



READINGS in
ISLAMIC DA'WAH

EDITOR
Mehd. Yusuf Hussain



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DA'WAH

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Mohd. Yusof Hussain



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THE MOSQUE AS A CENTRE OF ISLAMIC DA'WAH

Mohd Yusof Hussain

The word *masjid* (mosque) originates from the Arabic root-word *sajjada* (to prostrate oneself). The mosque is a place where Muslims prostrate themselves to Allāh in the direction of the *Qiblah* (direction Muslims face during prayer) which is the *Ka'bah* (cubic stone structure covered with a black cloth located at the center of the Grand mosque) in Makkah while performing *salāt* (prayer).

Although Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) has said "The whole earth is a mosque" the purpose of convenience, the Prophet (s.a.w.) allowed the construction of buildings to be used as mosques. In fact, the Prophet (s.a.w.) built a mosque in Quba a few days after completing his *Hijrah* (migration).

A typical mosque has the following areas: the *mihrab* which is located at the front wall of the mosque to indicate the direction of the *qiblah*, the *minbar*, an elevated structure from which the *khatib* (person who preaches) deliver his Friday *khutbah* (sermon), *sabru al-mayid*, the palace where the congregation performs the *salāt*, the *al-manār* (minaret), from which the *adhān* (call for prayer) is made, and the *mahal al wudu'*, the place for taking ablution.

The building of mosques is the social obligation of the ruler or government and also the Muslim community. In the early days, as Islam spread governors built mosques in their provinces. Some examples are *Masjid Selamaniah* in Turkey built by Sultan Sulayman (1520-1566), *Masjid Isfahan* in Iran built by the Seljuk dynasty (1072-1092) and *Masjid Akbar* in Delhi, India built by King Akbar in 1650. Today Muslim governments and Muslim communities continue to build mosques to cater for the growing Muslim communities. For example, in Indonesia the most populous Muslim nation, there are more than 196,000 mosques.

Mosques are regarded as *Baitullah* (House of God). For this reason, all Muslims entering a mosque are recommended to pray two

raka'at (complete cycle of prayer) of *tahyat al-masjid* (respect the mosque). This practice is based on the saying of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

"If anyone of you enters a mosque he should not sit down until he has performed two *raka'at* of prayer."

(Abū Da'ūd)

Islam's Three Holiest Mosques

There are three mosques which are considered holiest in Islam. They are:

1. Masjid al-Harām (The Grand Mosque)

Masjid al-Harām (The Grand Mosque) is the holiest mosque in Islam. The merit or reward of performing *ṣalāt* in *Masjid al-Harām* is 100,000 times more than performing *ṣalāt* in an ordinary mosque (Bukhārī).

The *masjid al-Harām* is a spacious place for performing *ṣalāt*. In the center are the *Ka'bah*, *maqam Ibrahim* (standing place of Abraham) and *Hijr Ismail*.

The mosque as a place of divine worship occupies a special place in Islām. In a *Hadīth* (tradition) of the Prophet (s.a.w.), it was said that *ṣalāt* performed in congregation in a mosque is worth twenty seven times more than *ṣalāt* performed individually at the person's home. It was also said by the Prophet s.a.w. that a person will be rewarded for every step he takes in his journey to a mosque to perform *ṣalāt*.

The *Ka'bah* is in the center of the *Masjid al-Harām*. The *ka'bah* is also called *al-bayt al-harām* (the holy house) and *al-bayt al-atīq* (the ancient house). The *hajar al-aswad* (the black stone) is in the south-east corner of the *Ka'bah* about one and a half meters from the ground. It is the center of the *Ka'bah* which marks the direction of the *qiblah*. Muslims have to face the *Ka'bah* when performing *ṣalāt* (prayer). Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

"From where ever thou startest forth, turn thy face in the Direction of the Sacred mosque...."

al-Baqarah (2): 149

The *Masjid al-Harām* has been extended and renovated several times after Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) died in 632, first by 'Umar al-Khattāb (r. 634-644), later by *Uthmān ibn 'Affān* (r. 644-656) *'Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr* (d. 692) and *al-Mahdī* (r. 775-785). A major renovation was done in the years 1572-1577 during the reign of caliph *Suleyman II*.

The latest renovation was made during the rule of *Mālik Fahd* (d. 2004) Prayer space has been increased and almost one-third of the mosque has been equipped with air-conditioners. The compound of the mosque has also been extended.

There are two floors for *ṣalāt* and *tawwaf* (anti-clockwise circulation around the *ka'bah*). During Friday prayer and during the fasting month of *Ramadhān*, worshippers are also allowed to perform prayer on the flat roof of the mosque.

The *Masjid al-Harām* has ninety four gates, the most famous are *Bāb al-Salām* (Gate of Peace) and *Bāb al-'Umrah* (Gate of minor pilgrimage). Two latest gates are named after two Saudi kings, i.e., *Bāb al-Mālik 'Abdul 'Aziz* and *Bāb al-Mālik Fahd*.

There are also escalators to facilitate worshippers to go to the second floor and to the flat roof top during Friday prayer and during the months of *Ramadhān* and *Hajj* when the mosque is extremely crowded.

2. Masjid al-Nabi (The Prophet's Mosque)

The *Masjid al-Nabi* (Prophet's mosque) is the second holiest mosque in Islam. The merit or reward of performing *ṣalāt* (prayer) in this mosque is one thousand times more than performing *ṣalāt* in an ordinary mosque. The mosque is also known as *Masjid al-nabawi al-sharif* and *Masjid al-sharif*.

The mosque was built by the Prophet (s.a.w.) on a piece of land bought from two orphans soon after migrating to Madinah.

The mosque has been rebuilt and renovated several times. The last renovation was done during the reign of Mālik Fahd (d. 2004). The present mosque covers an extensive area which can accommodate more than one million worshippers at one time. In terms of architectural design it is regarded as the most beautiful mosque in the world. It is fully air-conditioned and has superb acoustic system.

Two areas in the mosque are of historical and spiritual significance to Muslims. The first area is an enclosure which contains the grave of the Prophet (s.a.w.) (d. 632) as well as the graves of the first and second caliphs Abū Bakr (d. 634) and 'Umar (d. 644). The graves are located a few meters to the south-east of the *mihrab* (niche indicating the direction of prayer). Visitors to the mosque make it a point to respectfully walk past the graves quietly saying their *salām* (greeting of peace).

Another area is called the *Raudāh* (garden). It is located a few meters behind the *mihrab* to the right of the Prophet's (s.a.w.) tomb. This area is mentioned in a *Hadīth* of the Prophet: "Between my house and my pulpit is a garden of paradise. (*Raudāh al-jannah*)" The Prophet's tomb is on the spot where he died in what was his house which was adjacent to the original mosque.

The *Raudāh* is a highly sought place to perform *salāt* (prayer) and to offer *du'ā* (supplication) because it is believed that all *du'ā* made in this area will be automatically answered by Allāh (s.w.t.).

3. *Masjid al-Aqṣā* (The Farthest Mosque)

Masjid al-Aqṣā is the third holiest mosque in Islam. It is located in Baitulmaqdis (Jerusalem). It is also known as *al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf* and *al-Ḥaram al-Quds*.

It is mentioned in the Qur'ān as "the farthest mosque whose precincts We did bless." (*al-Isrā'* (17):1). It was reputed to be the mosque to which the Prophet (s.a.w.) was taken by Allāh (s.w.t.) for a journey by night (*Isrā'*) from *masjid al-Ḥaram* in Makkah and from there taken on a *Mirāj* (Miraculous night journey and ascension to heaven). Historically, it was the first *qiblah* that Muslims faced to when they performed *salāt*.

The mosque has been under Israeli occupation since the sixth day war of 1967. As such it has not gone through any process of improvement and beautification. It is still small and does not look as majestic as the other two holiest mosques. Access to the mosque is still restricted to worshippers including those that come from overseas.

Function of the Mosque

The functions of the mosque has changed and made more specific throughout time. During the time of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), its functions were varied.

The Prophet's mosque in Madinah was used for the following purposes:

1. As a place for performing the congregational prayer.
2. As a place for teaching and learning Islam.
3. As a center of government administration.
4. As a place where the Prophet (s.a.w.) meet and welcome outside visitors.
5. As a court of justice.
6. As a *bait al-māl* (house of treasury).
7. As a meeting place for the Muslim Community.
8. As a temporary shelter for the poor and homeless.

The multipurpose functions of the Prophet's mosque in Madinah were maintained by the *Khalafā' al-Rāshidīn* (Rightly of guided Caliphs) Abū Bakr (r.632-634) 'Umar (r. 634-644), Uthmān (r. 644-656) and 'Alī (r. 656-660).

During the Umayyid caliphate (*al-da'wah al-umawīyyah*) (661-750), when the capital of the Islamic state was moved from Madinah to Damascus the major functions of the mosque were still maintained. During the Abbasid caliphate (*al-da'wah al-'abbasiyyah*) (750-1258), the capital of the Islamic empire was moved to Baghdad. The function of the mosque as a center of government administration was moved to the palace. During the Ottoman (*Uthmāniyyah*) period (1300-1924), the functions of the mosque became more specific. The functions of the mosque as a *Bait al-Māl*, a court of justice, an intellectual center and as a shelter for the poor were transferred to other specifically built institutions. Today, the mosque functions as a place for performing *ṣalāt* (prayer), studying and reading the Qur'ān and learning basic Islamic religious teaching.

Communication Functions in Present Day Mosques

Communication has always been important in Islam. It is a way of establishing *ḥabīb min Allāh* (relationship with Allāh) and *ḥabīb min al-nās* (relationship with humankind).

The mosque is the place for establishing this relationship. In the case of fostering *hablu min Allāh*, the mosque has always been the main place for doing it.

Communication with Allāh

Islam has prescribed ways of establishing contact with Allāh through personal and group communication. These are through *ṣalāt* (prayer) *dhikr* (remembrance), *du'ā* (invocation) and *muraqābat* (intimate conversation). They can be performed anywhere but the best place to perform them is in the mosque.

Ṣalāt

Ṣalāt (prayer) is the second pillar (*arkān*) of Islam. It is obligatory (*fard*) for every Muslim who has reached the age of reason, i.e., around seven years old, to perform the five daily prayer. They are:

1. *Ṣalāt al-Ṣubḥ* (Dawn prayer)

Ṣalāt al-Ṣubḥ consists of two *raka'āt* (cycles). It is performed between true dawn when "a thread" of light appears on the horizon and the actual rising of the sun (*al-Shurūq*).

2. *Ṣalāt al-Zuhr* (Noon-prayer)

Ṣalāt al-Zuhr comprises of four *raka'āt* (cycles). It is performed immediately after the sun has reached its zenith, i.e., "after the shadow of a stick placed vertically on the ground has reached its shortest length" until the time of *al-Asr* prayer.

3. *Ṣalāt al-Asr* (Mid-afternoon prayer)

Ṣalāt al-Asr comprises four *raka'āt* (cycles). It is performed when the shadow of a vertically planted stick is equal to the length of the stick until the setting of the sun.

4. *Ṣalāt al-Maghrib* (Sunset Prayer)

Ṣalāt al-Maghrib is comprised of three *raka'āt* (cycles). It is performed starting from four minutes after the sinking of the sun below the horizon until the last red glow (*shifāq*) in the sky.

5. *Ṣalāt al-'Ishā'* (Night prayer)

Ṣalāt al-'Ishā' is comprised four *raka'āt* (cycles). It is performed after the onset of night until before dawn, but is preferably performed before midnight.

It is also obligatory for Muslims to perform *ṣalāt al-Juma'at* (Friday prayer) on Friday in place of *ṣalāt Al-Zuhr* (noon prayer) in congregation. The Friday prayer must be performed in the mosque and has two *raka'āt* (cycles). The Friday prayer must be performed by a group of at least forty persons. A special feature of the Friday prayer is the *Khutbah* (sermon) which is delivered by the *imām* before the prayer.

During the morning of 'Id (canonical festivals) i.e., 'Id al-fitr (festival to mark the end of thirty days of fasting during the month of *Ramadān*) and 'Id al-adha (festival to mark the end of the annual pilgrimage to Makkah celebrated on the tenth day of the month of *Dhu al-Hijjah*), Muslims also gather in the mosque to perform *ṣalāt 'id al-fitr* and *ṣalāt 'id al-adha*. The two prayers have two *raka'āt* (cycles) each and preceded by a special *Khutbah* (sermon).

Ṣalāt (prayer) is an act of total submission to Allāh (s.w.t.) through thought, movements, body postures and verbal communication. The body postures include standing (*qiyām*) bowing (*rūkū'*), prostration (*sujūd*) and sitting down. Every *ṣalāt* begins with a silent declaration of intent (*niyat*) to perform *ṣalāt* and saying *Allāhu Akbar* (*takbīr al-ithrām*) and ends with *tasīm* (saying *Assalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullāh*). Each cycle begins with the person in a standing position and uttering *Allāhu Akbar*.

The verbal communication is directed solely to Allāh (s.w.t.) It is uttered in silent (*sirr*) and also aloud and is done in Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān. The words uttered are words that glorify, praise and thank Allāh (s.w.t.), declare total submission to Allāh (s.w.t.), testify that there is no God but Allāh and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allāh, ask Allāh's blessing for Prophet Muhammad, and also ask for Allāh's forgiveness, blessings, support and guidance.

The verbal communication also includes recitation of *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* (opening chapter of the Qur'ān) and two short *sūrah* (chapter) of the Qur'ān. Recitation of *sūrah al-Fātiḥah* in every *raka'āt* (cycle) is a necessary requirement in every *ṣalāt*. The words recited are:

In the name of Allāh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to Allāh, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds, Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment. There do we worship and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way, The way of those on whom, Thou has bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose (portion) is not wrath. And who go not astray.

The benefit of a well-performed *ṣalāt* is that a person becomes a better Muslim. Allāh says in the Qur'ān.

"... and establish regular prayer, for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds."

al-'Ankabūt (29): 45

Du'ā invocation

The mosque is a place for offering *du'ā* (invocation) to Allāh (s.w.t.) for all the meaningful things we want in the present life and in the next life. Allāh (s.w.t.) urges Muslims to state their *du'ā*. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

"Call on Me, I will answer your (*du'ā*)"

Ghāfir (40):60

The *du'ā* is performed at the end of a *ṣalāt* (prayer). The person sits kneeling facing the direction of Makkah with both hands raised and palms facing upward.

A *du'ā* begins with the saying of *ta'awwuz* (seeking refuge in Allāh from satan), *basmalah* (saying in the name of Allāh), *ḥamdalah* (saying praise be to Allāh) and *ṣalawat* (asking blessing) on Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

In a *du'ā* a person can only ask for good and meaningful things for himself and others. The person is forbidden from asking anything that is evil in nature either for himself or other Muslims.

In making a *du'ā* it is highly recommended for Muslims to use verse of *du'ā* found in the Qur'ān or those used by Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and notable *'ulamās* (men of knowledge). Examples of frequently used *du'ā* are:

"Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error, Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us; Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have the strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant us forgiveness. Have mercy on us. You are our Protector, help us against those who stand against Faith."

al-Baqarah (2):286

Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling (us) to Faith, 'Believe you in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous. Our Lord! Grant us what you did promise unto us through Your messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment, for You never break Your promise."

Āli-'Imrān (3): 193-194

"Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty, establish our feet firmly, and help us against those that resist Faith."

Āli-'Imrān (3):147

"Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire!"

al-Baqarah (2):201

"Our Lord! Pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto You as Muslims (who bow to Your Will)!"

al-'Araf (7):126

"Our Lord! Bestow on us Mercy from Yourself, and dispose of our affairs for us in the right way!"

al-Kahf (18): 10

Our Lord! Accept (his service) from us: for You are the All-hearing, the All-knowing.

al-Baqarah (2):127

Dhikr (Remembrance)

Dhikr (remembrance) is a devotional act of remembering Allāh (s.w.t.) by repeatedly saying quietly, with full concentration and focus, certain words in the Qur'ān. Allāh (s.w.t.) is remembered as

our creator, sustainer and provider for all our needs. Through *dhikr*, Muslim hopes to become closer to Allāh (s.w.t.) *Dhikr* is done in obedience to Allāh's command in the Qur'ān:

"O you who believe! Celebrate the praise of Allāh and do so often."

al-Ahzāb (33):41

In the mosque, *dhikr* is done after *ṣalāt* or while waiting for the time of *ṣalāt*. There are four types of *dhikr*, i.e., *tahīl*, *tasbīh*, *tahmīd* and *takbīr*.

The words said repeatedly usually about thirty three or one hundred times are as follows:

Tahīl

"*Lā ilāha illā Allāh*" (There is no God but Allāh).

Tasbīh

"*Subhāna Allāh*" (Glory be to Allāh).

Tahmīd

"*Alḥamdulillāh*" (Praise be to Allāh).

Takbīr

"*Allāhu Akbar*" (Allāh is great).

Da'wah to Muslims

Da'wah is a religious duty of Muslims. This is especially true of 'ulamā (men of knowledge). The purpose is to make Muslims knowledgeable, responsible and ethical. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

"Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity."

Āl-'Imrān (3): 104

The mosque has always been used as a centre of *da'wah* since the time of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). This is done through the Friday and *'Id Khutbah* (sermons) and religious talks.

Khutbah (Sermon)

The *khutbah* is a sermon delivered by a *khatīb* to an assembled congregation (*jama'ah*), and it has a fixed and important place in *ṣalāt al-jumu'at* (Friday prayer), *ṣalāt al-'id al-fitr* (prayer to celebrate the beginning of the month of Syawwal) and *ṣalāt al-'id adha* (prayer for the festival of sacrifice). For the Friday prayer the *Khutbah* precedes the *ṣalāt* (prayer), whereas for *ṣalāt al-'id al-fitr* and *ṣalāt 'id al-adha* the *ṣalāt* is performed first.

The *khutbah* is delivered by the *khatīb* in a standing position from a *mimbār* (pulpit) and divided into two parts. The *khatīb* sits down for a moment between the two parts of the *khutbah*. In Arabic-speaking countries, the *khutbah* is delivered in Arabic. In non-Arabic speaking countries, the *khutbah* is delivered in the national or local language.

In a Friday *Khutbah*, the *khatīb* can choose any topic related to Islamic beliefs and teachings, such as the significance of *tawhīd* (absolute monotheism), the importance of *ṣalāt* (prayer), *Hajj* (annual pilgrimage to Makkah), *sawm* (fasting during the month of Ramaḍān), *zakāh* (obligatory alms-giving) and *jihād* (strive in the way of Allāh); the need for *da'wah* (call to Islam), *tarbiyyah* (proper upbringing and education of children), and *ta'lim* (instructions in Qur'ān and *Hadīth*); the importance of seeking knowledge ('ilm) as well as current issues, challenges and problems facing the Muslim community and the *ummah*, for examples, secularism, liberalism, capitalism, socialism, westernisation, corruption, drug addiction, crime, increasing divorce rate, decreasing moral values and Muslim disunity.

Some topics are seasonal, such as, *Ma'al Hijrah* (with the *Hijrah*) and *awwal Muharram* (first day of *Muharram*) which are chosen as topics in the month of *Muharram*, *mawlid al-nabi* (birthday of Prophet Muhammad [s.a.w.]), is chosen as a topic in the month of *Rabi' al-awwal*; *sawm* (fasting) and *laylatu al-qadr* (night of power of excellence) chosen in the month of *Ramaḍān*, and *isrā'* wa *al-laylatu al-mi'raj* (night journey) is chosen as a topic of *khutbah* at the end of the month of *Rajab*.

The *Khatīb* maintains only one topic. He quotes freely from the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*, the opinions of the four imams - Shāfi'i (d. 819), Ahmad bin Ḥanbal (d. 855), Mālik (d.795) and Abū Hanīfah (d. 767) as well as Ibn Hishām (d. 827) and the works of al-Ghazālī (d.

111) especially his *ihyā'* *'ulūm al-dīn* (revival of the religious sciences) to support and illustrate his points.

The *khaṭīb* completes his discussion of the topic in the first part of his *khaṭbah*. In the second part of the *khaṭbah*, the *khaṭīb* calls upon the congregation to possess *taqwa* (God fearing, piety) and to call on Allāh to shower His blessings upon the holy Prophet. He makes these calls by reciting relevant *āyāt* (verses) from the Qur'ān:

"O you who believe! Fear Allāh as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam."

Āli-'Imrān, 3:102

"Allāh and His angels send their blessings on the Prophet. O you who believe! Send your blessing on him and salute him with all respect."

al-Aḥzāb, 33:56

He then pray (du'ā) for the ruler of the state, the *mujāhidīn* (those who engage in *jihād*) and the believers, both men and women. After this *du'ā*, he invites the congregation to perform the Friday *ṣalāt* (prayer).

Throughout the *khaṭbah*, the congregation would listen attentively. No one speak a word. This practice is in accord with a *ḥadīth*. "Who says to the person sitting next to him 'be quiet' has spoken a superfluous word." (Bukhārī)

Religious Talks

Mosques normally organize religious talks after *ṣalāt al-Maghrib* (sunset prayer) and also during weekends and during holidays after *ṣalāt al-ṣubḥ*.

The talks are delivered by knowledgeable and respected '*ulamā'*' (men of knowledge). Each '*ulamā'*' talks on a topic of his specialization or interest. The areas often covered include *tafsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis), *Ḥadīth* (words and deeds of Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w), *tawḥīd* (absolute monotheism), *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and *taqawwaf* (Sufism).

The objectives of the talks are to increase knowledge, understanding and faith (*īmān*), to inculcate consistent practice

(*amal*), to develop good conduct (*akhlāq*) and to enable spiritual purification (*tazkiyyah al-nafs*).

The audience consists of both men and women. However, there is no mixing of sexes. The men sit in the main area of the mosque and the women sit and listen in another area of the mosque.

The talks are usually one-way. There is very little questioning and feedback from the audience. They sit quietly and listen attentively to the speakers.

Concluding Remarks

The mosque has always been an excellent centre of Islamic *da'wah*. It is a place where Muslims not only congregate five times a day to perform *ṣalāt*, *du'ā*, and *dhikr* but also listen to religious talks on various Islamic topics. The '*ālim*' who performs the role of a *dā'ī* always have an attentive audience to listen to his talks.

The environment in the mosque is also suitable for Islamic *da'wah*. The mosque is regarded as the "House of Allāh" and Muslims who come to the "House" are in the right frame of mind to listen to *da'wah*.

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