

What is “salat”?

As we saw in the previous chapter, the common noun “islam” is not the meaningless proper name of a religion. It is an action and life direction of peacemaking that one must take. It is not some rituals that people can perform while not supporting peace and instead supporting corruption and bloodshed. Unfortunately, by turning “islam” into a meaningless proper name, the majority of people became incapable of distinguishing between the simplest of meanings. For example, while “islam” means peacemaking, the word “taslim” means submission. Many people utter the words “sala allah alayh wa sallam” (صلى الله عليه و سلم) every time the prophet is mentioned because they believe that this is what the god told them to do in 33:56. Here are some of the most widely used English translations of 33:56:

033.056

YUSUFALI: Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect (salimu taslima).

PICKTHAL: Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation (salimu taslima).

SHAKIR: Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation (salimu taslima).

As we can see, the word “taslim” in 33:56 is translated as salutation. However, by doing a simple search in the Quran, everyone can easily find the same exact word used in 4:65 to clearly mean “submission” not “salutation”.

004.065

YUSUFALI: But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction (yosalimu taslima).

PICKTHAL: But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission (yosalimu taslima).

SHAKIR: But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission (yosalimu taslima)

The search will also find the same exact word “taslim” in Chapter 33 itself just a few pages earlier in 33:22:

033.022

YUSUFALI: When the Believers saw the Confederate forces, they said: "This is what Allah and his Messenger had promised us, and Allah and His Messenger told us what was true." And it only added to their faith and their zeal in obedience (taslima).

PICKTHAL: And when the true believers saw the clans, they said: This is that which Allah and His messenger promised us. Allah and His messenger are true. It did but confirm them in their faith and resignation (taslima).

SHAKIR: And when the believers saw the allies, they said: This is what Allah and His Messenger promised us, and Allah and His Messenger spoke the truth; and it only increased them in faith and submission (taslima).

It is obvious that the word "taslim" in the Quran is used to mean "submission" and not "salutation". In fact, the same complete formula "submit with full submission" used in 4:65 is the one used in 33:56. This is why 33:56 accurately doesn't say that the god and the controllers "submit with full submission/yusalimu taslima" and this clause only applies to "O you who believe". This is due to the obvious fact that the one and only god doesn't submit to anyone.

So, according to 33:56, when people say "sala allah alayh wa salam" they are ignorantly saying that the god submits (the god be most exalted). So billions of people, including so-called scholars, have been mindlessly uttering what is essentially a gross blasphemy against the god!

What the believers were told in 33:56 is to do the same thing that the god did and in addition submit completely. The god certainly didn't go around repeating "salla allah alayh" whenever the prophet's name was mentioned. Similarly, the prophet didn't understand the same command in 9:103 to mean going around parroting "salla allah alayh" whenever the name of any of those who repented was mentioned. In fact, all the translators of 9:103 agreed and thought that it would be ridiculous for the prophet to go around parroting "salla allah alayh" every time someone's name is mentioned. So they translated the order "salli alayhim" (صَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ) as "pray for them" or "pray on their behalf".

009.103

YUSUFALI: Of their goods, take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf. Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: And Allah is One Who heareth and knoweth.

PICKTHAL: Take alms of their wealth, wherewith thou mayst purify them and mayst make them grow, and pray for them. Lo! thy prayer is an assuagement for them. Allah is Hearer, Knower.

SHAKIR: Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby, and pray for them; surely your prayer is a relief to them; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

Of course when it came to 33:56, the translators faced a dilemma since they quickly realized that it would be absurd for the god to “pray for the prophet” or “pray on his behalf”. So they translated the same exact command in 9:103 as “send blessings on the prophet” or “ask/call for blessings on the prophet” instead of “pray for the prophet” or “pray on his behalf”.

033.056

YUSUFALI: Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him, and salute him with all respect.

PICKTHAL: Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe! Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation.

SHAKIR: Surely Allah and His angels bless the Prophet; O you who believe! call for (Divine) blessings on him and salute him with a (becoming) salutation.

The translators were forced to be inconsistent due to their lack of understanding of the term “salat”. Not only have they created logical inconsistencies between 33:56 and 9:103 but they have also created internal inconsistencies in 33:56. For example, Pickthal and Shakir realized that Yusufali made a huge blunder when he said “send your blessings on him” since humans do not inherently have “blessings” that they can distribute and can only ask the god for his blessing. So Pickthal and Shakir translated the command as “ask/call for blessings on him”. However, by doing so, they created another inconsistency since the action the believers are commanded to do is literally the same exact action the god does. Certainly, the god doesn’t “ask/call for blessings”.

The translators provided the key to understanding the concept of “salat” from the Quran a few passages earlier in 33:43. The key is not in their translation of the action of “salat” but is in the effect of this action:

033.043

YUSUFALI: He it is Who sends blessings on you, as do His angels, that He may bring you out from the depths of Darkness into Light; and He is Full of Mercy to the Believers.

PICKTHAL: He it is Who blesseth you, and His angels (bless you), that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and He is ever Merciful to the believers.

SHAKIR: He it is Who sends His blessings on you, and (so do) His angels, that He may bring you forth out of utter darkness into the light; and He is Merciful to the believers.

We hear this same exact effect in 65:11:

065.010-011

YUSUFALI: ...Therefore fear Allah, O ye men of understanding - who have believed!- for Allah hath indeed sent down to you a Message: An Messenger, who rehearses to you the Signs of Allah containing clear explanations, that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of Darkness into Light. And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to

Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent Provision.

PICKTHAL: ...So keep your duty to Allah, O men of understanding! O ye who believe! Now Allah hath sent down unto you a reminder: A messenger reciting unto you the revelations of Allah made plain, that He may bring forth those who believe and do good works from darkness unto light. And whosoever believeth in Allah and doeth right, He will bring him into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to abide for ever. Allah hath made good provision for him.

SHAKIR: ...Therefore be careful of (your duty to) Allah, O men of understanding who believe! Allah has indeed revealed to you a reminder: An Messenger who recites to you the clear communications of Allah so that he may bring forth those who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light; and whoever believes in Allah and does good deeds, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers now, to abide therein forever, Allah has indeed given him a goodly sustenance.

The effect of the god's "salat" is the same exact effect of "reciting the god's clarifying signs." In order to properly understand any action, it is important to understand its purpose and its effect. As we saw, the effect of "salat" is "bringing out of the darkness and into the light". The purpose of "salat" is clearly given as:

20:14. It is me, the god, there is no god except me, so serve me and persist in "al-salat" to remember me.

When people remember the god, he also remembers them:

2:152. So remember me, I remember you and be thankful to me and do not be unappreciative.

This is why as people do "salat", the god also does "salat" on them as we saw in 33:43.

The effect of the god's "salat" is to bring people out of the darkness of ignorance and being astray into the light of knowledge and guidance. The purpose of "salat" is to remember the god. The Quran is described as a reminder. In fact, just before we are told that reciting the god's signs brings out of the darkness and into a light, we are told that this is a reminder.

065.010-011

PICKTHAL: ...So keep your duty to Allah, O men of understanding! O ye who believe! Now Allah hath sent down unto you a reminder: A messenger reciting unto you the revelations of Allah made plain, that He may bring forth those who believe and do good works from darkness unto light. And whosoever believeth in Allah and doeth right, He will bring him into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to abide for ever. Allah hath made good provision for him.

SHAKIR: ...Therefore be careful of (your duty to) Allah, O men of understanding who believe! Allah has indeed revealed to you a reminder: An Messenger who recites to you the clear communications of Allah so that he may bring forth those

who believe and do good deeds from darkness into light; and whoever believes in Allah and does good deeds, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers now, to abide therein forever, Allah has indeed given him a goodly sustenance.

Passage 19:59 further confirms that “salat” is equivalent to reciting the god’s signs. In this passage we hear that reciting the god’s signs is the opposite of losing the “salat”. This is obvious even in the following widely used poor translations.

19:58-59.

YUSUFALI: Those were some of the prophets on whom Allah did bestow His Grace,- of the posterity of Adam, and of those who We carried (in the Ark) with Noah, and of the posterity of Abraham and Israel of those whom We guided and chose. **Whenever the Signs of (Allah) Most Gracious were rehearsed to them, they would fall down in prostrate adoration and in tears.**

But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts soon, then, will they face Destruction.

PICKTHAL: These are they unto whom Allah showed favour from among the prophets, of the seed of Adam and of those whom We carried (in the ship) with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and from among those whom We guided and chose. **When the revelations of the Beneficent were recited unto them, they fell down, adoring and weeping.**

Now there hath succeeded them a later generation whom have ruined worship and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception.

SHAKIR: These are they on whom Allah bestowed favors, from among the prophets of the seed of Adam, and of those whom We carried with Nuh, and of the seed of Ibrahim and Israel, and of those whom We guided and chose; **when the communications of the Beneficent Allah were recited to them, they fell down making obeisance and weeping.**

But there came after them an evil generation, who neglected prayers and followed and sensual desires, so they win meet perdition.

So “salat” is reciting the signs of the god in the Quran, which is the reminder, for the purpose of remembering the god. The “salat” and thus the remembrance is a two-way process. People remember the god and he remembers them in the same way that they do “salat” and he does “salat” on them. Remembrance is closely associated with learning and studying. The effect of this two-way learning connection is to enlighten people by taking them out of the darkness and into the light. So as a concept “salat” can be simply interpreted and translated as a “learning connection” or “studying connection”. The purpose of the learning connection is remembrance and the effect is enlightenment.

Notice also from 18:58-59 that reciting the god’s signs ends with obedience (“sujud”) exactly like the learning connection ends with obedience in 4:102.

4:102

YUSUFALI: When thou (O Messenger) art with them, and standest to lead them in prayer, Let one party of them stand up (in prayer) with thee, Taking their arms

with them: When they finish their prostrations, let them Take their position in the rear. And let the other party come up which hath not yet prayed - and let them pray with thee, Taking all precaution, and bearing arms: the Unbelievers wish, if ye were negligent of your arms and your baggage, to assault you in a single rush. But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill; but take (every) precaution for yourselves. For the Unbelievers Allah hath prepared a humiliating punishment.

PICKTHAL: And when thou (O Muhammad) art among them and arranges (their) worship for them, let only a party of them stand with thee (to worship) and let them take their arms. Then when they have performed their prostrations let them fall to the rear and let another party come that hath not worshipped and let them worship with thee, and let them take their precaution and their arms. Those who disbelieve long for you to neglect your arms and your baggage that they may attack you once for all. It is no sin for you to lay aside your arms, if rain impedeth you or ye are sick. But take your precaution. Lo! Allah prepareth for the disbelievers shameful punishment.

SHAKIR: And when you are among them and keep up the prayer for them, let a party of them stand up with you, and let them take their arms; then when they have prostrated themselves let them go to your rear, and let another party who have not prayed come forward and pray with you, and let them take their precautions and their arms; (for) those who disbelieve desire that you may be careless of your arms and your luggage, so that they may then turn upon you with a sudden united attack, and there is no blame on you, if you are annoyed with rain or if you are sick, that you lay down your arms, and take your precautions; surely Allah has prepared a disgraceful chastisement for the unbelievers.

The fact that reciting the god's signs ends with obedience (exactly like the learning connection) is further confirmed by 17:107.

17:107

YUSUFALI: Say: "Whether ye believe in it or not, it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down on their faces in humble prostration,

PICKTHAL: Say: Believe therein or believe not, lo! those who were given knowledge before it, when it is read unto them, fall down prostrate on their faces, adoring,

SHAKIR: Say: Believe in it or believe not; surely those who are given the knowledge before it fall down on their faces, making obeisance when it is recited to them.

The real "sujud" is not merely a superficial mechanical move of putting one's forehead on the floor but it is essentially obedience of the god. This is why we hear that the learning connection forbids shameful and disgraceful deeds in 29:45.

We also notice that the reading in the morning is used as a synonym for the learning connection in the morning in 17:78:

017.078

YUSUFALI: Establish regular prayers - at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.

PICKTHAL: Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn is ever witnessed.

SHAKIR: Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed.

Notice that Yusufali, not realizing that “recitation/reading” and “salat” are equivalent, had to insert “the prayer” before “the reading” despite it being absent from the original passage.

So when we talk about the best method for the learning connection (“salat”), we are actually talking about the best method for reciting the god’s signs:

1. During the learning connection, we should recite the god’s signs with a moderate voice, not too loud or whispering:

017.110

YUSUFALI: Say: "Call upon Allah, or call upon Rahman: by whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Neither speak thy Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between."

PICKTHAL: Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names. And thou (Muhammad), be not loud-voiced in thy worship nor yet silent therein, but follow a way between.

SHAKIR: Say: Call upon Allah or call upon, the Beneficent Allah; whichever you call upon, He has the best names; and do not utter your prayer with a very raised voice nor be silent with regard to it, and seek a way between these.

2. We have to pay attention and listen carefully in the learning connection:

007.204

YUSUFALI: When the Qur'an is read, listen to it with attention, and hold your peace: that ye may receive Mercy.

PICKTHAL: And when the Qur'an is recited, give ear to it and pay heed, that ye may obtain mercy.

SHAKIR: And when the Quran is recited, then listen to it and remain silent, that mercy may be shown to you.

3. The optimal times for the learning connection:

As we saw, the learning connection is about reciting the god's signs. So it is natural that the optimal times for the learning connection are the optimal times for reciting the god's signs. Of course, the optimal times are when we start our day and when we end it. This is confirmed by 24:58 where only those two times are mentioned by name:

024.058

YUSUFALI: O ye who believe! let those whom your right hands possess, and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: before morning prayer; the while ye doff your clothes for the noonday heat; and after the late-night prayer: these are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other: Thus does Allah make clear the Signs to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

PICKTHAL: O ye who believe! Let your slaves, and those of you who have not come to puberty, ask leave of you at three times (before they come into your presence): Before the prayer of dawn, and when ye lay aside your raiment for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. Three times of privacy for you. It is no sin for them or for you at other times, when some of you go round attendant upon others (if they come into your presence without leave). Thus Allah maketh clear the revelations for you. Allah is Knower, Wise.

SHAKIR: O you who believe! let those whom your right hands possess and those of you who have not attained to puberty ask permission of you three times; before the morning prayer, and when you put off your clothes at midday in summer, and after the prayer of the nightfall; these are three times of privacy for you; neither is it a sin for you nor for them besides these, some of you must go round about (waiting) upon others; thus does Allah make clear to you the communications, and Allah is Knowing, Wise.

It is clear from the above that the morning and night learning connection are maintained by us at home with our families. Passage 17:78 confirms those two optimal times:

017.078

YUSUFALI: Establish regular prayers - at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.

PICKTHAL: Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn. Lo! (the recital of) the Qur'an at dawn is ever witnessed.

SHAKIR: Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed.

So the first optimal time is from the time the sun goes down through the horizon at sunset until the complete darkness of the night. The second optimal time is in the morning. This is also confirmed by the following passage:

011.114

YUSUFALI: And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night: For those things, that are good remove those that are evil: Be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord):

PICKTHAL: Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night. Lo! good deeds annul ill-deeds. This is reminder for the mindful.

SHAKIR: And keep up prayer in the two parts of the day and in the first hours of the night; surely good deeds take away evil deeds this is a reminder to the mindful.

The passage points to the two ends or edges of the day and the approaches of the night. The first edge of the day is “the morning” mentioned in 17:78. The other edge of the day and the approaches of the night is the time between sunset and the complete darkness of the night. So 17:78 and 11:114 are perfectly consistent.

Given the optimal times of the learning connection at the start and end of day, washing (5:6) is what one normally and naturally does when he wakes up and starts his day and when he returns home at the end of the day after work which helps to approach the learning connection with a clearer mind.

What about the so-called middle “salat”?

002.238

YUSUFALI: Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers (“salawat”), especially the Middle Prayer; and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind).

PICKTHAL: Be guardians of your prayers (“salawat”), and of the midmost prayer, and stand up with devotion to Allah.

SHAKIR: Attend constantly to prayers (“salawat”) and to the middle prayer and stand up truly obedient to Allah.

The Arabic word translated as “middle” is the word “wosta”. However, a closer look at the occurrences of this word in the great reading/”quran”, we can see that it actually means best and not middle. Thus, in 68:28 the word was translated as “the best” by Pickthal and Shakir as we see below:

068.028

YUSUFALI: Said one of them, more just (than the rest): "Did I not say to you, 'Why not glorify (Allah)?'"

PICKTHAL: The best among them said: Said I not unto you: Why glorify ye not (Allah)?

SHAKIR: The best of them said: Did I not say to you, Why do you not glorify (Allah)?

So 2:238 is not talking about a third middle learning connection but about maintaining the best learning connection. Also, the same exact plural term “salawat” in 2:238 is used in 2:157 to clearly indicate a continuous action and not a specific number in a 24 hours span.

002.157

YUSUFALI: They are those on whom (Descend) blessings (“salawat”) from Allah, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.

PICKTHAL: Such are they on whom are blessings (“salawat”) from their Lord, and mercy. Such are the rightly guided.

SHAKIR: Those are they on whom are blessings (“salawat”) and mercy from their Lord, and those are the followers of the right course.

4. What about the so-called Friday prayer?

062.009-010

YUSUFALI: O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew!

And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah: and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper.

PICKTHAL: O ye who believe! When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation, haste unto remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if ye did but know.

And when the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty, and remember Allah much, that ye may be successful.

SHAKIR: O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know.

But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful.

The pre-Quranic Arabs had no day of the week named Al-Juma’at. This is why Pickthal correctly translates “juma’a” as “the day of congregation” and not as the name of a day of the week (Yusuf Ali does the same in parenthesis). On the other hand, sectarians claim that Friday, which they named Al-Juma’at (as opposed to the common noun "ywm al-jum3at"/time of gathering/assembly), is a special "holy" day where, according to their traditions, Adam was created. What is hard for many people to understand is that the week is completely arbitrary. Hence, the week has not always been seven days. Weeks from 4 to 20 days were observed. For example, the ancient Egyptians used a 10-day week while the Mayans used a 20-day week. The week was typically the interval from one market day to the next. Four to 20 days gave farmers and craftsmen enough time to gather and transport products to sell. Hence, when Friday occurs depends on when the present seven day week was arbitrarily adopted and which day it started with and the order of the days of the week, which is also arbitrary. The origin of the seven-day week lies with the pagan Romans who used to worship five planets, the moon, and the sun and thus named the days after them. It was also adopted by the Jews who believed that the almighty god had to rest on the seventh day (the god be most exalted).

As we saw, the learning connection is about reciting the god's signs and the optimal times for the learning connection are when we start our day with a clear mind and when we end it after a busy day of seeking the god's bounty. Naturally, in addition to these two times, it is a good opportunity to remind as many people as possible of the god during gatherings such as when people are gathered for the market (62:9-10) or for war (4:102) or a funeral (9:84) or even a football game. Think of reciting the god's words as the national anthem that is used to remind people.

In summary, the learning connection ("salat") is essentially reciting and pondering on the god's signs. When we do the learning connection, we remember the god and we are enlightened and therefore we obey the god. Instinctively, we all know that in order to remember, we have to study. Of course, reading is the essence of studying. From this perspective, we can see that when Chapter 96 contrasts "reading" against "forbidding the learning connection (salat)", it actually contrasts "salat" against "forbidding it".

In the name of the god, the almighty, the merciful

Read in the name of your lord who created.

He created man from a clot.

**Read and your lord is the most generous,
who taught by the pen**

He taught man what he didn't know.

Nay, but verily man transgresses.

Upon seeing it he disregards it.

Surely to your lord is the return.

**Have you seen him who forbids
a servant when he connects/learns?**

Have you considered if he were on the guidance?

Or advocates forethoughtfulness?

Have you considered if he denies truth and turns his back?

Does he not know that the god sees?

**Nay! if he does not desist, we would certainly smite his forehead,
a lying, wrongful forehead.**

Then let him summon his council,

We would summon the guardians.

Do not obey him, and submit/obey and draw near (me).