

Feature and sections of praye (Salat) in religions before Islam from the view point of Quran.

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Abstract: Prayer (Salat) is the most significant and greatest practice of worshipping God in the Islamic religion. It seems that prayer exclusively should be belong to Islam and there has not been such practice in other religions. By surveying the Verses (Ayaat) of the Holly Quran, however, it becomes obvious that prayer had been elaborated in the past religions and the holly past prophets performed it in accompany whit people. According to the Holy Quran, in the past religions, it had been practiced individually or in a group. The Holly Quran says that prayer of the past religions, encompasses the elements such as genuflection (Rokoo), prostration (sajdeh), and recitation (garaah) and it is basically performed at the especial times such as in the morning,..., etc. This fact proves that the main message of all religions and their principals are the same.

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Introduction

The holy Quran is the book of guidance to all people, especially to those who are pious. It's the only heavenly book which has not been anagrammatized. The holy Quran is the most primary source of reach to the original contents of the earlier religions and prophecy of the prophets. Indeed, the holy Quran has given various reasons to convince the Arabs to accept Islam and the mission of Prophet Mohammad. Of such cases is indicating to the mission and life account of the previous prophets who were chosen to be prophets in the peninsula of Saudi Arabia and its neighbor countries. From these indication and the life accounts of the prophets, one is able to recognize the core issues and the main contents of their prophetic mission. The holy Quran, though its miracle and its exclusive style of writing has not introduced the Islamic liturgical commands in one individual surah. Furthermore, it has quite often avoided explaining the details of the religious obligations and has given the responsibility of such explanations to Prophet Mohammad and has said:

"... So take what the Messenger assigns to you, and deny yourselves that which He withholds from you ..." (Hashr, 7).

The holy Quran has clarified that Prophet Mohammad's word is the word of God: "3. Nor does He say (ought) of (his own) desire. 4. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him: 5. He was taught by one mighty in power." (Najm, 3-5). Accordingly, the holy Quran has not talked about the previous religions` liturgical commands and their religious obligation is one individual surah, rather, it has dispersed them through various Surahs and verses.

This article, by studying the whole holy Quran and the verses which were related to the history of life account of the previous prophets, claims that the

main religious obligations of the previous religions are basically the same with the Islamic ones and therefore, saying prayers, Zakat, Fasting, ordering to virtue and preventing from evil, avoiding overcharging, respecting the parents, piety, obedience to prophet and his orders of jihad, fighting against oppressions and tyrants, and so forth are included in all prophets' mission.

Studying each of these topics in depth, demands separate articles. Thus, this study focuses only on the ways of depictions of prayers and its conditions in previous religions and mission of prophets that are mentioned in Quran. In addition, this article will demonstrate that prayers had existed in all religions and its features and conditions were very much like the prayers in Islam and nowadays prayers do not exist among the followers of the previous religions like Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism. Surely it has been eliminated from the contents of these religions throughout history by some evil people.

The article is made up of three parts: A) invitation of various prophets to god's worship from the view point of the holy Quran. B) Quranic verses that point out the existence of prayers in previous prophets' mission. C) Some details and conditions of prayers in previous prophets mission from the view point of Quran.

A) Invitation of all prophets to worship God

The holy Quran in certain verses states that the goal of sending all prophets was that they invite ordinary people to worship God. This fact has been stated in Quran in two ways: 1- That invitation to worship God has been a common mission for all the prophets. 2- That invitation to worship God has been specifically prophetic mission of every one of the prophets.

A-1) Invitation of all prophets to worship God as a common mission

The following verses prove the fact that invitation I. to accept and worship God the Almighty has been a common mission of all divine prophets.

I. "For we assuredly sent amongst every people an apostle, (with the Command) and quote; serve Allah..." (Nahl, 36)

II. "Not an apostle did we send before thee without This inspiration sent by us to him; that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve me." (Anbia, 25)

According to these verses, all the prophets were chosen. Not only they themselves worship God but also invite other people to accept God's invitation because, according to Quran, both human beings and the Geniis were created to worship God. The clear tone of the following verse further proves this fact:

III. "I have only created jennis and men, that they may serve Me." (Zariat, 56)

A-2) Invitation of every single prophet to worship God

In addition to the verses mentioned, the holy Quran, in its account of history of every individual prophet, states that the prophets have invited all of people to worship God. Some of such verses are as follow:

A-2-1) Invitation of the Prophet Nooh to worship of God:

I. "We sent Nooh to his people. He said: O My people! Worship Allah..." (A`raf, 59)

II. "1. We sent Nooh to his people (with the command): Warn Thy people before comes to them a grievous penalty." 2. He said: O My people! I am to you a Warner, Clear and Open: 3. Ye should worship Allah, Fear Him and obey me." (Nooh, 1,2,3)

A-2-2) Invitation of the prophet after Noah to worship God

"31: Then we raised after them another generation. 32. And we sent to them an apostle from among themselves, (saying) worship Allah..." (Momenoon, 31, 32)

According to Fakhr Razi explanations this verse I. is about Prophet Houd but it's likely that it might be about prophet Salleh or Thamoud. (Vol.23, p96)

II. However, according to Tafsir Al-mizan, this verse is about Prophet Saleh. (Vol. 15, P. 33)

A-2-3) Invitation of the prophet Hood to worship God:

I. "To the 'Ad people, (we sent) Hud, one of their (own) brethren" He said: O My people! Worship Allah ..." (A`raf, 65_ Hood, 50)

A-2-4) Invitation of Prophet Saleh to worship God to the Thamud people

(We sent) Saleh, one of their own brethren: He said: O My people! Worship Allah. We have no other god but him. Now hath come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord! This she -camel of Allah- is a Sign unto you: so leave her to gaze in Allah`s earth, and let her come to no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment. (A`raf,73 - Hood, 61 - Nahl, 45)

A-2-5) Invitation of prophet Shu`aib to worship God to the Madyan people

I. "We sent Shu`aib, one of their own brethren; He said: O My people! Worship Allah." (A`raf, 85 – Hood, 84)

With a little difference it states in `Ankabout Surah:

II. "O My people! Serve Allah..." (`Ankabout , 36)

A-2-6) Invitation of Prophet Ibrahim to worship God

I. "And (we also saved) Abraham: Behold, He said to His people, Serve Allah ... " (`Ankabout, 16)

Quran, following the statements of Prophet Ibrahim says that he told his tribe

II. "... Then seek ye sustenance from Allah, serve Him, and be grateful to Him; to Him will be your return." (`Ankabout, 17)

A-2-7) Invitation of Prophet Jesus to worship God

I. Jesus told his tribe: "It is Allah who is My Lord then worship Him." (Al-e-`Omran, 51)

II. But said Christ: "O children of Israel! Worship Allah, My Lord and your Lord ... " (Maedah, 72)

"Never said I to them aught except what Thou Didst command me to say , to wit, worship Allah , My Lord and your Lord ... " (Maedah , 117)

IV. "For Allah, He is My Lord and your Lord; so worship ye him..." (Zokhrof, 64)

A-2-8) Invitation of Prophet Mohammad to worship God

"O ye people! Adore your Guardian - lord, who created you..." (Bagharah, 21)

"That is Allah, your Lord! There is no God but He , the creator of all things; then worship ye him..." (An`am,102)

"O ye who believe! Bow down , prostrate yourselves, and Adore your Lord ... " (Haj,77)

"Verily Allah is My Lord and your lord; Him Therefore serve ye ... " (Maryam, 36)

These holy verses are only a small section of the whole Quranic verses that are about different prophets who univocally have called people to

worship God. It is interesting that the invitation of Prophet Jesus in 64th verse of Zokhrof Surah is exactly the same as the invitation of Prophet Mohammad in the 36th verse of Maryam Surah. Likewise is the expressions which are related to different prophets in many verses of Araf Surah and other verses.

This similarity means that the prophets` mission in inviting the ordinary people to worship God was fundamentally the same though they might have some minor differences in certain details.

B) The Holy verses of Quran that guide to legislation of prayers in previous religions

The Holy Quran clearly states that prayers did exist in previous Prophets` time.

B-1) Prayer in the time of Prophet Abraham:

I."O Our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in a valley without cultivation, by thy sacred House; in order. O Our Lord, that they may establish regular prayer..." (Ibrahim, 37)

II. " O My Lord make me one who establishes regular prayer and also (raise such) among My offspring. O Our lord and accept thou my prayer." (Ibrahim, 40)

B-2) Prayers in the time of Prophet Ismail

I." 54. Also mention in the Book (the story of) Ismail. He was (strictly) true to what he promised, and he was an apostle (and) a prophet.

II- He used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity, and he was most acceptable in the sight of His Lord." (Maryam, 54-55)

Jalalain interpretation of the words Salat and Zakat in this verse is a religious one, though he given no explanations. (P.401)

In the same manner, in Gortobis` interpretation, six points have been presented for this holy verse, and in the sixth point no explanation has been given for the words "Salat" and "Zakat", implying that the meanings of these words have been taken as the same meanings which are familiar to Islam. (Vol. 11, p.116)

B-3) Prayers in the time of Prophets Isaac and Jacob:

"72 And we bestowed on him Isaac and, as an additional gift, (A grandson), Jacob, and we made righteous men of every one (of them). 73. And we made them leaders, guiding (men) by our command, and we sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity, and they constantly served us (and us only)." (Anbia, 72-73)

B-4) Prayers in the time of Prophet Shu`aib

I. " They said: ' O shu`aib does Thy (religion of) prayer command Thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practiced ..." (Hud, 87)

B-5) Prayers in the time of Prophet Moses

I." We inspired Moses and his brother with this message: " Provide dwelling for your people in Egypt, make your dwellings into places of worship, and establish regular prayers: and give glad tidings to those who believe." (Yonus, 87)

II- "Verily, I am Allah, there is no god but I: so serve thou me (only), and establish regular prayer for celebrating my praise." (Taha, 14)

B-6) Prayers in the time of Prophet Zakaria

I. "Which he was standing in prayer in the chamber ..." (Al-e-`Omran, 39)

II. " So Zakariya came out to his people from Him chamber. He told them by signs to celebrate Allah`s praises in the morning and in the evening. (Maryam, 11)

The expression" celebrate Allah`s praises", in kashaf`s interpretation, means saying prayers. (Vol. 2, p. 504)

B-7) Prayers in the time of Maryam

Maryam was not a prophet, but according to the holy Quran, in her time, which was at the same period with Prophet Zakaria, people used to say prayers.

"O Mary worship Thy Lord devoutly: prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down." (Al Imran, 43)

Many of the interpretative books like that of Kashaf have taken the meaning of the words " worship", " prostrate", and " bow down" as saying prayers. (Vol.1, p.429)

B-8) Prayers in the time of Prophet Edris

"But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayer (Maryam, 59)

Though this verse points to the disappearance of saying prayers among people after Prophet Edris, one can easily come to conclusion that during prophet Edris`s time people used to say prayers with a greater emphasis.

B-9) Prayers in the time of Lugman

Lugman was not a prophet. He was either the nephew or the cousin of Prophet Ayoub. He lived in Prophet Davood`s period.

One of his famous recommendations to his son is saying prayers.

These recommendations further indicate the importance of prayers at that age. "Those who

establish regular prayer and give regular charity and have (in their hearts) the assurance of the Hereafter..." (Iugman, 4)

A close analysis of the mentioned verses reveals that the word "Salat" has not been used with other prophets and religions than Prophet Mohammad. However this does not mean that prayers had no roles in other religions or the previous prophets did not command to prayers. Rather a review of only some of the Quranic verses elucidated that almost all of the prophets were sent to guide people to worship God and say their prayers. However, no occasion has come forward that the Holy Quran would plainly and directly mention the prophet's mission to command ordinary people to prayers.

C. The verses that point to the significance of the prayers in previous religions

There are verses that mention and comment on the details of saying prayers in the mission of previous prophets and religions. The 27th verse of Al Haj Surah in Quran emphasizes on the existence of the features and conditions of worship in almost all other religions:

"And proclaim the pilgrimage amongmen: They will come to Thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways. (Haj 27)

All the same, there are verses that clearly indicate the existence of certain features and conditions of prayers in previous prophets' religions.

C-1) Ruku` and Sajdah in Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail's religions

I. "... And we covenanted with Ibrahim and Ismail, that they should sanctify My House for those who compass it round, or use it as a retreat, or bow or prostrate themselves (there in prayer). (Bagharah, 125)

II. " Behold! We gave the site to Ebrahim, of the (sacred) house, (saying): Associate not anything(in worship) with Me, and sanctify My House for those who compass it round or stand up or bow or prostrate themselves (there in prayer). (Haj, 26)

These two verses explicitly point to the presence of ruku` and sajdah in Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismael's prophetic mission.

It is interesting that the holy Quran has employed the same expressions in commenting on muslim prayers. The verse states:

III. "Mohammad is the apostle of Allah and those who are with him are strong against unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer)..." (Fath, 29)

C-2) Ruku` and Sajdah in the time of holy Maryam and the former prophet before her:

"O Mary (worship Thy Lord devoutly, prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayer) with those who bow down." (Al-e-`Omran, 43)

In this holy verse, it is commanded to holy Maryam to do ruku` and sujud . With regard to prayers in Islam, one can easily find out that this recommendation to ruku` and sujud had to be applied in prayers. Furthermore, she was commanded to do it in accompany of other people which reveal the existence of congregation prayers at that period.

Do the words "prostrate" and "bow down" have the same meaning as "sajdah" and "ruku`" in Islam? In order to find an answer to the raised question, some of the interpretations are presented below:

I. Al-mizan interpretation declares that the meaning of sajdah is quite clear and ruku`, too, means to bow down in respect and humility. (Vol. 1, p. 281- Vol. 3, p. 189)

II. Abi-al-so`ud interpretation has just stated that ruku` and sujud are two of the features of prayers and has given no detailed explanation of the words. (Vol. 1, p.758) Then this book believes that the meanings of these two words are clear and obvious as known as in Islamic teaching.

III. Likewise, in Gortobi's interpretation, no clarification, have been given, regarding the meaning of ruku` and sujud. However, it has claimed that the word "and" in the expression "prostrate and bow down" does not show order, and it does not necessarily suggest that at that time sajdah was performed prior to ruku` (Vol. 4, p.84)

Furthermore, in volume one of the same book, it takes the meaning of "ruku`" exactly as "bowing down" and in another place it says " prostrate " and " bow down" both mean saying prayers .(Vol. 1; p. 345-5)

IV. Fakhr Razi's Kabir interpretation has also translated the words "prostrate" and "bow down" as saying prayers (Vol. 8, p.46). Razi comments that "prostrate" means saying prayers individually and bow down with those who bow down. "Is a command to say prayers in congregation, furthermore, Razi proposes that bringing the word "prostrate" before "bow down" does not imply they were being carried out in order since the word "and" before them is a conjunction only to connect words or parts of sentences .(vol. 8 - p. 47)

V. Ibn Arabi's Ahkam al-Quran has not given only detailed explanation of the words ruku` and sujud for that time, either. (Vol. 1, p. 33)

VI. Jassas in Ahkam al-Quran takes the meaning of " prostrate" (sajdah) and "bow down" (ruku`), in this verse as a command to say prayers and has stated that at that period of time prostration was not

being performed before bowing down since the word " and" is only a connecting conjunction. (Vol. 2, p.17)

VII. Kashaf's interpretation has also suggested that "standing", "prostrating" and "bowing down" are features of prayers. However, he has not commented on the meaning of the words ruku` and sujud. (Vol. 1, p. 429)

VIII. Imam Shafei's Ahkam al-Quran, like many of the above interpretation has given no exact explanation regarding the meaning and form of the words ruku` and sujud in this holy verse. (Vol. 1, p.74)

A close scrutiny of these interpretation reveals that in most interpretators` opinion, the words ruku` and sujud in Islam have the same meaning they had in preceding religions, and in conclusion, it is easy to prove that the features and conditions of prayers in Islam and religions prior to Islam were quite the same.

C-3) Ruku` and sujud in the time of Prophet Edris

In the 58th verse of the holy Quran, God states that whenever the divine verses were being read to prophets like Noah, Ibrahim, Edris, and so forth, they started to do sajdah.

This verse clearly shows the existence of sajdah in those prophets' religions. However it is likely that this sajdah might not be the same sajdah which is in Islamic prayers, but it is strongly possible that it may be an action similar to those sajdah that muslims accomplish wherever they read certain verses of the holy Quran. After all sajdah is done to confess humility and courtesy before the God almighty.

C-4) Ruku` in the time of Prophet Davood

God has talked about Prophet Davood's ruku` in the 24th verse of Saad surah in the holy Quran.

"David said: he has undoubtedly wronged thee in demanding thy (single) ewe to be added to his (flock) of ewes: truly many are the partners (in business) who wrong each other; not so do those who believe and work deeds of righteousness and how few are they? ... And David gathered that we had tried him. He asked forgiveness of His Lord, fell down, bowing (in prostration) and turned (to Allah in repentance) (Saad, 24)

Similar to sajdah, and with regard to the fact that, unlike sajdah, ruku` has not been mentioned in separation, it is easy to conclude that ruku` was part of prayers and it is a reason to command to prayers in Prophet Davood's religion.

C-5) Congregation prayers in previous prophet's time

In two of the holy Quran's verses, God command to pray in congregation.

I. In 43rd verse of Al-e-`Omran Surah, he commands to holy Maryam to perform prayers in accompany of those who do ruku` and sujud before God. This verse point to the existence of congregation prayers at that period of time; since it is unlikely that God, would command holy Maryam to carry out sajdah and ruku` before God in accompany of these people who do the same though individually.

Gortobi, Zamakhshari, and Fakhr e Razi in their interpretations, have taken this verse as a proof to existence of congregation prayers at that age. (Vol. 1, p.348 – Vol. 1, p 429 - Vol. 8, p. 46)

II. In life account of Prophet Zakaria, The holy Quran also states that, during those three days in which Prophet Yahya's embryo was to be settled, God ordered Prophet Zakaria not to speak or made him unable to speak. According to Quran" He said, "My Lord, make for me a sign." He said, "Your sign is that you will not speak to the people for three nights, [being] sound." (Maryam, 10)

"Zakaria said, "My Lord, make for me a sign." He Said, "Your sign is that you will not [be able to] speak to the people for three days except by gesture..." (Al-e-`Omran, 41)

In the beginning of these three days, around down , Prophet Zakaria said his prayers individually and later after he finished and when other people tried to join him, he attempted to make them understand , unlike previous days , he could not say his prayers in their accompany. He told them to say their prayers in down and dusk individually,

"He told them to celebrate Allah's praises in the morning and evening." (Maryam, 11) This story and these Noble Verses quite explicitly prove existence of congregation prayers on those days.

C-6) Qiam in the prayers of previous religions

Qiam (standing in humility before God) is one part of prayers that has to be accomplished. The holy Quran, in the story of Prophet Zakaria's life, announces that he used to say his prayers while he was Qaem (in standing position).

I."While he was standing in prayer in the chamber..." (Al e - `Omran, 39)

The implications of this verse obviously reveal that one essential part of prayers at that period was Qiam. Another holy verse that points to the holy act of Qiam (standing before Allah) is:

II."O Mary worship thy Lord devoutly; prostrate thyself, and bow down (in prayers) with those who bow down." (Al e - `Omran, 43) Jassas claims that this verse orders to holy Maryam to lengthen her Qiam. (Vol. 2, p. 16, Gortobi, Vol. 4, p 84)

Imam Shafei, on the other hand, suggests that the word "worship" (Gonnut) means Qiam. (Vol. 1, p. 74)

C-7) Reference to the time of prayers in previous religions

Islam has determined specific timetable for prayers, which has to be done in 5 different hours. In addition of Islam, these hours have been clearly defined but the Quran has only implicitly commented upon it.

I. "...and celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord, before the rising of the sun, and before its setting. Yea celebrate them far part of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the day. That Thou mayest have (spiritual) joy." (Taha, 130)

II. "O ye who believe celebrate the praises of Allah, and do this often, and glorify him morning and evening." (Ahzab, 41,42)

Some verses touch upon the existence of similar assigned hour in previous religions.

III. "He told them by signs to celebrate Allah's praises in the morning and evening." (Maryam, 11)

IV. "...Then celebrate the praises of thy Lord again and again and glorify him in the evening and in the morning." (Al-e-`Omran, 41)

However, without Prophet Mohammad's explanations, one is not able to find out the exact prayers hours of the previous religions, though saying prayers in the beginning and in the end of the day has been explicitly commanded.

Conclusion

By close scrutiny of Quranic verses, one is not able to figure out the details of prayers in previous religions. Nonetheless, it is easy to deduce some of the features of prayers in these religions:

1. Prayers had to be performed in certain hours of the day.
2. Qiam, ruke and sujud were essential sections of the prayer.
3. Prayers were carried out both in congregation and individually.

Unfortunately, some of the previous nations have forgotten and spoiled the prayers. "But after them there followed a posterity who missed prayers and followed after lusts soon, then will they face destruction." (Maryam, 59) We, on other hand, have to be careful not to allow ourselves to forget saying prayers before God the Almighty.

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