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Comparative Analysis of the Obligatory Prayer (Ṣalāt) in Islam and Judaism

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Abstract

Prayer (Ṣalāt) is one of the pillars of Islam. This research aims to introduce prayer in Judaism and Islam, compare them, and articulate the similarities and differences. A descriptive-inductive method was employed, examining the Torah texts related to the features of prayer in Judaism. Furthermore, contemporary practices of prayer among Jews were collected and compared with the features of prayer in Islam. The findings show that prayer in Judaism does not derive its legitimacy from the Holy Scriptures but has undergone changes over time and remains subject to further modification. Also, the form of prayer in Judaism differs from that in Islam; Islam's prayer includes standing (*Qīyām*), bowing (*Rukūʿ*), prostration (*Sujūd*), ritual purity (*Tahārah*), and a direction of prayer (*Qiblah*), while Judaism has no fixed form. Although bowing is more common among Jews, it is entirely optional, and a condition like ritual purity before prayer, which is essential in Islam, does not exist in Judaism.

Keywords: Prayer (Ṣalāt), Judaism, Islam, Bowing (Rukūʿ), Prostration (Sujūd).

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Introduction

Prayer (*Ṣalāt*) is a sign of worshipping the Almighty Lord, demonstrating humility, awe, and submission before Him. This concept exists in the heavenly books that mention prayer, its purpose, and its features. However, these books have suffered distortion, additions, and deletions, as the Almighty God states: "Some of the Jews distort the [Divine] word from its [original] context and say: "We hear and disobey!" and [say:] "Hear what you do not hear!" and [say:] "*Rā'inā* [tend to us]," [and they utter these words] twisting their tongues and disparaging the religion..." (Quran, al-Nisā': 46).

Only the Holy Qur'an has remained immune from any distortion, as God Himself has guaranteed its preservation, stating: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder [the Qur'an], and indeed, We will be its guardian." (Quran, al-Hijr: 9) Consequently, the forms of prayer mentioned in previous heavenly books—which were subjected to distortion—differ from what contemporary Jews practice; this is because the ritual has been influenced by the personal desires of priests and monks. In contrast, the Islamic *Sharī'ah*, including prayer, has remained fixed and stable due to the preservation of the Holy Qur'an and the authentic prophetic *Sunnah*, continuing to rest upon the method and guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The present study aims to examine the features of Jewish prayer based on their religious books and texts, identify the common form of prayer among contemporary Jews, and then articulate the features of prayer in Islam, so that the differences between Jewish and Muslim prayer become apparent,

and the importance of adhering to the Divine *Sharī'ah* and the Prophet's *Sunnah* is highlighted.

1. Prayer in Judaism

Investigating the origins of the legislation of prayer in Judaism is a difficult and complex task, surrounded by considerable ambiguity. A researcher in this field encounters a boundless, long, variable, and evolving history (Mūhī, 2001: 74), making it challenging to provide a clear picture of prayer across all ages and generations; this is because prayer among Jews has been constantly changing and evolving, reaching endless complexities. This can be attributed to the fact that the Torah and the prophets of the Old Testament did not specify the nature of prayer before the Babylonian captivity, and this worship remains subject to factors of innovation and change. Consequently, the researcher struggles to grasp its original and unified state.

Discussion about acts of worship and their sanctity must be based on religious texts, and these texts are not explicitly and clearly available in the Old Testament, as they have suffered distortion and alteration. As a result, Jewish acts of worship have taken forms that make understanding their true essence difficult. Nevertheless, we will attempt to clarify this worship as much as possible by relying on the Old Testament texts.

1.1. The Meaning of the Word "*Ṣalāt*" in Jewish Sources

The word "*Ṣalāt*" (prayer) is originally derived from the Aramaic language, with its root (*Ṣ L A*) *Ṣala* meaning to bow or bend. This word was used to refer to prayer in its religious sense at the time and was subsequently adopted by the Jews. It later became a term in Aramaic-Hebrew. Jews have

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used terms like "*Ṣalwatah*," "*Salūta*," and "*Ṣalwatu*" to refer to a specific meaning of worship (ibid: 74).

1.2. Jewish Prayer in Linguistic Texts

In linguistic books, the word "*Ṣalwat*" among Jews is used to mean their synagogues (ibid: 73). Additionally, Hebrew terms used for supplication and worship indicate the nature of prayer among Jews.

One of the most famous terms associated with prayer in Hebrew is "Tephillah." The Hungarian orientalist, Goldziher, translated this word as "supplication to God as the sovereign and submission to Him." Jewish scholars have cited a text from the Book of Deuteronomy to legitimize prayer: "And you shall love Him (God) and worship your Lord with all your heart and soul." (Deuteronomy 10:12).

They consider supplication to be equivalent to worship and even regard it as worship itself. Jews view prayer as the revival of Judaism and believe that the legislation of prayer coincided with the beginning of the creation of the world. They claim that Judaism is the first monotheistic religion with a revealed book. Furthermore, Jews considered reading unselected sections (as a form of divination) of the Torah a type of prayer outside the prescribed times (Mūhī, 2001: 76).

By examining the Holy Scriptures regarding the use of the word prayer, its legislation, or its concept, we find that Moses referred to it in four instances. These are mentioned in the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These passages are presented below for examination, as they are considered sacred texts by the Jews:

1. "Then Moses pleaded with the Lord his God and said, "Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought

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out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? "

(Exodus 32:11)

2. "And all the people saw the pillar of cloud stand at the tent door, and all the people rose and worshipped each at his tent door." (Exodus 33:10)
3. "And when the Ark [of the Covenant] set out, Moses said, "Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you." And when the Ark rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, to the tens of thousands of Israel." (Numbers 10:35-36)
4. "And I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, "O Lord God, you have begun..." (Deuteronomy 3:23)

Although the sacred texts about prayer in the Bible show that Moses spoke to God, pleaded with Him, and sought help, a closer examination reveals that these texts are not consistent with the prayer of a prophet to his Lord. Also, there is no sign of the Israelites joining Moses in prayer in these texts, and no obligation to perform prayer is mentioned among them. Nevertheless, these texts have been cited to discuss the times of prayer, its place, and its degree of sanctity.

1.3. Contradiction in the Torah Texts Regarding Worship and Prayer

One of the strange things in the Pentateuch attributed to Moses is that these texts elaborate on some subjects that they consider acts of worship, including the Tent of Meeting, the Holy of Holies, the clothes of Aaron and the priests, their colors, and the type of fabric, as well as the sacrifices and their related rules. However, these texts provide no explanation about prayer, its form, its requirements, and its rulings! Nevertheless, Jews attribute these books to Moses and call them the Torah.

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Even the text regarding prostration in the Book of Exodus lacks the necessary details: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." (Exodus 20:3-5) But how is this prostration performed? Where is it done? What are its details? These are not explained! In contrast, these texts place great emphasis on material matters while neglecting spiritual and devotional matters like prayer.

In contrast to this situation in Judaism, in the Holy Qur'an, God says about Moses: "Indeed, I am God. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance." (Ṭāhā: 14) This verse shows that in Islam, prayer was introduced as a clear and definite obligation from the beginning.

In Judaism, prayer is intertwined with sacrifice, and they even considered reading certain texts of the Torah at unspecified times a form of prayer (Mūhī, 2002: 2, 66; Mūhī, 2001: 76). This indicates that prayer in Judaism had no fixed time or obligation, but was mostly performed as extemporaneous and personal supplications (Zāzā, 1971: 142).

In their prayer, Jews have intertwined supplication with prayer to the extent that supplication has dominated prayer in both form and content. This issue intensified particularly during the Babylonian captivity, when the Persians restricted the performance of Jewish prayer because they observed that Jewish prayers mostly included supplications for the destruction and ruin of other nations. In response to the imposed restrictions, Jews introduced music into their prayers and tried to make it appear natural by

composing specific melodies and tunes for each prayer. When the Persians forbade them from performing such acts, the Jews claimed they were reciting laments and dirges for themselves, and thus managed to continue their prayer (Mūhī, 2001: 76).

Prayer, in its general sense, had not departed from the concept of supplication (*Du'ā*), and only from the time of Daniel and Ezra did it move towards the committed performance of the movements of standing, kneeling, bowing, and prostration. Furthermore, David's bowing is considered the oldest reference to bowing, as God says: "And David was certain that We had tested him, so he asked forgiveness of his Lord and fell down bowing [in *Rukū'*] and repented." (Ṣād: 24)

For this reason, the reformist segment among Jews paid special attention to music in worship, choosing specific melodies and tunes for each prayer so that this act of worship would have a deeper and more penetrating effect on the soul (Zāzā, 1971: 144; al-Bāsh, 2002: 2, 369; Darwīsh, 2006, 93). Consequently, the inclusion of singing and music in prayer has caused great damage to one of the most important goals and purposes of prayer, as it has emptied it of its soul, which is humility (*Khushū'*).

1.4. Preparation for Prayer in Judaism

Prayer in Judaism requires preparation and readiness to be performed correctly, as they view prayer as a meeting with God, and just as every meeting requires its own preparation (Saḥmarānī, 2000: 122), the meeting with God also requires essential prerequisites. The Book of Amos states: "This is what I will do to you, Israel, because of what I will do to you, therefore, prepare to meet your God." (Amos 4:12).

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Based on the Israelite command for preparation before prayer, Jews performed specific preparations before prayer. Ancient righteous people would prepare for a full hour before prayer, and one of the most important things they did was the purification of the body and clothes (Zāzā, 1971: 144). Given that purity and impurity are closely related to acts of worship, Jews have divided purity into two types: "Minor Purity and Major Purity."

1.4.1. Major Purity

Major purity is performed by a man or woman immersing them three times. This is done after sexual intercourse or the emission of semen from a man or the cessation of menstrual bleeding, and also in the case of childbirth for a woman, or touching a dead body, or leprosy for an individual.

The Book of Leviticus states: "If a man lies with his wife, they must both wash themselves and will be unclean until evening." It also states: "If a man has an emission of semen, he must wash his whole body with water and will be unclean till evening, and if a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must wash themselves with water and will be unclean till evening." (Leviticus 6: 5-8)

Regarding a woman's purification from menstruation, the Book of Leviticus also states: "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, she will be in her menstrual impurity for seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. Anything she lies on or sits on during her period will be unclean, and whoever touches her bed must wash their clothes and bathe in water, and will be unclean till evening, and if a man lies with her and her menstrual discharge touches him, he will be unclean for seven days." (Leviticus 19:15-30).

Regarding post-natal bleeding (*Nifās*), the Book of Leviticus states: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel," saying, "If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstrual impurity. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation, and she shall continue for sixty-six days in the blood of her purifying. And when the days of her purifying are completed, whether for a son or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb a year old for a burnt offering... and the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean." (Leviticus 12:1-7)

Also, anyone who touches a dead human body becomes unclean, as the Book of Numbers states: "Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died will be unclean for seven days, and must purify him on the third and seventh day with the water of purification. If he does not purify himself on the seventh day... he must be cut off from the community, because he is unclean."¹

More surprisingly, Jewish law considers a person afflicted with leprosy unclean until cured. Consequently, such a person is excluded from performing rituals and acts of worship like prayer, fasting, and other devotions. They state this ruling by citing what is in the Book of Leviticus: "The person with the leprous disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out,

¹. Reference Numbers, chapter 19, verses 1 to 5, which contain the laws regarding purification through sacrifice and holy water. This section of the Torah outlines precise instructions for purification from uncleanness resulting from contact with a dead body.

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"Unclean, unclean!": He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." (Leviticus 13:45-46)

Thus, we understand from the above that the rulings regarding impurity and purity in the Torah are very complex and strict, obligating many Jews to purify themselves for their acts of worship; because prayer and fasting are only accepted from them when the person is in a state of purity.

1.4.2. Minor Purity

As for minor purity, the Jew performs it daily before every prayer, and this act resembles ablution in Islam. The method of performance is as follows: The Jew takes a liter of pure water; the sign of the water's purity is that it is drinkable. Therefore, sea water and salt water are not suitable for purification (Mūḥī, 2001: 81). He then washes his hands three times before dipping them in the water container. Then he washes his face. Then he rinses his mouth. Then he dries his face with a towel or cloth. Then he washes his feet (Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 68), and finally, he recites a supplication to God, thanking Him for providing clean water (Mūḥī, 2001: 81). In the past, Jews used to wash their feet as well, but today they suffice with washing their hands, justifying this by saying: "In the past, they washed their feet because they stood barefoot before the Lord; but today, the feet are always clean and do not need to be washed." (Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 68)

They also stipulate that the place of prayer must be clean from any impurity and free from pictures and statues, as they consider themselves followers of Monotheism. Therefore, they do not pray in Christian churches, as they consider the belief in the Trinity to be contrary to Monotheism. Furthermore, prayer is not permissible in cemeteries, unclean places, or

places like dumps or deserted houses. If a Jew touches a dead body, or has contact with insects, menstrual blood, or pork, major ritual bath (*Ghusl*) becomes mandatory (Sāmūk, 2004: 225–226; Mūhī, 2001: 77). If water is not available, one must purify with clean dust by rubbing one's hands with it (Mūhī, 2002: 2, 68).

1.5. Qiblah (Direction of Prayer) and Announcing the Time of Prayer

In the past, Jews would announce the time of prayer by blowing trumpets made of ram's horn or metal. Today, however, they use a bell (*Nāqūs*) to announce the time of prayer (Sāmūk, 2004: 225; Mūhī, 2002: 2, 68).

Their Qiblah is towards the West, i.e., towards Jerusalem, where the Temple (*Haykal*) is located and considered their Qiblah. This direction (West) is still followed by Jews today, and they cite the Book of 1 Kings to support it: "If your people go out to war against their enemy, to whatever place you send them, and they pray to the Lord toward the city that you have chosen and the temple that I have built for your Name..." (1 Kings 8:44).

It is for this reason that among Jews, the Samaritan sect considers Mount Gerizim holy; this mountain is currently located to the right of the city of Nablus. However, the Hebrews (mainstream Jews) consider Mount Zion holy; the hill upon which the Temple in Jerusalem (today's Al-Quds) was built ('Abd al-Razzāq Ṭāhā, 1985: 97).

The Holy Qur'an also refers to the Jews' Qiblah, stating: "And you, [O Muḥammad], were not on the western side [of the mount] when We revealed to Moses the command, and you were not among the witnesses [to that]." (al-Qaṣaṣ: 44) This verse is stated in the context of the change of the Muslim Qiblah from Jerusalem towards the Ka'bah (The House of God in Mecca).

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The choice of the West as the Qiblah by the Jews is due to several factors:

1. Adherence to the Torah's command that "peace be established in the heart" (referring to a spiritual state during worship in that direction).
2. Idol worshippers usually built their temples and palaces on the highest points, especially on mountains; and Abraham chose Mount Moriah, which was to the west of the polytheists' temples in the east, for worship.
3. That place is considered the ultimate and perfection of the *Sharī'ah* on Earth (Sāmūk, 2004: 225; Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 69; Mūḥī, 2001: 82).

What is said and observed in Jewish prayer: "Before performing the prayer, the worshipper brings the intention (called "Kavvanah" in Hebrew) to their heart, and must be standing during the recitation of the supplication (which they call "Tephillah")." Jews require full and respectful covering for prayer, and the head must be covered with a cloth called "Khiliyah." Also, when mentioning the name of God, they raise their bodies and stand on the tips of their toes for a moment (Sāmūk, 2004: 226; Mūḥī, 2001: 82; 2002: 2, 72; Zāzā, 1971: 15).

However, the language used in Jewish prayers is primarily Hebrew, although some prayers exist in Chaldean and Arabic, and from the sixteenth century onwards, these prayers were translated into all European languages (al-Bāsh: 344; Zāzā, 1971: 145; Mūḥī, 2001: 88–89).

Regarding what is said in Jewish prayer, many sayings are recited during prayer; some of them are taken from the Torah, and some from the Talmud, but most are adopted from the Talmud. When a Jew intends to pray, they must recite the "Shema" prayer. "Shema" means "Hear," and this word is the

first word of the Monotheism text in Judaism. Its text is: "Hear, O! Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4). The "Shema" prayer is divided into three sections:

1. Reciting the verse of Monotheism, then speaking about the love of God and its necessity, and keeping His commandments (Mūḥī, 2001: 88–89; Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 75–76; Al-Bāsh: 344; Zāzā, 1971: 146).
2. Recalling God's promise of reward and longevity, and that if sin occurs and God becomes angry, God must discipline the people of Israel.
3. Recalling the necessity of obedience to God, and remembering the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt.

After the "Shema" prayer, another prayer called "Shemoneh Esrei" (i.e., Eighteen Blessings) is recited, which includes: a) Hymns and praises to glorify God. b) Supplications and requests. c) Gratitude to God (Zāzā, 1971: 147; al-Bāsh, 2002: 2, 24). It can be said that these recitations are not fixed and permanent but change according to the type of prayer and different circumstances.

The head must be covered during prayer as a sign of respect, especially when the Jew reads the sacred texts (al-Bāsh, 2002: 2, 248). Jewish prayers are of two types:

- Personal and Extemporaneous Prayer, which is recited according to individual circumstances and needs, and is not connected to rituals, timings, or religious ceremonies; such as the prayers of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua bin Nun. These prayers can be performed at any time and place (Mūḥī, 2001: 86; Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 74; Sāmūk, 2004: 227).

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- Communal Prayer; which is held publicly in specific places and times and is obligatory for men and women, provided that a minimum of ten adult individuals are present. After the prophets following Moses, additions and amendments were made to the communal prayer (Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 72). They also wear a shawl over their shoulders, made of white cloth, with a tassel and eight strands of thread at each corner: four white threads symbolizing the dawn and four other threads in varying shades of blue. This shawl has two types: "A small shawl used for individual prayers, and a large shawl used for communal prayers such as Sabbaths and holidays." The threads of the shawl serve as a rosary for the worshipper, and the deceased are usually shrouded with the large shawl. They consider the shawl the "Spiritual covering" that encompasses their soul during prayer, presenting them as pure angels chosen by God due to His care and attention (Zāzā, 1971: 152; Nadwi, 2006: 67).

1.6. Prayer Times

The Jew prays three times a day, inferring this from the Book of Daniel: "He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously." (Daniel 6:10) In the text above, we read that Daniel prayed three times as was his custom: "And threats and pressures should not prevent your prayer, for prayer is the lifeline that connects man to God." (Master Media Company, 1997: 1696; Sāmūk, 2004: 226) In Psalm 55, the times of prayer are mentioned: "As for me, I call upon God, and the Lord saves me. Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he hears my voice." (Psalms 55:16–17) Based on these texts, it is determined that Jews pray three times a day.

1.6.1. Morning Prayer:

The Morning Prayer in Judaism is called "Shacharit," and its time is from sunrise until the day is well advanced. As stated: "To you, O! Lord, I cry for help; in the morning I pray to you, O Lord, and you hear my voice." (Psalms 5:2–3) And also: "O God, my God, I seek you early in the morning" (Psalms 63:1). The worshipper must wear the prayer shawl and bind the Tefillin.¹ The Morning Prayer consists of four *Rak'ahs* (cycles), with supplications and recitations of praise to Monotheism between each *Rak'ah*. In it, God is thanked for making him a Jew and a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There is no prostration (*Sujūd*) in this prayer, but bowing and bending occur as a sign of humility (Mūhī, 2001: 86; Mūhī, 2002: 2, 74; Sāmūk, 2004: 227; Zāzā, 1971: 151–152; al-Farhān, 1985: 53).

Religious texts also indicate this; as in the Book of Kings: "When Solomon finished his prayer and supplication to the Lord, he rose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread toward heaven." (1 Kings 8:55) And in the Book of Ezra: "Then I arose from my humiliation, with my garment and my cloak torn, and fell upon my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord my God." (Ezra 9:4–5) And in the Book of 1 Kings: "But Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel; and he bowed himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees." (1 Kings 18:42) These texts show that Jewish prayer includes bowing but no prostration.

1. They are two pieces of paper, each with a portion of the Torah scrolls written on it (such as the "Hear, O! Israel"), and placed in two small leather boxes. One is fastened to the arm and forearm with seven turns of a leather strap and then wrapped around the hand, and the other is fastened to the forehead, opposite the brain, and its strap is wrapped around the middle finger. It is required that there be no separation between the tefillin and the body.

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1.6.2. Noon Prayer

In Hebrew, it is called "Mincha," and its time is from the sun's decline from the zenith until twenty minutes before sunset. This prayer consists of four *Rak'ahs*, with supplications, recitations, and sections from the Psalms read between each *Rak'ah*. The supplications for this prayer are chosen to be appropriate for the noon time, and it is believed that David performed this prayer for the first time (Sāmūk, 2004: 272; Mūhī, 2002: 2, 74; Mūhī, 2001: 88; Zāzā, 1971: 152).

1.6.3. Evening Prayer

In Hebrew, it is called "Arvit," and its time is from sunset until complete darkness. On regular days, they are permitted to pray it an hour before the official time, but on Saturday, it must be performed twenty minutes after sunset. This prayer also consists of four *Rak'ahs*, with supplications and recitations between each *Rak'ah*, in which they seek forgiveness from God and emphasize Monotheism. Reciting the Torah and religious hymns is encouraged in this prayer. It is stipulated that the reciter must have a pleasant voice and be a descendant of Levi. The two main components of the evening prayer are the "Eighteen Blessings" and the "Shema" (Mūhī, 2001: 88; Mūhī, 2002: 2, 76; Zāzā, 1971: 152; Sāmūk, 2004: 228).

1.6.4. Sabbath Prayer

The Sabbath prayer holds special significance for Jews; the man leading the prayer stands on a relatively high platform, and the worshippers sit on two facing benches. He begins with praise to God and recites the prayer: "Our God and God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the mighty gatekeeper whose kindness is upon the world..." He then descends from the platform and, along with another worshipper, brings out the Torah from its

storage place. During this, a section of the Torah is read: "Hear, O! Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one, for the Lord our God is holy." Then, the Torah in its ark is carried, and both return to the prayer platform. When the Torah is brought out of the ark, the congregation stands respectfully, and with humility, heads are raised, some prayers are recited, and it is said: "Blessed is the Lord, the source of blessings, the Lord the source of every blessing, enduring and eternal, the Lord the King of the world who chose us from among all the nations and gave us the Torah, so blessed are You, O Lord, the giver of the Torah." Then the Torah is raised, and it is said: "This is the Torah that Moses placed before Israel, this is the Torah that God gave us through Moses." (Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 75; Sāmūk, 2004: 228; Zāzā, 1971: 166; al-Farhān, 1985: 54; Shalabi, 1988: 304; Sahmarani, 2000: 157; Hammou, 2003: 167)

They consider the Sabbath their weekly festival, and its most important ritual is the complete abstinence from all work and activity. Anyone who performs work on this day has violated its sanctity and defiled it, thus committing a sin, as this day is the day of God's rest (Mūḥī, 2001: 84; Mūḥī, 2002: 2, 75). As stated in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy: "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock." (Deuteronomy 5:12–14)

1.6.5. Supererogatory Prayers

In addition to the obligatory prayers, Jews established many supererogatory prayers after Moses, including: 1) The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

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Prayer; 2) The Kol Nidre Prayer; 3) The Prayer of the Moon (*Ṣalāt al-Qamar*); and 4) The Sukkot Feast Prayer.

1. Prayers of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

This day is the Day of Atonement and forgiveness of sins. It is the tenth day of the month of "Tishrei" (the first Hebrew month). This holiday begins at sunset on the ninth day and lasts until sunset on the tenth day. On this day, one must fast day and night and refrain from any work other than worship. It seems that the main purpose of this day is self-reflection and reviewing past actions. A Jew is obliged to spend the entire day in worship. This day is a prelude to the seven days called "Days of the Torah." In this ceremony, the priest serving the temple, along with two other priests, begins the prayer, which begins with a prayer (Zāzā, 1971: p. 128, Samuk, 2004: p. 229, Mūhī, 2001: 91, *ibid.*, 2002: 2, 80).

2. Evening Prayer Special for the Day of Atonement (Great Day), known as "Kol Nidre"

This prayer is for seeking forgiveness from God for vows and promises that a Jew has made and has not been able to fulfill. The origin of this prayer dates back to periods when Jews were persecuted and tortured (Mūhī, 2002: 2, 76; Samuk, 2004: 229; Zāzā, 1971: 169).

3. Prayer of the Month (Salah al-Qamar)

This prayer is recited on one of the nights of the second week of each Hebrew month. In this ceremony, Jews speak to the moon and repeat three times: "May the new moon be a blessed promise for us and for all Israelites. Blessed be your creator, blessed be your maker." Then the worshipers stand and jump up as if they want to touch the moon and say: "Just as we try to reach you but cannot, may those who stand before us and intend to harm us

not be able to touch us." The prayer of the month among Jews has special rituals that are recited when the crescent moon is seen (Mūhī, 2001: 92; ibid: 2002: 2, 8).

4. Prayer of the Feast of Tabernacles

The special prayer for the Feast of Tabernacles is held on the fifteenth day of the Hebrew month of "Tishri." This feast is called "Sukkot" (סוכות) in Hebrew. On this occasion, tree leaves and palm branches are used to build a shelter resembling a gazebo, and people sit or sleep under it for a full day. The root of this feast is an agricultural celebration in which the year's food crops were stored. However, today, Jews only mark the place of prayer and worship by erecting a symbolic shelter in their homes. This prayer is among the recommended prayers related to holidays (Mūhī, 2001: 91; idem, 2002: 2, 80, Sāmūk, 2004: 229, Zāzā, 1971: 169; Master Media Company, 1997: 200).

1.7. The Manner of Prayer in Contemporary Judaism

Prayer in Judaism begins with washing the hands. Then the worshipper places a small shawl on their shoulders, and in communal prayers, a large shawl is wrapped around the neck. The prayer leader wears a black cloak and a hat, as covering the head during prayer is a sign of respect for the sacred Torah texts.

Jews stand facing Jerusalem during prayer. In the past, their prayer included bowing and prostration, and some still pray in this manner, but the majority today pray while seated on chairs, like Christians. They place their hands on their chests and slightly bend their heads, as a sign of humility and respect, like a servant standing before their master.

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Although there are minor differences in prayer rituals among different Jewish sects, these differences are limited to hymns and peripheral additions, and there is no disagreement on the fundamentals of the prayer and the blessings (supplications). Jewish prayers are divided into two categories:

- **Individual Prayers;** which are extemporaneous and recited according to personal needs, and are not dependent on a specific time, season, or ritual.
- **Communal Prayers;** which are held publicly with a group of people at specific times and places, according to the religious rituals set by rabbis and priests.

In these prayers, sections of the Torah are read from the sacred scrolls, which are kept in a special place. After the recitation ends, the scrolls are closed. Sometimes the prayer ends here, or it may be followed by a short sermon, a religious hymn, or supplications, and finally concludes with the recitation of the blessing (Tebrik) before the temple is vacated. Before the end of the ceremony, a Quddas (Eucharist) or a blessing may also take place, in which each worshipper is given a cup of wine and two consecrated loaves of bread (Messiri, 1999: 14, 110).

2. Prayer in Islam

Only one who recognizes the unique and unparalleled bond between the servant and their Lord can truly understand the position of prayer and humanity's need for it. This bond, which cannot be compared to any other relationship between two parties in this world, is only understood by one who knows the attributes of the Almighty Lord and the attributes of the

servant. This is because no relationship between two parties can be correctly defined without knowing the characteristics of each and the extent of one's need for the other; the relationship is contingent upon and stems from the attributes.

For this reason, the heavenly books first stated the attributes (of God and man) and then legislated prayer and worship. Consequently, the call of all prophets was based on the Monotheism of God and His correct description. These books also explained the human condition, describing man as a weak, incapable, and needy being. The Almighty God says: "Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant." (al-Aḥzāb: 72) Because man possesses such attributes, he is in dire need of constant bowing and prostration before the Creator and true Lord; and it is for this reason that prayer was legislated.

Ṣalāt in linguistics means supplication, seeking forgiveness, and mercy (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: 14, 464). For example, in the verse: "And invoke [Allāh's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them," (al-Tawbah: 103) it means: supplicate for them. Or in the verse: "Indeed, Allāh confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]," (al-Aḥzāb: 56) prayer from God means mercy, and from the angels it means seeking forgiveness and supplication. Also, in the verse: "Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy," (al-Baqarah: 157) prayer means mercy.

Ṣalāt in religious terminology is an act of worship consisting of specific words and actions, which begins with the *Takbīr* (saying "Allāhu Akbar")

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and ends with the *Salām* (salutation), and has specific conditions (‘Aṭā’ī Iṣfahānī, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 15; Mardāwī, 1998 AD/1419 AH: 1, 276).

2.1. The Position and Ruling of Prayer in Islam

Prayer holds an immense position in Islam that no other act of worship can match; it is the pillar of the religion upon which the faith is established. The Almighty God has made it obligatory upon every sane, adult Muslim. For this reason, the Prophet made prayer the main sign of adherence to the covenant of faith and the boundary between Muslim and disbeliever, and it is the first matter the believer will be questioned about on the Day of Resurrection.

The Qur'an refers to prayer in the supplication of "My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants." (Ibrāhīm: 40) God praised Ishmael for commanding his family to establish prayer, saying: "And he used to enjoin on his people prayer and *Zakāh* and was to his Lord pleasing [i.e., accepted by Him]." (Maryam: 55) God also commanded Moses to pray, and this was the first command given to him at the moment of revelation: "And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed [to you]. Indeed, I am Allāh. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance." (Ṭāhā: 13–14) And Jesus also referred to this command in the cradle: "And has enjoined upon me prayer and *Zakāh* as long as I remain alive." (Maryam: 31)

Such is the position of prayer in Islam; for this reason, prayer is a fundamental characteristic of the pious (*Muttaqīn*) mentioned after faith in the unseen. God says: This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh; Who believe in the unseen, establish

prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them." (al-Baqarah: 2–3).

Due to this high status, prayer was the first act of worship made obligatory upon Muslims, and that was in Mecca, approximately three years before the *Hijra* (migration). The manner of its obligation also shows its importance in the presence of God; while all other acts of worship were ordained on Earth, prayer is the only one that was ordained upon the Prophet in the heavens on the Night of *Mi'rāj* (Ascension); and this is eloquent proof of the high rank of prayer in the sight of God (Maḥmūd, 1998: 149). Prayer is a spiritual ascension for the believer, in which their soul ascends daily five times from the material world towards the realm of purity and transcendence, the world of the unseen kingdom. Thus, prayer was the "Coolness of the eyes" of the Prophet.

2.2. The Manner of Obligation and Time of Prayer

It is established in the prophetic tradition that prayer was made obligatory on the Night of *Mi'rāj*. In the hadith of *Anas ibn Mālik*, the Prophet said: "God obligated fifty prayers upon my Ummah. I returned with that until I met Moses. He asked: What did your Lord obligate upon your Ummah? I said: Fifty prayers. He said: Go back to your Lord, for your Ummah cannot bear that. So I returned, and God removed half of it. I returned to Moses and said: He reduced it by half. He said: Go back to your Lord, for your Ummah cannot bear that. So I returned, and He removed another half. I returned to Him. He said: Go back to your Lord, for your Ummah cannot bear that. I returned, and God said: "They are five, and they are fifty, the word does not change with Me. I returned to Moses, he said: "Go back to your Lord, I said: "I am ashamed of my Lord." (Bukhārī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 1, 135, Hadith

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no. 342; Also in Shia sources without mentioning its details: Shaykh Ṣadūq, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 1, 197)

In this matter lies a profound wisdom that combines gradualism and ease. Prayer was first obligated as fifty times on the Night of *Mi'rāj*, then God reduced it to five prayers; so that the Muslim knows that God deemed him worthy of this great burden and fit for it. This affects his soul and creates self-confidence, so that he does not underestimate or find these five prayers heavy, but feels that he would have been able to perform them if they had remained fifty. However, God gave a reduction and made it five, whose reward is like fifty; to be a source of encouragement and motivation for high ambition and excellence in worship.

All this and more indicates that prayer was made obligatory on the Night of *Mi'rāj*. If so, did the Prophet and Muslims pray before its obligation? And what was that prayer? The reality is that verses from the Qur'an were revealed before the *Mi'rāj* that refer to prayer and encourage it. Such as verse 19 of *al-'Alaq*, 14 of *al-A'lā*, 2 of *al-Kawthar*, and 18 of *Fāṭir*. Furthermore, verses revealed before the *Mi'rāj* even referred to specific prayer times, such as: "So be patient, [O! Muḥammad], over what they say and exalt [Allāh] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and [in part] of the night exalt Him and after prostration [i.e., prayer]." (Qāf: 39–40)

This leads to three possibilities:

- 1) That the *Mi'rāj* occurred at the beginning of the prophecy, but evidence does not support this;
- 2) That the intended meaning of prayer in the previous verses was supererogatory (optional) prayer, not obligatory prayer;

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but the words used in these verses are in the form of commands, and a command implies obligation (Rūmī, 1989: 20);

- 3) That the intended meaning of these verses was obligatory prayers, but not the five daily prayers that were ordained on the Night of *Mi'rāj*; and perhaps this is what Ibn Kathir intended in his commentary on the verse: "When we have died and have become dust, [we will return to life]? That is a distant [i.e., unlikely] return," (Qāf: 3) where he said: "The obligatory prayer before the *Mi'rāj* consisted of two prayers: one before sunrise (Fajr prayer) and the other before sunset ('Aṣr prayer), and the night vigil was also obligatory, then God abrogated all this with the five prayers on the Night of *Mi'rāj*, but the Fajr and 'Aṣr prayers remained among these five prayers, because one occurs before sunrise and the other before sunset." (Ibn Kathīr, 1999: 7, 409)

2.3. Times of Prayer in Islam

Prayer has specified times in which it must be performed, as the Almighty God said: "Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times." (al-Nisā': 103). The Qur'an referred to these times, as He said: "And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember" (Hūd: 114) Also, verse 78 of *al-Isrā'* and 130 of *Tāhā*. It is clear from the previous verses that the Holy Qur'an referred to the five prayer times, and the Prophet of God explained them as follows: "The time for *Zuhr* (noon) prayer is from the sun's decline until a person's shadow

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is the same length as his height, as long as the time for 'Aṣr (afternoon) has not arrived. And the time for 'Aṣr prayer is until the sun turns yellow. And the time for *Maghrib* (sunset) prayer is until the twilight disappears. And the time for 'Ishā (night) prayer is until midnight. And the time for *Fajr* (dawn) prayer is from the break of dawn until the sun rises. So when the sun rises, refrain from prayer, for the sun rises between the two horns of Satan." (Majlisī, 1983 AD/1403 AH: 80, 74; Muslim, n.d.: 2, 105, Hadith no. 1419)

Thus, the prayer times are *Tawqifi* (fixed by divine decree), and no human has any role in determining them; they are all a pure legislation from God with their own purposes.

2.4. The Purpose of the Five Daily Prayers

The Almighty God set specific times and *Rak'ahs* for the five daily prayers, ordaining them as spiritual duties and therapeutic doses legislated by the All-Knowing Creator: "*Fajr* prayer is when a person wakes up to start their day with worship." *Zuhr* prayer is when a Muslim is about to have lunch, to remind them that the body also needs spiritual nourishment. 'Aṣr prayer is when a person returns tired from the day's work, to find peace and reassurance. *Maghrib* prayer is the sign of the end of the day and the beginning of the night, a time when hearts are purified. 'Ishā prayer is before sleeping, so that a person ends their day with worship (Ṭabbāra, 1978: 112–113).

The repetition and succession of prayer throughout the day and night hold great wisdom and indicate that the soul is like the body; just as the body needs daily food, the soul, which sustains the body, also needs spiritual food that renews its will and removes sorrow and grief (Rūmī, 1989: 33). Furthermore, man constantly falls short of God's rights and commits sins

and disobedience, so he needs stations throughout the day and night where he can turn to God and seek forgiveness and mercy. The repetition of prayer after prayer brings mercy and forgiveness and cleanses those sins. God says: "Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds." (Hūd: 114) Prayer is like a spiritual bath with which the believer cleanses himself from the heart's heedlessness and the contamination of sins; for this reason, the Prophet said: "Do you not see if one of you were to bathe five times every day, would any dirt remain on his body? The five daily prayers are like that, they erase sins." (Muslim, n.d.: 2, 131, Hadith no. 1554)

The position of prayer in Islam becomes clearer when we consider the related matters, as these matters create an atmosphere of reverence and exaltation for this obligation that is unmatched by any other act of worship. Among the obligatory matters upon a Muslim before entering prayer are the following:

2.5. The Call to Prayer (*Adhān*)

Adhān literally means announcement and notification (Ibn Manzūr, n.d.: 13, 9; Ibn Nujaym Ḥanafī, n.d.: 1, 268). God Almighty said: "Then say, "I have announced to [all of] you equally," (al-Anbīyā': 109) "So say, "I have warned you equally," and He also said: "And [it is] an announcement from Allāh and His Messenger to the people," (al-Tawbah: 3) "And a proclamation from God and His Messenger to the people."

Religiously, *Adhān* is the announcement of the start of the prayer time with specific phrases that invite to the congregation and display the rituals of Islam (Ibn Nujaym Ḥanafī, n.d.: 1, 268; Buhūtī, n.d.: 1, 53). Since the five daily prayers are held at specific times and performing them before those times is not permissible, and many people did not know the start time

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of the prayer or might be busy and not notice the time's arrival; God legislated the *Adhān* to announce the entry of the prayer time (Ibn Fawzān, 2002 AD/1423 AH: 1, 98). The reason for the legislation of *Adhān* is that when knowing the prayer time was difficult for people, they consulted to set a sign for it; 'Abdullāh ibn Zayd saw this *Adhān* in a dream, and its revelation was confirmed (ibid.).

Despite its brevity, *Adhan* encompasses matters of faith; it begins with "Allāhu Akbar" which includes God's existence and perfection, then it bears witness to Monotheism and the negation of polytheism, then bears witness to the Prophethood of Muhammad, then an invitation to specific obedience (prayer) which is the pillar of Islam, and it is mentioned after the testimony of the prophethood because prayer is only known through the Prophet, then an invitation to salvation and attaining God's pleasure, and finally, the *Takbīr* and glorification of God and the word of sincerity which is one of the best and highest recitations. All these factors cause the Muslim, upon hearing the *Adhān*, to turn to prayer with motivation and eagerness because the fruit of prayer is for man and it is the path to salvation (Mūḥī, 2001: 245; Ibn Fawzān, 2002: 1, 98).

This call legislated for prayer has not only revealed the purposes and meanings of prayer, but also clearly, eloquently, and briefly shown the purposes of Islam and the spirit of the religion. This call, which is announced publicly five times a day, is like an invitation to Islam and an introduction to its purposes, and it may also affect the hearts of many non-Muslims; thus, the *Adhān* announced publicly is a reminder for Muslims, an awakening for the heedless, and an invitation for the disbelievers (Rūmī, 1989: 25). If we look at the means of announcing the prayer time among

Jews and Christians, we see that Jews use the Shofar (horn) and Christians use the Nāqūs (bell), neither of which has a spiritual semantic load, while the *Adhān* contains the complete principles of the Islamic creed.

2.6. Ritual Purity

Ablution is a water purification related to the face, hands, head, and feet, and its legitimacy is established in the Qur'an and Sunnah. God says: "O! You, who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of Janābah, then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it." (al-Mā'idah: 6). In the Prophet's Sunnah, it is stated: "Prayer without Wudu' is not accepted." (Majlisi, 1983: 8, 238; Bukhārī, 1987: 1, 63, Hadith no. 135) *Wudu'* is also emphasized as a condition for the validity of prayer. If water cannot be used due to illness, travel, or lack of water, *Tayammum* (dry ablution) is its substitute.

If the wisdom of *Adhān* was not only notification, *Wudu'* is also not only for outward cleanliness, but has a higher purpose, which is the purification of the heart from spiritual contamination, sins, and impurities (Rūmī, 1989: 27). This is confirmed by the Prophet's hadith: "When the Muslim (or believing) servant performs *Wudu'* and washes his face, all sins of his eyes that he looked at leave with the water. When he washes his hands, all sins he committed with his hands leave. When he washes his feet, the sins of his steps also leave with the water until he comes out pure from sin." (Muslim, n.d.: 1, 148, Hadith no. 600)

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This hadith shows that *Wudu'* is not just washing the exterior of the limbs, but spiritual purity and invites souls to self-monitoring and continuous repentance. *Wudu'* has other benefits, including psychological readiness for the worshipper and preparing him to stand before the Almighty God; the essence of prayer is that man imagines himself standing before the Creator. For the human mind to be ready for this state and freed from the many distractions of life, *Wudu'* has been made obligatory. *Wudu'* interrupts prior thoughts so that man can turn to another type of thinking and make his mind clear and calm and his heart cheerful; therefore, *Wudu'* is the key to entering prayer (Ṭabbāra, 1978: 80-83).

2.7. Qiblah

The Muslim is commanded to face the *Qiblah* during prayer, which is the old and sacred House dedicated solely to God's worship. This House became the symbol and Qiblah of Muslims, as God says: "Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Bakkah [i.e., Makkah] - blessed and guidance for the worlds." (Āli 'Imrān: 96) The Qiblah is the direction towards which they turn, and in the Islamic *Sharī'ah*, the Ka'bah is called the "*Qiblah* of the Muslims" (Ṭabbāra, *ibid*, 121) towards which Muslims must face in prayer.

The purpose of facing the *Qiblah* in prayer is to emphasize Monotheism and declare alignment with the creed and call of Abraham and his Qiblah. The turning of Muslims around the world towards one *Qiblah* is one of the most important factors of unity among them, unlike the Jews who do not have a unified *Qiblah*. Since the direction of the heart is an internal and hidden matter, it is necessary for the face to be directed towards the Ka'bah, which is one of the rites of God, so that mental concentration increases,

humility is created, and the presence of the heart before God becomes closer, as humility is only achieved in a state of calmness and focus (Ṭabbāra, 1978: p. 121).

Conclusion

1. Prayer (*Ṣalāt*) also exists in Judaism, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an about Moses.
2. The Holy Qur'an indicates that prayer in Judaism also included bowing (*Rukū'*).
3. The Holy Qur'an also refers to their *Qiblah*.
4. Prayer in Judaism does not derive its legitimacy from the Holy Scriptures but has changed over time, and its content has been altered in accordance with historical events and political developments.
5. The form of prayer in Judaism is different from that in Islam; while prayer in Islam includes standing, bowing, prostration, ritual purity, and facing the *Qiblah*, Judaism does not have such a fixed structure. Although bowing is common in it, it is optional, and performing ritual purity before prayer is not mandatory as it is in Islam.
6. The features of prayer in Islam are stated through fixed religious texts that the Muslim Ummah has consensus on accepting. This structure is unchangeable, and no addition or deletion is permissible in it.

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