

The Comprehensive Guide to the Authenticity of Salah: A Technical and Jurisprudential Analysis of Sifatus Salah

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The ritual prayer, known as **Salah** or **Namaz**, stands as the second pillar of Islam, serving as the primary ontological link between the practitioner and the Divine. In the context of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and the science of prophetic traditions (*Hadith*), the quest for the **authenticity of Salah** is not merely an academic exercise but a foundational requirement for the validity of worship. This article provides an in-depth technical analysis of the prayer's method, based on the seminal work *Sifatus Salah* (The Description of the Prayer) and various authentic narrations found in **Sahih Bukhari**, **Sunan al-Tirmidhi**, and other primary sources. We will explore the evidentiary basis for prayer postures, the legislative status of specific prayers like *Salat al-Tasbeih*, and the rigorous standards applied by *Muhaddithin* (Hadith scholars) to ensure the method of prayer aligns with the practice of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

Theoretical Framework of Salah Authentication

The imperative for establishing an authentic method of Salah is derived from the well-known command of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): "*Pray as you have seen me praying*" (Sahih Bukhari). This directive necessitates a technical breakdown of the prayer's movements and recitations based on corroborated evidence. In the study of **Sifatus Salah**, technical writers and scholars categorize elements of prayer into three levels of obligation:

- **Arkan (Pillars)**: Essential components without which the Salah is nullified (e.g., the opening Takbir, the standing, the prostration).
- **Wajibut (Obligations)**: Necessary actions that, if omitted forgetfully, can be compensated via Sajdah al-Sahw (prostration of forgetfulness).
- **Sunan (Recommended Acts)**: Attributes and postures that complete the perfection of the prayer, such as the specific placement of hands or the raising of hands at certain junctures.

The work of scholars like **Sh. Ilyas Faisal** focuses on providing **specifically linked hadith-based evidence** for these matters, ensuring that the practitioner is not merely following cultural tradition but a documented prophetic methodology.

Technical Analysis of Prayer Postures and Their Evidentiary Basis

Establishing the authenticity of Salah requires a granular look at the physical mechanics of the prayer. Each movement must be mapped back to a *Sahih* (authentic) or *Hasan* (sound) narration.

1. The Initial Takbir and Raising of Hands (Raf' al-Yadayn)

According to the **Characteristics of Prayer** documented in Sahih Bukhari, Book 12, the prayer commences with the *Takbirat al-Ihram*. A technical point of variation and discussion among scholars is the extent to which the hands are raised. Data indicates two primary authentic methods:

- To the level of the shoulders: Supported by multiple narrations in Bukhari and Muslim.
- To the level of the earlobes: As detailed in the technical manual 02-How-to-Pray-Salah.pdf, this is a common practice based on narrations in Sunan Abi Dawud and Sahih Muslim.

2. Hand Placement During Qiyam (The Standing)

The technical positioning of the hands during the standing phase of prayer is a subject of significant jurisprudential literature. While the core requirement is the standing itself, the **Sifat** **Salah** literature analyzes the following placements:

- Beneath the Navel: Often cited in the Hanafi school of thought, utilizing narrations found in the Musannaf of Ibn Abi Shaybah.
- Upon the Chest: Cited in works focusing on Sahih narrations, such as those by Ibn Khuzaymah, suggesting a more direct link to prophetic practice in certain contexts.
- On the Navel: A middle-ground posture documented in various technical manuals.

3. Detailed Anatomical Alignment in Ruku and Sujud

The **authenticity of Salah** is also measured by the precision of physical alignment. For instance, in *Ruku* (bowing), the back must be kept straight enough that if water were poured on it, it would stay level. In *Sujud* (prostration), the Prophet (pbuh) commanded the involvement of seven bones: the forehead (including the nose), the two hands, the two knees, and the toes of both feet. This technical requirement ensures the mechanical integrity of the prayer.

Comparative Analysis of Scholarly Opinions on Salat al-Tasbih

One of the most debated topics in the realm of prayer authenticity is **Salat al-Tasbih**. The following table provides a comparison of scholarly evaluations regarding its legislative status and the strength of its supporting evidence.

Scholar / School	Evaluation of Authenticity	Technical Justification
Imam Tirmidhi	Accepted Virtue	Recognized the virtue based on the acceptance by scholars like Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak.
Imam al-Nawawi	Questionable / Dismissed	In al-Majmu', he expressed skepticism, noting that the chain of narration did not meet his criteria for Sahih.
Ibn al-Jawzi	Fabricated (Mawdu)	Historically placed it in his collection of fabricated narrations, though this was later challenged.
Al-Albani	Sahih / Hasan	Modern grading often classifies the collective chains of narration as strengthening one another (Lighayrihi).
Sh. Ilyas Faisal	Authentic Practice	Details the specific method of 15 tasbihs in each position as a valid sunnah.

The technical structure of **Salat al-Tasbih** involves four units (*Rak'ahs*) where a specific glorification (*Subhanallahi wal hamdulillahi...*) is repeated 75 times per Rak'ah, totaling 300 repetitions. The disagreement among *Muhaddithin* stems from the unique structure of this prayer, which differs significantly from the standard five daily prayers.

The Mathematical Reward Model: Sending Blessings (Salawat)

Beyond the physical mechanics of Salah, the spiritual mechanics include the *Salawat* (sending blessings upon the Prophet). This is governed by a precise reward ratio found in the Hadith of **Abu Hurayrah**. The formulaic representation of this reward is as follows:

Where **R** represents the blessings from Allah and **n** represents the single *Salah*(blessing) sent by the believer. This 1:10 ratio is a fundamental concept in Islamic theology, emphasizing the exponential spiritual return on technical adherence to prophetic traditions.

Field Guide: Step-by-Step Procedure for Authentic Salah

To ensure a high level of accuracy, the following procedural checklist should be followed, derived from **Sifatus Salah** and **Sahih Bukhari**.

Phase 1: Pre-Operational Requirements

- Purification (Wudu): Ensure physical purity as per the Sunnah.
- Intention (Niyyah): Formulate the internal resolve for the specific prayer.
- Facing the Qiblah: Alignment toward the Kaaba in Makkah.
- Sutrah: Placing an object in front of the praying person to prevent passage.

Phase 2: Execution of Movements

- Takbir: Raise hands to shoulders or earlobes and say "Allahu Akbar."
- Qira'at: Recite Al-Fatiha (a pillar) and another Surah (in the first two Rak'ahs). Recitation must be audible in Fajr, Maghrib, and Isha, and silent in Dhuhr and Asr.

- Ruku: Bow until the back is level, hands on knees with fingers spread.
- I'tidal: Stand up straight after bowing, saying "Sami' Allahu liman hamidah."
- Sujud: Prostrate on seven limbs, ensuring the elbows are lifted and not resting on the floor (like a dog).
- Tashahhud: Sit for the testimony of faith, moving the index finger according to the authentic narrations described by Muhammad Salah and other contemporary teachers.

Troubleshooting and Common Errors in Prayer Authenticity

Even with a technical guide, certain failure modes are common in the practice of Salah. Addressing these requires an understanding of the *Mufsidat* (nullifiers) and *Makruhat* (disliked acts).

1. Lack of Tranquility (Tuma'ninah)

A frequent error is the "pecking of a crow," where the practitioner moves too quickly between positions. Technically, *Tuma'ninah* is a pillar of Salah. Each bone must return to its original position before moving to the next posture. Failure to achieve this state renders the Salah invalid according to the Hadith of the "man who prayed badly."

2. Incorrect Hand Placement and Movement

While variations exist, moving the hands excessively or failing to place them correctly according to one's chosen *Madhhab* (school) or the *Hadith* evidence can detract from the focus (*Khushu*). The technical manual by **Faisal, S.M. Ilyas** emphasizes that covering the head is a characteristic of the prayer that many scholars consider a part of the "beautification" (*Zinah*) of Salah based on the Quranic verse, "Take your adornment at every masjid."

3. Misalignment in Congregational Prayer

In the technical workflow of *Salah al-Jama'ah* (congregational prayer), the alignment of the heels and shoulders is mandatory to close gaps. Authentic narrations suggest that gaps between worshippers allow for distractions (metaphorically described as Shaytan entering the ranks).

Synthesis of Authentic Practice and Spiritual Efficacy

The rigorous pursuit of **authenticity in Salah** is not an end in itself but a means to achieve the highest level of spiritual efficacy. By adhering to the **Characteristics of Prayer** as defined in the **Sahih Bukhari** and the meticulous breakdowns in **Sifat-us-Salah**, the practitioner ensures that their worship is modeled after the most perfect example. The technical accuracy of the prayer—from the level of the earlobes in Takbir to the placement of the hands beneath the navel or on the chest—creates a disciplined framework that fosters *Khushu* (submission).

As we have seen, the debate over prayers like **Salat al-Tasbeeh** highlights the internal verification systems of Islamic scholarship, where *Muhaddithin* like **Imam Tirmidhi** and **Al-Nawawi** apply logic and chain-of-narration analysis to determine the legislative weight of a practice. Ultimately, whether one is studying the work of **Sh. Ilyas Faisal** or reviewing the primary texts of the IIUM collections, the goal remains the same: to perform a prayer that is acceptable to the Creator and consistent with the authentic Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Adherence to these technical standards, supported by **authentic hadith**, provides the believer with the certainty (*Yaqeen*) required for a sound and meaningful spiritual life.

Tags: #Salah Authenticity #Sifat-us-Salah #Hadith Analysis #Prophetic Prayer #Salat al-Tasbeeh

