

SALAAH
is a **BLESSING**
NOT A BURDEN

BY **UMM
ZAKIYYAH**

Salaah Is
a Blessing,
Not a Burden

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Author's Note



This book, along with its corresponding course, initially began as a compilation of the notes and reflections from a live webinar I hosted entitled “Salaah, a Blessing, Not a Burden,” held on the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah 1441, corresponding to July 29th, 2020. Thus, the project was initially intended as a supplement to the course and coursebook entitled *Come Back To Allah, Dear Soul* via uzhearthub.com. However, as I began to compile the notes, a new course and book emerged.

At the heart of this book and corresponding course is the spiritual message that mirrors the one shared in the original Salaah course and book: *There is no salvation or spiritual health without the Salaah.*

Salaah is the second pillar of Islam after the *shahaadah*, the formal testimony of faith wherein a person bears witness that nothing has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone and that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is His last and final prophet and messenger. Specifically, Salaah refers to the five foundational prayers of the Muslim—*Fajr*, *Dhuhr*, *‘Asr*, *Maghrib*, and *Tshaa*—as well as any voluntary formal prayer such as *Witr*, *Qiyaam al-Layl*, or any of the other Sunnah prayers that complement the obligatory Salaah.

This book discusses the pivotal role that Salaah holds in the Muslim’s spiritual life, as well as its numerous blessings. I give a glimpse into these innumerable blessings here. This book further serves as a reminder that the central spiritual role of the five foundational prayers in our *deen*—our spiritual way of life—is second to only *Tawheed* (the Oneness of Allah) itself, as the five pillars of our faith demonstrate

quite clearly. Therefore, the role that Salaah holds for both the salvation of our souls in the Hereafter and our spiritual health in this world cannot and should not be trivialized.

In this book, I offer one humble effort in enumerating ten (10) of the immeasurable blessings that our lives and hearts enjoy when we fully embrace Salaah as the spiritual foundation of our *emaan*—the single most significant manifestation of true faith in the believer’s heart. I pray that you find in this compilation both inspiration and benefit during your brief sojourn in this world.

May Allah make the Salaah a source of joy and tranquility for you until you meet Him, and may He write you down amongst His most beloved and sincere companions of Salaah and Qur’an in this world and in the Hereafter.

Your sister in faith,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ummi', written in a cursive style.

May 5th, 2021

23rd of Ramadan, 1442 AH

*“O dear soul who rushes through Prayer,
Is there somewhere you absolutely must go...
Other than Jannah?”*
—from the journal of Umm Zakiyyah



Part One

Why Salaah Feels Burdensome



1

Showing Up Empty



When I was struggling to hold on to my *emaan*, I used to dread when it was time to pray. Just mustering the strength to perform *wudhoo'* and stand for Salaah felt so overwhelming. There were moments that I would even crawl to the Salaah because I felt so depressed and unmotivated to pray. So, whenever I found myself standing (or sitting) for prayer, my heart wasn't really in it, and deep inside, I felt spiritually empty.

As I recited *Al-Faatihah* (the first *soorah* of the Qur'an) and fulfilled the other requirements of Salaah, I was just going through the motions. Nevertheless, though I didn't really want to, I kept showing up for Salaah day after day. I told myself that an empty, ritualistic prayer was better than no prayer at all. And based on what I've known for quite some time regarding the weightiness of Salaah in the Muslim's life, I was right.

However, at the time, reminding myself of the religious significance of Salaah did little to nourish my spiritual wounds. More significantly, it did little to make me feel connected to my Rabb in any meaningful way. Yet it was this spiritual connection that my heart ached for during this difficult time. But instead, while offering my half-hearted prayers, I felt like Salaah was just a weighty burden that I had to fulfill because I wanted to be counted as a Muslim.

It was during this time of emotional pain and spiritual emptiness that I wrote a personal note in my journal that continues to motivate and inspire me till today:

*Struggling in your ʿamaan? Do you feel dead inside when you
pray, make duʿaa, or read Qurʿan?*

Remember this: It's okay to show up empty.

Just be sure to show up.

*And your Lord will fill your heart with the spiritual fuel it
needs, eventually.*

But you have to show up.

Show up to prayer.

Show up to duʿaa.

Show up to Qurʿan.

Just the act of showing up is a powerful act of faith.

Allah will take care of the rest.

The truth is, no matter how empty or overwhelmed we feel at times, Salaah is an immense mercy and blessing from Allah. However, for the struggling believer, acknowledging this spiritual reality does little to lighten the burden of Salaah on the heart. This is why, for so many of us, Salaah continues to feel burdensome even when we mentally understand its merciful significance in our faith.

But why?

2

Are You Nourishing Your Spiritual Veins?



When seeking the answer to why Salaah can feel so burdensome even with knowledge of its merciful significance, here's something we can reflect on: After the *shahaadah* itself, Salaah is the primary source of spiritual life for the believer. This source of life is comparable to how after oxygen in the lungs, water is the primary source of physical life for the human being. Therefore, if we are deprived of any crucial aspects of the Salaah within our hearts, then it is like we are being deprived of the minimal amount of water we need in our bodies to avoid physical dehydration—and in the case of our hearts, we are becoming spiritually dehydrated.

In other words, whenever Salaah begins to feel overwhelming and burdensome for us, then our spiritual veins are “thirsty” and in need of vital nourishment to strengthen the heart. And we get this nourishment from striving to connect to our Rabb each day—even when we feel unmotivated—through continuing to show up for Salaah despite feeling spiritually empty.

During this time of emotional overwhelm and spiritual emptiness, we might begin to ask ourselves, “What’s the point?” This is a question that my struggling heart battled during some of my lowest points. And the truth is, the struggle is real, so there really isn’t any one answer that will “magically” heal our hearts and make us suddenly feel motivated to pray. Moreover, even when our mind

understands the “theoretical” reasons why we pray, our heart is not always open, ready, or strong enough to accept it.

Nevertheless, I’ll share something that I reminded myself and my sisters and brothers in faith some time ago, and I pray the reminder benefits each of us on our spiritual journeys: *So many of us abandon our worship—our spiritual fuel—when we feel empty. But would you abandon going to the fuel (petrol) station if your car was on “E”? Emptiness is a sign that you need that fuel most.*

3

Spiritual Dehydration



If you ask anyone about the importance of hydrating the body with water or having access to clean water each day, they would almost certainly affirm that fresh, unpolluted water is an absolute necessity. They would also almost certainly affirm that without this water hydrating your veins each day, you would die. Furthermore, many would affirm that water is so vital to our bodies that it is more essential than food, because our bodies need much more water than food.

Nevertheless, despite our widespread knowledge about the necessity of water, it is not uncommon for us to neglect drinking the minimum amount of water we need for optimal physical health. Moreover, so many of us consume much more food than water, and we continuously drink beverages that are bad for our health, even as we have fresh drinking water all around us. It is indeed ironic that this neglect of our health is most common in regions of the world where we have access to clean water every single day.

Dehydration of the Body

When our bodies do not intake as much water as we need, we suffer from dehydration, which if left untreated, can lead to death. Symptoms of dehydration include dizziness, body weakness, muscle cramps, headaches, and poor urine output. The last symptom is a sign that our body is not healthily cleansing itself and expelling harmful toxins. In

combination, all of these symptoms are serious red flags that the life of our physical body is in danger.

At the moment of dehydration, it is not uncommon for a person to feel unmotivated to do the things they would normally do throughout the day, even important tasks that include self-care and caring for vulnerable loved ones who depend on them.

When we are in a state of dehydration, it can become difficult to function, to think clearly, or to even muster the energy to properly hydrate the body and do what it needs to survive. Sometimes we end up in a clinic or hospital with IV (intravenous) fluids being forced into our veins as a desperate attempt to save our life.

During moments of dehydration, we might mentally know what we need to do for self-care and hydration. However, due to the harm that the dehydration has caused us, we quite likely do not have the physical or mental energy to take care of ourselves properly. Consequently, self-care and even proper hydration can feel burdensome.

This feeling of overwhelm in no way indicates that we actually view water itself as an inherent burden to our bodies and lives. It just means that our dehydration has sapped so much of our physical and mental energy that we need a bit of encouragement, beneficial reminders, physical assistance with hydration and self-care, or even medical intervention until we have regained our physical and mental strength.

Spiritual Dehydration

Similarly, when begin to feel that the Salaah is a burden, we are undergoing a form of spiritual dehydration that affects our hearts and souls similar to how physical dehydration affects our bodies and physical strength. In this state, we can know that the Salaah—like water with our physical health—

will cleanse spiritually damaging toxins from our hearts and souls, but we might lack the health and vigor to do what's necessary to properly hydrate our spiritual veins.

Meanwhile, like water in our physical nourishment, Salaah itself remains a tremendous blessing and an essential form of spiritual nourishment or “hydration” to the soul. Unfortunately, however, when we are spiritually dehydrated, our hearts and minds begin to lose the spiritual strength to consciously experience Salaah as the immeasurable mercy and blessing that it is.

4

Help Them Suffer Dehydration?



In the course *Come Back To Allah, Dear Soul*, I discuss a concept that I call *compassionate misguidance*. This term refers to any damaging spiritual advice that is intended to show compassion and encouragement to those who are struggling with the foundational prayers, but is in reality rooted in concepts that harm our souls and exacerbate our “spiritual dehydration,” despite the (likely) good intentions of the advisor.

One of the most spiritually harmful examples of compassionate misguidance is telling a person that it’s okay if they feel too weak, too depressed, or too lazy to pray; and that they can just wait until they feel spiritually strong or mentally motivated before resuming the Salaah. Or they tell them that it’s okay to neglect prayers on a regular basis, or to pray only one pray a day, if that’s all they feel motivated to do.

In other words, in the name of compassion and empathy, these “compassionate advisors” encourage a soul already suffering from spiritual dehydration to dehydrate their souls even more. In this, they are pushing an already dying, suffering soul to exacerbate their condition by depriving themselves of the single most crucial source of life that will rejuvenate them and restore their spiritual health.

Figuratively speaking, these compassionate advisors do this because they believe that advising a person in the throes of dehydration to patiently lift their head to take a sip of water or to patiently withstand the discomfort of an IV

needle being placed in their arm to save their life, is being unkind and judgmental, or “too strict” and extreme.

They feel that the “judgmental person” putting water to someone’s lips or an IV in their veins to save them doesn’t understand what the dehydrated person is going through. In this way, these “compassionate advisors” accuse the very one who is saving this person’s life of being too ignorant, insensitive, or arrogant to just leave the dehydrated person alone. Thus, in the minds of these compassionate advisors, what is healthiest and most helpful for the dehydrated person is to just leave them alone and watch them die.

They claim that this passive, “compassionate” approach is most necessary if the energy required to hydrate the person—or if the instructions that encourage them to hydrate themselves—inspires even the slightly discomfort or pain. As a result, they intentionally abandon this person in their most desperate time of need.

These advisors defend themselves by claiming that spiritual death is exponentially better than the dying person *ever* feeling any irritation, discomfort, or pain in the process of someone trying to save their life.

They Both Need Help

Undoubtedly, those who assign themselves to the role of compassionate supporter to someone suffering spiritual dehydration and then proceed to merely watch them die—and do nothing except actively stop those who are trying to save their life—are themselves suffering from a spiritual ailment that needs treatment. This spiritual ailment might be sincere, misguided ignorance; or it could be a spiritual disease of the heart wherein they (consciously or unconsciously) dislike what Allah loves and loves what He dislikes.

Either way, intervention is needed to help them understand that they are harming themselves and others. The intervention that “compassionate advisors” need is just as crucial as the intervention that the spiritually dehydrated person needs, as both are spiritually unwell, and critically so. In fact, the person calling to compassionate misguidance is suffering a more serious spiritual ailment than mere dehydration, as their spiritual health issue has reached such a toxic level that their hearts and minds are “nourished” by actively seeking others’ spiritual dehydration and, thus, their ultimate spiritual death.

In this way, the misguided compassionate advisor is like a person suffering addiction to drugs or alcohol who feels most at ease not only when harming their own bodies with these destructive toxins, but also when inviting friends and loved ones to join in. In this, they are like someone who genuinely views sober, healthy people as missing out on the “joys of life,” so they make it their mission to make sure everyone around them has a “happy and fun” life.

In other words, their entire philosophy of life is a damaging form of hedonism, which is the ideology that pleasure or happiness is the sole purpose of life. And since drugs and alcohol are (in their minds) the chief sources of pleasure and happiness in life, these addicts see it as their “duty” to ensure that everyone they come in contact with “enjoys” drugs and alcohol, too.

In the spiritual realm, compassionate advisors are hedonists with regards to spirituality just as these “social addicts” are hedonists with regards to drugs and alcohol. In their life of spiritual hedonism, they genuinely imagine that the entire purpose of spirituality is to feel pleasure and happiness every moment of your life—even if the path you take to achieve it can almost certainly ensure your death.

Figuratively speaking, the spiritual hedonist who identifies as Muslim genuinely believes that a dying person avoiding the physical discomfort of lifting his (or her) head or withstanding the poke of a needle while he is already in pain and discomfort, is more crucial than assisting him in doing what is necessary to save his life.

So, naturally, just as the addicts who see their habitual drug or alcohol use as a good thing would never support drug intervention programs or groups like AA (alcoholics anonymous), spiritual hedonists who identify as Muslim would never support spiritual interventions aimed at saving a Muslim's spiritual life, at least not unless they can be absolutely sure that every aspect of this intervention will make the person "happy." Yet their hedonistic ideology just points to their own urgent need for spiritual intervention themselves.

5

Getting Spiritually Hydrated



It is undeniable that the only way to address physical dehydration is to hydrate the body with water so that the hydration reaches the veins of the body as soon as possible. Similarly, the only way to address spiritual dehydration is to hydrate the soul with Salaah so that the hydration reaches the spiritual “veins” of the heart as soon as possible. In both cases of dehydration, whether physical or spiritual, how a person mentally or emotionally *feels* about hydrating their body or soul is irrelevant to the urgency of them actually getting hydrated.

At the moment of dehydration, the most urgent matter is to rehydrate oneself and then commit to a daily regimen of hydration to prevent recurrent dehydration in the future. Depending on the level of mental or emotional struggles the person has with daily hydration, this daily commitment to one’s health and wellness, whether physical or spiritual, can feel tremendously overwhelming and burdensome. Nevertheless, committing to the daily regimen of hydration—physically and spiritually—is an absolute necessity, as it is literally “life or death” for your body and soul.

While spiritual hydration is an absolute necessity irrespective of how we feel about that hydration, this does not mean we should ignore our feelings completely. It just means that these feelings should not prevent us from continuing to spiritually hydrate ourselves.

Furthermore, though Salaah is the most essential source of spiritual hydration after *Tawbeed* itself, this does not mean that praying Salaah should be our *only* means of addressing our spiritual dehydration. Undoubtedly, underlying issues like mental health conditions, unresolved emotional trauma, and unhealed spiritual wounding directly affect our spiritual health and thus can disrupt our ability to feel fully hydrated through the Salaah.

For this reason, when Salaah feels continuously burdensome, it is crucial that we supplement our worship with proper mental healthcare, emotional healing, and seeking to understand and address our underlying spiritual wounding. What this particular aspect of spiritual hydration will look like will vary from person to person, but for each of us, this personalized self-care is essential to our soul-care.

Allah Knows What You're Going Through

In the Qur'an, our Merciful Creator lets us know that He knows our struggles, and He acknowledges how emotionally heavy and burdensome they sometimes feel. In His immeasurable knowledge and wisdom, He also gives us the formula for seeking help in getting the holistic rehydration that our hearts and souls need, despite how overwhelming this lifestyle of spiritual health and emotional wellness can feel at times.

He says,

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ إِنَّهَا كَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

This *ayah* has been translated to mean,

“And seek help in *Sabr* (patiently persevering upon what nourishes the soul and betters one’s life) and the

Salaah, and truly it is extremely heavy and hard except for the *Khaashi'oon* (the humbly submissive)”

(*Al-Baqarah*, 2:45).

So often the term *sabr* is translated as simply *patience*. However, *sabr* actually refers to a lifestyle of soul care and self-care, whether one is enjoying times of ease and happiness or suffering times of difficulty and distress. Inherent in the definition of *sabr* is persevering upon this lifestyle of spiritual, personal, and emotional wellness even when it is difficult, as discussed in the definition below.

Sabr As Spiritual Hydration

Specifically, *sabr* means two things: (1) patiently persevering upon what nourishes the soul and betters our life, even when we feel emotionally weak and overwhelmed (or mentally burdened and exhausted); and (2) patiently persevering upon withholding ourselves from doing anything that harms our soul or practical life, even when we feel inclined to or tempted toward a path of self-harm, whether spiritually, personally, or emotionally.

Additionally, with respect to both of these aspects of the definition, *sabr* means seeking the proper help from our Creator while also utilizing the merciful resources He's given us through His creation that support us on the path to optimal spiritual health, emotional wellness, and personal life betterment.

Also inherent in the definition of *sabr* is to continuously seek repentance when (not *if*) we sin or fall short in our efforts, and to subsequently return to a lifestyle of soul nourishment and personal improvement no matter how many times we have to get back up when we fall and no matter how many times we have to “start over” when we deviate from the right path.

As it relates to Salaah in particular, *sabr* means committing to a daily lifestyle of giving the heart and soul at least the bare minimum hydration they need for spiritual survival. As aforementioned, spiritually speaking, after *Tawbeed* itself, the bare minimum hydration that the soul needs is patiently nourishing the heart with the five foundational prayers, no matter how emotionally or mentally burdensome this spiritual rehydration feels.

6

Salaah As Tawheed of the Limbs



We know that the five foundational prayers reflect the bare minimum spiritual hydration that our souls need because this is what we are taught in the *Kitaab* (the Book of Allah) and the *Hikmah* (the divinely inspired prophetic teachings). The divine evidences that establish the absolute spiritual necessity of Salaah are too numerous for this context. However, for the sake of clarity, I will mention one evidence from the *Kitaab* and one evidence from the *Hikmah*.

In the Surah (divine chapter) of Qur'an entitled *Al-Muddaththir*, Allah gives us a glimpse of what will happen in the Hereafter with regards to the believers and disbelievers. In one set of *ayaat*, He shares with us a conversation between the people of Paradise and the people of Hellfire. When the people of Hellfire are asked what caused them to enter it, the very first reason they mention is that they were not of those who prayed. Allah says,

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

إِلَّا أَصْحَابَ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٣٩﴾

فِي جَنَّاتٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

عَنِ الْمَجْرِمِينَ ٤١

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ ٤٢

قَالُوا لَوْلَا آتَيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ ٤٣

These *ayaat* have been translated to mean:

“Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained. Except the companions of the right, [who will be] in gardens, questioning each other, about the criminals, [and asking them], ‘What put you into *Saqar* (Hellfire)?’ They will say, ‘We were not of those who prayed...”

(Al-Muddaththir, 74:38-42).

In further emphasizing Salaah as a bare minimum necessity for the soul’s spiritual survival, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “What is between a person and committing *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) and *kufr* (disbelief) is abandoning the Salaah” (Sahih Muslim).

As I discuss in the Salaah coursebook and course videos for *Come Back To Allah, Dear Soul*: While the *shahaadah* is *Tawheed* of the heart and tongue, Salaah is the most foundational manifestation of the *Tawheed* of the limbs.

Tawheed in Our Hearts and Lives

In Islam, the term *Tawheed* refers to authentic monotheism as reflected in the Oneness of Allah. When *Tawheed* enters

the heart, spiritually speaking, it is manifested in three comprehensive ways:

- (1) sincere belief in Allah alone as our Rabb (Guardian Lord) who is the Creator, Owner, and Manager of all that exists, whether seen or unseen.
- (2) singling out Allah alone in our worship and ultimate obedience; having in our hearts sincere love, hope, and fear of Allah in a way that transcends how we experience these same feelings with respect to any of His creation; and trusting in the guidance and teachings of Allah over all other ideologies and systems of guidance such that our hearts are fully content with Allah as the ultimate authority in our spiritual, personal, and community life.
- (3) believing in the divine Oneness and Uniqueness of all of Allah's Names and Attributes while assigning none of His Names or Attributes to any of His creation (and while assigning none of His creation's attributes to Him); affirming everything that Allah says about Himself without anthropomorphic assumptions that inspire figurative interpretations of divine attributes that are incomprehensible to the fallible human mind; and never allowing the mind or heart to deny, change, or reinterpret the apparent meaning what Allah says about Himself, even when that apparent meaning isn't apparent to us.

As it relates to its practical manifestation in the believer's life, every aspect of *Tawheed* discussed above can be summarized into three categories: belief, speech, and action. Alternatively, its manifestation can be explained through two simple categories: internal manifestation of *Tawheed* and external manifestation of *Tawheed*.

The most basic and essential internal manifestation of *Tawheed* is *emaan* (sincere faith) itself, which is reflected in a heart that is free from any *shirk* or *kufir*. After reciting the *shahaadah* itself, the most basic and essential external manifestation of *Tawheed* is establishing the Salaah, the five foundational prayers, every day without fail until we are lowered beneath the ground.

In this way, after sincere belief in the Oneness of Allah, Salaah is the most essential spiritual hydration for the soul and thereby preserves *Tawheed* in the believer's heart.

If we go back to the analogy of physical life and health, we can understand the *shahaadah* as the oxygen in our lungs and establishing the Salaah as the water in our veins. If you deprive the body or soul of either source of life, death is inevitable. That is, unless you restore air to the lungs and water to the veins—i.e. *emaan* to the heart and prayer to the limbs—before the soul leaves the body.

7

Too Far To Walk?



Before discussing the numerous benefits of the Salaah, one final reflection we can consider in seeking to understand what is happening when Salaah feels burdensome (and we thus feel unmotivated to pray) is this hypothetical scenario:

Imagine you've lost all your wealth and your home, and you and your family are now living on the streets. Each day, you live in agony, having no idea where your next meal will come from, where you will sleep at night, or how you and your family will be safe from the heat or cold—or from the vicious criminals that roam the streets each night.

Then one day, someone walks up to you and tells you that an anonymous person has given you and your family one million dollars, and all you have to do is go to the nearest bank and pick it up. They tell you that you can use the money to purchase any comfortable, safe home that you like and to buy meals for yourself and your family each day. They also tell you that not only do you *not* have to pay this person back, but also that if you continue to use the money to support yourself and your family, this person will continue to deposit money into your account for as long as you live.

Imagine how ecstatic, relieved, and grateful you would feel at that moment.

But now imagine that after the initial moment of excitement passes, you begin to mentally calculate how to get to the nearest bank, which is three blocks away. Concerned, you realize that you don't have a car, so you have

no choice but to walk there to pick up the generous donation.

Logically speaking, this isn't an extremely long walk, and you know this. But still, you think of how exhausted you already feel from living on the streets and going hungry each day. You think of how mentally spent you feel at just the thought of facing another day. You then recall how your legs ache each day due to the excessive walking you already do just to survive.

Now you begin to feel overwhelmed and stressed about picking up the check because, quite frankly, you just don't feel like going through the mental, emotional, and physical discomfort that the walk requires from you. So you begin to complain to your family about having to walk "all the way" to the bank to pick up that check. You openly ask why this so-called "generous donor" decided to put the check "in some faraway bank" and not directly in your hands. "If they were *truly* generous," you say, "I wouldn't even have to *go* anywhere to pick it up in the first place. They would be compassionate enough to just bring it to me. Can't they see all the stress I'm under?"

Then finally you say to yourself, *I'm not going to pick up that check because walking three blocks is just too far for me, given how exhausted and overwhelmed I already feel.*

So, in that moment, you are willing to continue living in poverty and desperation, to continue suffering potential starvation and dehydration, and to continue subjecting yourself and your family to fear, crime, and danger. All because in your mental and emotional overwhelm, you feel that patiently withstanding the physical and mental discomfort of walking the three blocks—which would literally solve *all* of your immediate problems—simply is not worth the stress.

Does this mindset make any sense to you? If your answer is no—as I’m sure it most certainly would be—then consider this reality: It makes *more* sense to think this way than to view Salaah as a burden.

In other words, it is more sensible—and less harmful, in fact—to refuse to pick up that check due to your personal struggles than to refuse to pray Salaah due to feeling burdened and overwhelmed. Why?

Let’s look at just a small portion of the numerous mercies and blessings of Salaah, as expounded in the next section. Then *bi’idhnillaah*, this glimpse into the immeasurable *rahmah* of formal prayer will help us understand how Salaah is exponentially more valuable and essential to our life than any physical comfort, success, or wealth in this world.

Part Two
Mercies and Blessings of Salaah



Blessing 1

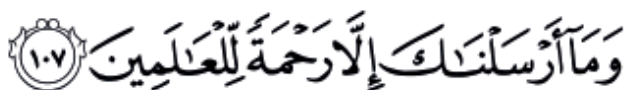
Salaah Reflects the Essential Mercy of Our Deen



In the Qur'an, Allah teaches us that He has perfected our religion for us, has completed His favor upon us, and has chosen for us Islam as our *deen*, our spiritual way of life. In this excerpt of a longer *ayah*, Allah says what has been translated to mean, **“This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your *deen*”** (*Al-Maa'idah*, 5:3).

In explaining the foundations of this spiritual favor from our Rabb (our Merciful Creator), Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, “Islam is built on five [pillars]: testifying that nothing has the right to be worshipped except Allah alone and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; establishing the Salaah; paying the *zakat* (obligatory charity); making Hajj to the House (i.e. the *Ka'bah* in Makkah); and fasting in Ramadan” (Bukhari and Muslim).

Regarding the essence of this *deen*, Allah explains to Prophet Muhammad the purpose of his prophetic mission, in which he was sent as the last prophet and messenger to humankind until the Day of Judgment. Allah says,



This *ayah* has been translated to mean, **“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds”** (*Al-Anbiyaa*, 21:107).

From this *ayah*, along with numerous other divine evidences from the *Kitaab* and *Hikmah*, we learn that the essence of *rahmah* (i.e. divine mercy and compassion) is at the heart of our *deen*. Therefore, every pillar of Islam is a direct reflection of this spiritual and practical *rahmah*, which has been gifted to us by our Merciful Rabb.

In other words, as it pertains to Salaah in particular, since the guidance that the Prophet ﷺ brought from Allah is at its root a mission of mercy to all of creation, then the second pillar of this spiritual guidance must be a direct reflection of that *rahmah*—that divine mercy. In the following chapters, *bi'idbnillaah*, these numerous blessings will be enumerated, thereby further illustrating the immeasurable mercy that we have in the Salaah.

Soul Reflections

As it relates to the blessing of Salaah that you just read about, write freely from your heart. Or respond to this journal prompt: When you reflect on the ayah about Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) being sent as a mercy to all the worlds, think about the different “worlds” around you (i.e. emotional, spiritual, personal, financial, nature, etc.). What are some ways that the spiritual way of life found in the Qur’an and prophetic teachings have brought mercy and blessings to you, to your environment, or to someone you know (even if they are not Muslim)?

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Closing Notes

Affirmations for Compassionate Presence



When I feel broken, I will pray. When I feel weak, I will pray. When I feel empty, I will pray. Then I will trust that my Merciful Creator will write me down amongst His most beloved companions of Salaah, even if I myself feel undeserving of this honor.



I will show up for my soul, even if I show up empty, and I fully trust my Most Merciful Creator is granting me the spiritual fuel I need, even when I'm unable to perceive it.

Also By Umm Zakiyyah

If I Should Speak

A Voice

Footsteps

Realities of Submission

Hearts We Lost

The Friendship Promise

Muslim Girl

His Other Wife

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Let's Talk About Sex and Muslim Love

Reverencing the Wombs That Broke You: A Daughter of Rape and Abuse

Inspires Healing and Healthy Family

*Prejudice Bones in My Body: Essays on Muslim Racism, Bigotry and
Spiritual Abuse*

And Then I Gave Up: Essays About Faith and Spiritual Crisis in Islam

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even if. bits and pieces from the heart of Umm Zakiyyah

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He Asked About Islam

Alone, But In the Company of Your Lord

Come Back To Allah, Dear Soul: Salaah Coursebook

Dear Soul, It's Time: A Journey of Coming Back To Allah

I'm Divorced Now: Heartbreak and Healing

What Did You Expect? Lessons on Spiritual Honesty

Dear Struggling Soul: Affirmations for Spiritual Self-Compassion

Nurturing the Nafs: Emotional Honesty for the Female Soul

Learning Love: Self-Care Journal

About the Author

Known for her soul-touching books and spiritual reflections on the Qur'an and emotional healing, Umm Zakiyyah is a world-renowned author and soul-care mentor.

Umm Zakiyyah studied Arabic, Qur'an, Islamic sciences, *'aqeedah*, and *tafseer* in America, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia for more than fifteen years. She currently teaches *tajweed* (rules of reciting Qur'an), *tafseer* (explanation of the meaning of the Qur'an), and *tadabbur* (deep reflections on the Qur'an) via uzhearthub.com.

Daughter of American converts to Islam, Umm Zakiyyah (also known by her birth name Ruby Moore and her "Muslim" name Baiyinah Siddeeq) is the internationally acclaimed, award-winning author of more than twenty-five books, including novels, short stories, and self-help. Her books are used in high schools and universities in the United States and worldwide, and her work has been translated into multiple languages. Her work has earned praise from writers, professors, and filmmakers. Her novel *His Other Wife* is now a short film.

Dr. Robert D. Crane, advisor to former US President Nixon, said of Umm Zakiyyah, "...no amount of training can bring a person without superb, natural talent to captivate the reader as she does and exert a permanent intellectual and emotional impact."

Professor K. Bryant of Howard University said of *If I Should Speak*, "The novel belongs to...a genre worthy of scholarly study."

Umm Zakiyyah has a BA degree in Elementary Education, an MA in English Language Learning, and Cambridge's CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults).

In 2020, she founded an online university to share the life lessons she learned on her emotional and spiritual healing journey. For information on UZ courses, go to uzhearthub.com and uzuniversity.com

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