

# Ṣalāt al-Lail

Taken from the forthcoming book, *Weapon of the Believer*  
Translated by Saleem Bhimji  
www.al-mubin.org / al-mubin@al-mubin.org

In many of the verses of the Qur'an, the performance of Ṣalāt al-Lail and staying awake a portion of the night - after midnight - in the worship of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him) has been mentioned, of which, we present some of these verses:

﴿وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ﴾

“...and those who ask forgiveness in the morning times.”

﴿وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ﴾

“Say your special (tahajjud) prayer during some part of the night...”

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا﴾

“And they who pass the night prostrating themselves before their Lord and standing.”

﴿تَتَحَفَّى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا  
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ﴾

“Their sides draw away from (their) beds, they call upon their Lord in fear and in hope, and they spend (benevolently) out of what We have given them.”

﴿كَأَنَّهُمْ قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ  
يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾﴾

“They used to sleep but little in the night.  
And in the morning they asked forgiveness.”

The Ṣalāt al-Lail was Wājib upon the Messenger of Allāh<sup>1</sup> and no Prophet had been sent before him except that it was obligatory upon them as well.<sup>2</sup>

In the aḥādith from the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon all of them), it has been emphatically mentioned that:

1. Ṣalāt al-Lail protects one during the daytime.<sup>3</sup>
2. Ṣalāt al-Lail is a Kaffārah for the sins committed in the day.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 122

<sup>2</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 136; Tafsiṛ Al-Qummi, Pg. 701

<sup>3</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 154; Maḥāsin Barqī, Pg. 53

<sup>4</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 136

3. That house in which Ṣalāt al-Lail is recited beams with light for those who are in the heavens just as the stars beam with light for those who are on earth.<sup>5</sup>

4. The great and noble people of our nation are those who are protectors of the Qur'an and who stay awake the night in worship.<sup>6</sup>

5. There are three things which raise a person's rank and station: (1) Initiating the greeting to a fellow Muslim, (2) feeding poor people, (3) Ṣalāt in the darkness of the night when all other people are busy sleeping.<sup>7</sup>

6. Ṣalāt al-Lail makes one's face beautiful; beautifies one's etiquette; gives a pleasant smell to one's body and increases one's daily sustenance. It also removes sorrow and grief and gives strength to the eyes.<sup>8</sup>

7. One who does not read the Ṣalāt al-Lail is not considered as a Shi'a of the Ahl al-Bait.<sup>9</sup>

8. One who is not able to perform the Ṣalāt al-Lail is truly a very unfortunate person.<sup>10</sup>

9. Committing sins is one of the reasons for one to be unsuccessful in the performance of Ṣalāt al-Lail.<sup>11</sup>

10. The performance of Ṣalāt al-Lail leads to gaining the pleasure of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him); love of the Angels; is the Sunnah of the Prophets; leads to the light of true recognition of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him); is the foundation of belief; tranquility of the soul; destruction of Shaitān; a weapon against one's enemies; acceptance of one's supplications; acceptance of one's actions; increases the blessings in one's sustenance; intercession when the Angel of Death comes; brightness in the grave; protects the person while in the grave; ease in the answering of the angels Munkir and Nakir and is the companion and friend in the grave.<sup>12</sup>

## Method of Reciting Ṣalāt al-Lail

Ṣalāt al-Lail is 11 Rak'at in which the first 8 Rak'at are prayed in four Ṣalāt of two Rak'at each with the intention of *Ṣalāt al-Lail* (we finish each two Rak'at of Ṣalāt off with the Salām and then start the next set of Ṣalāt until we have completed 8 Rak'at). Following this, two Rak'at would be read with the intention of Ṣalāt ash-Shaf'. Once this is recited, one Rak'at with the intention of Ṣalāt al-Witr would be recited.

<sup>5</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 161; Rawḍhatu 'l-Wai'dhin, Pg. 320

<sup>6</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 138; Amāli Shaikh Saduq, Pg. 141

<sup>7</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 141; Khīṣāl, Vol. 1, Pg. 42

<sup>8</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 86, Pg. 153; Thawāb Al-'amal, Pg. 38

<sup>9</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 162; Maqnah of Shaikh Mufid, Pg. 111

<sup>10</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 164; Ma'āni Al-Akhbār, Pg. 342

<sup>11</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 152; Tawḥīd Shaikh Saduq, Pg. 17

<sup>12</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 161; Irshād Al-Qulūb, Pg. 316

The time of Ṣalāt al-Lail is the last one third of the night.<sup>13</sup>

It is a commonly held belief that the closer that the Ṣalāt al-Lail is read to the time of Ṣalāt al-Fajr, the better it is, however, in many aḥādīth it has been mentioned that a little bit after the middle of the night, the Prophet of Islām and the A'immah (blessings of Allāh be upon all of them), performed the Ṣalāt al-Lail. The narrations that mention these are great and it is has been mentioned that this is the time when one's supplications are answered.<sup>14</sup>

However, it has also been mentioned that the Messenger of Allāh (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) used to recite the Ṣalāt al-Lail in three stages:

1. Four Rak'at after the middle of the night.
2. Four Rak'at in the last one-third of the night.
3. Three Rak'at near to the time of Fajr while performing a very long Rukū'.<sup>15</sup>

It has been narrated that when Imām 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (peace be upon him) was on his way from Madinah to Khurāsān, he first recited the Ṣalāt of Ja'far at-Ṭayyār and counted that Ṣalāt as a part of the Ṣalāt al-Lail.<sup>16</sup>

It is Mustahab that after each two Rak'at, the Tasbiḥ of Fāṭima az-Zahrā (blessings be upon her) is performed.<sup>17</sup>

In the second Rak'at of each of the two Rak'at Ṣalāt, it is Mustahab that before going into Rukū', the Qunūt is performed. It is also Mustahab that in the Qunūt, if possible, one sheds tears for the fear of Allāh and for the fear of the punishment of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him) and if one can not cry, he should at least 'pretend' to cry.<sup>18</sup>

It is Mustahab that in the first and second Rak'at of the Ṣalāt al-Lail that after Sūrah al-Fātiḥa, Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ is recited 30 times.<sup>19</sup> If one is not able to recite this, then in the first Rak'at after al-Fātiḥa, one should recite Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ and in the second Rak'at after Sūrah al-Fātiḥa, one should recite Sūrah al-Kāfirūn.

It is better that in the second Rak'at of the first Ṣalāt, Sūrah al-Muzzammil is read and in the second Rak'at of the second Ṣalāt, Sūrah an-Nabā is read. It is Mustahab that in the first Rak'at of the third Ṣalāt, Sūrah Yā Sīn is read, and in the second Rak'at (of the third Ṣalāt), Sūrah ad-Dukhān is read – alternately, one can read Sūrah Wāqiyah in place of Yā Sīn and Sūrah al-Muddathir in place of Sūrah ad-Dukhān. It is Mustahab that in the first

Rak'at of the fourth Ṣalāt, Sūrah al-Mulk is read and in the second Rak'at of the fourth Ṣalāt, Sūrah al-Insān is read.<sup>20</sup>

It has been mentioned that Imām Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Bāqir (peace be upon him) used to recite Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ in the Ṣalāt al-Shaf' and Ṣalāt al-Witr and after reciting this Sūrah, would say:

كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ رَبِّي

*"This is Allāh my Lord"*<sup>21</sup>

Recitation of Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ is counted as the recitation of one-third of the Qur'ān, thus, who ever recites this Sūrah in the three Rak'at (Ṣalāt al-Shaf' and Ṣalāt al-Witr) is as if he has recited the entire Qur'ān.<sup>22</sup>

## Qunūt of Ṣalāt al-Witr

The Ṣalāt al-Witr is one Rak'at and is the Ṣalāt and whispered supplication that completes the Ṣalāt al-Lail. As it has been mentioned in the aḥādīth, the Ṣalāt is the Me'rāj of the believer, and the Ṣalāt al-Witr is the wave that carries the believer to the higher realms. It has been specifically mentioned in the aḥādīth that, "The more a person stands while in the Ṣalāt al-Witr will have to stand less on the Day of Judgement."<sup>23</sup>

The main item that carries one during this spiritual journey is the Qunūt of the Ṣalāt al-Witr in which those who are the true servants of Allāh, spend countless hours, engrossed in supplication and tears and asking forgiveness for their sins.

The Prophet of Islām Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullah (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) has said: "Whichever of you prolongs the Qunūt in his Ṣalāt al-Witr will have more ease on the Day of Judgement."<sup>24</sup>

In the Wājib Ṣalāt, the Qunūt is in place for the servant to supplicate to his Lord however in the Ṣalāt al-Witr, it is for asking forgiveness to Allāh.<sup>25</sup>

The following verse of the Qur'ān has been constantly mentioned in the aḥādīth in reference to asking forgiveness during the Ṣalāt and especially during the Ṣalāt al-Witr:

﴿بِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ﴾

*"...and in the morning time, they used to ask for forgiveness"*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 223; Al-Hidāyah, Pg. 35

<sup>14</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 227

<sup>15</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 228

<sup>16</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 231; Uyūn Al-Akhbār ar-Riḍā, Vol. 2, Pg. 181

<sup>17</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 243

<sup>18</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 272; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 107

<sup>19</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 232

<sup>20</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 243

<sup>21</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 226; Furū' Al-Kāfi, Vol. 3, Pg. 441

<sup>22</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 86, Pg. 226; Tahdhib, Vol. 1, Pg. 171

<sup>23</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 154; Fiḥr ar-Riḍā, Pg. 1

<sup>24</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 287; Al-Faqih, Vol. 1, Pg. 308

<sup>25</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 18, Pg. 26; Al-Faqih, Vol. 1, Pg. 311

<sup>26</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 207; Illul ash-Sharā'ī, Vol. 2, Pg. 53

During the Qunūt of the Ṣalāt al-Witr, there are many supplications, which can be recited, and although it is not possible to list all of them here, we will mention the most important forms of seeking forgiveness.

At the time of asking forgiveness, one should lift his left hand for asking forgiveness and use the right hand to count the number of times<sup>27</sup> and if one uses a tasbīḥ made from the dirt of Kerbalā, then the reward of the forgiveness is increased.

It has been related that the Prophet of Islām Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullah (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) would ask forgiveness 70 times during the Ṣalāt al-Witr.<sup>28</sup>

Imām Ja far ibn Muḥammad as- ādiq (peace be upon him) has said: “Whosoever recites the following in the Ṣalāt al-Witr 70 times and continues to do so for one entire year will be counted by Allāh as a *Mustaghfirin bil ashār* or one who used to ask forgiveness during the night time and will make *Jannah Wājib* upon that person.”<sup>29</sup>

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I seek repentance from Allāh, my Lord and to Him I turn back.”

In another ḥadīth it has been mentioned that, “Whosoever says the following 100 times at the end of his Qunūt and continues to do so for fourty nights will be counted as a *Mustaghfirin bil ashār* or one who used to ask forgiveness during the night time.<sup>30</sup>

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I seek repentance from Allāh, my Lord and to Him I turn back.”

The Prophet of Islām Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullah (blessings of Allāh be upon him and his family) used to ask for forgiveness 70 times in the Qunūt of Ṣalāt al-Witr followed by reciting the below line seven times:

هَذَا مَقَامُ الْعَائِدِ بِكَ مِنَ النَّارِ

“This is the station of the person who seeks refuge with You from the Hell Fire.”<sup>31</sup>

The method of asking forgiveness as taught to us by Amir al-Mo’minin ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him) in the night as is follows:

<sup>27</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 208

<sup>28</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 121; Tahdhib, Vol. 1, Pg. 272

<sup>29</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 120; Al-Faqih, Vol. 1, Pg. 301

<sup>30</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 22; Miṣbāḥ of Kaf’ami, Pg. 53

<sup>31</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 287; Al-Faqih, Vol. 1, Pg. 301

1. Recite the following 70 times:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I seek repentance from Allāh, my Lord and to Him I turn back.”

2. Followed by reciting the following seven times:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

“I seek repentance from Allāh the One whom there is no god except Him, the Living and Self-Subsisting and to Him I turn back.”<sup>32</sup>

One of the most important acts in the Qunūt of the Ṣalāt al-Witr is supplication for forty believers (men or women) amongst one’s family, friends, those who have asked to be prayed for, the deceased and the Shi’a of Amir Al-Mo’minin ‘Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him). Whosoever does this will be assured that his supplications are answered.<sup>33</sup>

One should then say the following three hundred times:

الْعَفْوُ

“I ask for forgiveness.”

Following this, the following should be said once:

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Lord, please forgive me and have mercy upon me and turn back towards me. Verily You are the Oft-Turning back, Most Merciful”<sup>34</sup>

It has been mentioned that Imām ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusain as-Sajjād (peace be upon him) used to recite the following line three hundred times in his Qunūt during the Ṣalāt al-Witr:

الْعَفْوُ

“I ask for forgiveness.”<sup>35</sup>

Allāmah Majlisī has mentioned that the word (الْعَفْوُ) can also be recited as (الْعَفْوُ) (with a fatḥah instead of a ḍhammah) on the last letter.

\* Please do not forget this humble servant of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him) in your prayers and especially in the blessed Qunūt of the Ṣalāt Al-Lail.

<sup>32</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 308; Miṣbāḥ of Al-Kaf’ami, Page 58

<sup>33</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol., 87, Pg., 284; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 101

<sup>34</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol., 87, Pg. 275; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 101

<sup>35</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol., 87, Pg., 275; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 101

## The Concise Method of Reciting Ṣalāt al-Lail

Ṣalāt al-Lail is 11 Rak'at in which:

1. The first 8 Rak'at are prayed in four Ṣalāt of two Rak'at each with the intention of *Ṣalāt al-Lail* (after each two Rak'at, give the Salām, finish the Ṣalāt and then stand for the next set of Ṣalāt.)
2. Following this, two Rak'at would be read with the intention of Ṣalāt ash-Shaf' (this Ṣalāt is performed exactly as Ṣalātul Fajr).
3. Once this is recited, one Rak'at with the intention of Ṣalāt al-Witr would be recited. In this Ṣalāt, recite Sūrah Al-Fāṭiḥa once, Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ three times followed by Sūrah al-Falaq and Sūrah al-Nās once each.

Once this part of the Ṣalāt is finished, we raise our hands in Qunūt such that our palms are facing the sky and our hands are level with our eyes and perform the following:

### Qunūt of Ṣalāt al-Witr

1. Recite the following 70 times:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

*"I seek repentance from Allāh, my Lord and to Him I turn back."*

2. Followed by reciting the following seven times:

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

*"I seek repentance from Allāh the One whom there is no god except Him, the Living and Self-Subsisting and to Him I turn back."*<sup>36</sup>

3. One of the most important acts in the Qunūt of the Ṣalāt al-Witr is supplication for forty believers (men or women) amongst one's family, friends, those who have asked to be prayed for, the deceased and the Shī'a of Amīr Al-Mo'minīn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him). Whosoever does this will be assured that his supplications are answered.<sup>37</sup>

4. One should then say the following three hundred times:

الْعَفْوُ

*"Task for forgiveness."*

5. Following this, the following should be said once:

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَارْحَمْنِي وَتُبْ عَلَيَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ  
*"Lord, please forgive me and have mercy upon me and turn back towards me. Verily You are the Oft-Turning back, Most Merciful"*<sup>38</sup>

Please do not forget all of the believers throughout the world in your Ṣalāt al-Lail, especially those downtrodden and oppressed Muslims of Palestine, Iraq, Kashmir, Chechniya, Bosnia, and all over the globe – this humble servant of Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him) as well.

May Allāh (Glory and Greatness be to Him) hasten the advent of the 12<sup>th</sup> Imām (may Allāh hasten his return) to fill this world with justice and equality. ●

<sup>36</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol. 87, Pg. 308; Miṣbāḥ of Al-Kaf'āmī, Page 58

<sup>37</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol., 87, Pg., 284; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 10<sup>1</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Bihār Al-Anwār, Vol., 87, Pg. 275; Miṣbāḥ Al-Muttahajjid, Pg. 10<sup>1</sup>