown where he was born and the Ka'bah is known to be the most sacred site in Islam. By doing this they feel more connected to Allah and Muhammad and it brings them closer to them spiritually. This also brings them closer to the Ummah (the Islamic community) because they are all facing the same direction at the same time. When beginning Salah, you must make your intention for it. This is called "Niyah". This is done silently in your heart, in either Arabic or in your own language. During Salah, your focus must be completely on Allah. If you are a female, you must start by raising your hands up to your shoulders and if you are a male then you must raise your hands up to your earlobes, whilst doing this you must say "Allahu Akbar", meaning "Allah is the greatest". This is known as takbiratul ihram. Once this is said, you are now in the state of ihram, therefore you must block all worldly things such as eating, drinking, talking laughing and thinking about anything else other than him. These things are forbidden. This is because when you're doing any of these things, your attention is drawn away from Allah and you are unable to fully focus on him. During Salah, you must kneel down and recite from the Quran whilst praising and glorifying Allah, whilst doing actions. These involve, folding your arms across your chest, bending over with your hands on your knees then standing up again before then kneeling prostrate on the floor. Sitting back on your heel and turning your head from side to side. These actions of movement are known as rak'ah. Once the salah is finished you must end it by silently saying "Ameen", meaning "let it be so."

Where Salah is performed:

Salah can be done anywhere, but it is most important to pray with other Muslims in a mosque. This is because when doing it at a mosque there are no distractions and everyone there is aiming for the same goal. As well as bringing you closer to Allah, this also brings you closer to the Ummah and it brings togetherness for all the people. This also relates to Hajj, how the people travel to Mecca and Medinah all wanting to achieve the same goal. Everyone is there for the same purpose.

When is Salah performed:

Salah must be performed 5 times a day. Dawn, Sun rise, during midday, after sun passes at its highest, late afternoon. This is also known as: Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib and Isha. I personally think that doing Salah 5 times a day is very important for a Muslim, especially one who is trying to build their relationship with God because they are constantly thinking about Allah. They won't forget him. By doing this it makes him a priority and it gives them self-discipline. Their connection with God becomes stronger spiritually. Makes them a better person that Allah wants them to be and prevents them from committing sin and evil.

Why is Salah performed:

Salah is performed to help a Muslim connect with Allah. It is important to perform Salah because by doing so, it cleanses your mind and soul from sin and all evil. When you commit to Salah you receive Allah's protection, and this saves you on Yawm al-din which Muslims call Judgement day. This saves you from eternal destruction in the afterlife (hell) with Satan. Muslims believe that on the day of Judgement, they will be asked whether they pray regularly which would be performing Salah; if the answer is 'yes', then they will guarantee a spot in paradise. When a Muslim performs Salah, it helps them to realise that they are all equal in the eyes of God. Salah helps to not only communicate with Allah but to also follow in the footsteps of the prophets like Muhammad. When Salah is performed, it helps a Muslim realise that they play a big part in the Muslim family (The Ummah).

Who performs Salah:

Allah commands that It is compulsory that all Muslims MUST perform Salah. Women who are pregnant or on their periods and children below the age of 12 have an exception to not do it, so therefore a family member would have to fill in for them.

Preparations for Salah:

To prepare for Salah, Muslims must proceed to a washing ritual, this is known as Wudu. Before starting wudu, you must say "Bismillah", meaning "In the name of Allah". When you start wudu, the first step is to wash your hand up to your wrists thoroughly repeating the process 3 times. You must then wash your mouth on the inside and outside gurgling with water. You must repeat this 3 times. Thoroughly. After, you must inhale water into your nose and blow out sharply, although if you are unable to do so, then wet your fingers and rub the lower part of your nose. Make sure to do this 3 times. Next, you must then wash your face thoroughly from right to left ear and from chin to hairline. Repeat the process 3 times. Then, you must wash your lower part of your arms starting from your elbows down to your wrists. Do this 3 times. Once that is done, you must then do a process of cleaning your head. In this process, you must wash the centre of your forehead from the front to back and then back to front. This can be done only once. Afterwards, you must wipe your ears, inside and out making sure to wipe the back of your ears too. This may also be done just once. Lastly, wash your feet. Make sure to wash up to your ankles and get in between each individual toe starting with your right foot to your left foot. This may also be done 3 times. You must also make sure that what you wear cover the Awrah. The awrah is the intimate parts of the body. For a female the awrah is all parts of the body except the hands and face; therefore, they must wear an Islamic dress covering all parts of the awrah and a hijab to cover their hair. If you are a male, the awrah is from the navel area down to your knees. Therefore, as a male, you must wear a long piece of garment covering the private area up to your ankles. They may also wear a head piece called a taqiyah. It is important how you dress when performing Salah because you want to make sure that you represent yourself well Infront of Allah/ in the eyes of Allah.