

THE SECRETS
OF
PRAYER

Āyatullāh Jawādī Āmulī

Translated by Dr. Arman Rahmim

With a foreword by Dr. Mohammad Soleimanpanah

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Contents

Foreword.....	i
Translator’s Introduction.....	v
Author’s Prologue.....	1
The First Stage: Reason-based Evidence Supplemented by Narration.....	4
The Second Stage: Narrational Evidence backed by Reason.....	5
Summary of Issues Clarified in the Prologue	12
Prelude: Secrets of Acts before Prayer.....	13
Introduction	13
The Role of Causality.....	15
The Secrets of Ritual Cleansing (<i>Ṭahārah</i>)	16
The Secret of Cleansing by Soil (<i>Tayammum</i>).....	27
The Secrets of the other Prerequisites of Prayer	28
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	30
The Relativity of the Secret and Unseen.....	32
Chapter I: Secrets of the Inaugurating <i>Takbīrs</i> in Prayer	33
Introduction	33
The First Narration.....	33
The Second Narration.....	35
The Sublime (<i>Malakūti</i>) Aspect of the Narration.....	37
The Third Narration.....	38
The Fourth Narration.....	39
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	41

SECRETS OF PRAYER

Chapter II: Secrets of Intention	45
Introduction.....	45
The Three Types of Worship	47
Theological and Jurisprudential Considerations	49
Returning to our Main Discussion.....	51
The Role of <i>Riyā</i> and Lack of Intellect in Spoiling Deeds	53
The Role of Sincerity and the Intellect.....	54
Outward and Inward Intention.....	56
The Spirit of the Deed	58
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	60
Chapter III: Secrets of Recitation	62
Introduction.....	62
The Most Magnificent Name	65
The Qualities of <i>Bismillāh</i> and the Secrets of the Opening Chapter of <i>al-Ḥamd</i>	66
An Explanation of the Plural Pronoun in “We Worship”	70
The Benefits of Certitude (<i>Yaqīn</i>)	72
Degrees of Invocation and Whispering	73
Secrets of the Second <i>Sūrah</i> Recited.....	76
The View of the People of Wisdom	79
Divine Criteria in the Verses of <i>Sūrahs Ḥadīd</i> and <i>Tawḥīd</i>	83
Secrets of the Four Glorifications (<i>tasbīḥāt</i>).....	86
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	87

CONTENTS

Chapter IV: Secrets of Standing, Bowing, Prostrating, etc.	91
Introduction	91
The Secret of Standing.....	94
The Distinction of Standing in Prayer	97
The Outcome of the Discussion on Standing.....	98
Secrets of Bowing and Prostration.....	100
The Outward Realization of Humility.....	103
The State of the Performer of Prayer while Praying	105
The Difference between Bowing and Prostration	107
A Further Significance of Prostration:	110
Prostration and the Issue of the Afterlife	110
The Prominence of Prostration in the Narrations	112
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	118
Chapter V: Secrets of Qunūt, Tashahhud, Salām, etc.	122
Secrets of Qunūt.....	122
Secrets of <i>Tashahhud</i>	124
Secrets of Invoking Blessings upon Muḥammad and the Progeny of Muḥammad.....	126
Secrets of Sitting before Standing up	128
Invocation (<i>dhikr</i>) while Standing up and its Secret	129
Secrets of <i>Salām</i> in prayer	131
<i>al-Salām</i> : one of the most beautiful Names of God.....	133
<i>Salām</i> in the word of people of (esoteric) knowledge	136
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Chapter	137
Postlude: Secrets of Acts following Prayer.....	141
Introduction	141

SECRETS OF PRAYER

The Limits of Acts following Prayer.....	144
The Rewards of Acts Following the Prayers	146
Stages of Virtue for the <i>Ta'qīb</i>	147
Recitation of Āyah al-Kursī in <i>ta'qīb</i> of prayer	149
The Lives of <i>Dhikrs</i>	151
The Sublime Goal, the Ultimate Secret, and Ways to Reach it	153
Prostration of Gratitude.....	157
The Prostration of the Imams (‘a)	158
Prolonged Prostrations of the Companions of the Imams	162
Summary of Issues Clarified in this Postlude	163
Epilogue.....	166
Concluding prayer	170
Glossary	172
Index of Qur’ānic Verses	176
Topical Index.....	184
Endnotes	187

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

Allah says:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

Indeed I am Allah —there is no god except Me. So worship Me, and maintain the prayer for My remembrance. (20:14)

Ṣalāh is a specific form of prayer and act of worship prescribed in Islam. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and the Holy Imams (ʿa) have explained and hinted at the spiritual significance of various parts of the act of prayer. Throughout history, many Muslim scholars have commented and elaborated upon what has been said regarding ṣalāh in both the Holy Qurʾān and the narrations of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the Imams (ʿa). Other scholars have also relied on their own personal experiences of spiritual vision and illumination in this regard. The result has been a voluminous body of scholarly texts on various aspects of ṣalāh.

Among the works related to ṣalāh, there are those which focus on explaining what are, in Arabic, called *asrār al-ṣalāh*, which literally means “the secrets of ṣalāh,” and those which deal with *ādāb al-ṣalāh*, which means “the etiquettes of ṣalāh.” The focus of these two endeavours is different. While the first seeks to explain and decipher the deeper layers and meanings of what is said and done in ṣalāh, the latter is related to the conducts of the worshiper and the codes and etiquettes that must be observed by him/her in order to achieve the ontological status of proximity with Allah, for which ṣalāh has been prescribed. The present work by Āyatullah ʿAbdullāh Jawādī Āmulī falls within the first group. In the introduction, his holiness Ayatullah Jawādī Āmulī explains the differences between these two complementary approaches in detail.

Since this book discusses *asrār al-ṣalāh* (secrets of *ṣalāh*), it might be useful to point out that it is, to use a western philosophical term, about the hermeneutics of *ṣalāh*. From various verses of the Holy Qurʾān and a vast body of narrations, one can easily reach the conclusion that the outward rituals and acts that constitute *ṣalāh* as a form of worship have inner and hidden meanings. Thus, it is incumbent upon us to reach for the ever richer and more profound essence of the outward acts and words of *ṣalāh*. In the classical meaning of the term, this uncovering and discovering of the meaning of the author's words or acts, which in this case is Allah, who has prescribed *ṣalāh*, is considered a hermeneutical endeavour. In other words, seeking to understand *asrār al-ṣalāh* is an attempt to understand the truer or deeper meanings of the acts and words of *ṣalāh*. Its goal is to move beyond the signs and the signifiers into the realm of the signified, which in this case would mean the existential or ontological realm. In other words, the understanding of how the ritual of *ṣalāh* is a body of signs and symbols (through its acts and words) is supposed to shape and transform the very existence of the worshiper.

As mentioned, many Muslim scholars have undertaken such an endeavour throughout history. Ayatullah Jawādī Āmulī, himself, has acknowledged in the introduction that this work, from one perspective, is an act of passing certain traditions to a new generation. He comments that “the present treatise is a brief writing about the secrets of prayer and in it I have bequeathed to the successful successors that which I inherited from the righteous predecessors.” However, the present work is unique in many respects, as are almost all of the scholarly works of the present author. Āyatullah ‘Abdullāh Jawādī Āmulī is one of very few (if not the only) living Muslim scholars who have a very deep and profound understanding of a wide range of Islamic subjects including Qurʾānic studies, the narrations of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) and Imams (ʿa), Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy, and Islamic gnosticism, including all their schools and