

(Takbirah al-Ihram: Allahu akbar (Allah is greater

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The first utterance which is obligatory for the pilgrims {hujjaj} to the House of God is the recital of labbayk the recital of which signals the commencement of their Hajj rituals and this state also makes a series of things forbidden for them.

In the same token, prayer commences with the recital of "Allahu akbar" {Allah is greater} and this makes such things as eating, drinking and talking, forbidden {haram} for the person praying. Thus, the first takbir (utterance of Allahu akbar) in prayer is called Takbirah al-Ihram. Along the way to Mecca, the pilgrims repeat the recital of labbayk whenever they reach any upward and downward slope. This repetition is recommended or optional {mustahabb}. In every bending and standing upright, standing and sitting, it is mustahabb for the one praying to repeat the recital of Allahu akbar.



"Allahu akbar" is the first obligatory utterance in the morning. It is the first phrase in the form of adhan and iqamah that a Muslim infant hears at the time of birth, and it is also the last phrase that is

recited for the dead (in the prayer of the dead {salah al-mayyit}) before he is buried. It is the only recital which is obligatory {wajib} in prayer as well as an essential pillar {rukn} of prayer.

It is the first sentence of the Muslim hymn, i.e. adhan. It is the much repeated recital at the commencement of prayer, during the prayer and afterward, such that throughout the day the Muslim repeats it 360 times during the five daily obligatory prayers (not including the mustahabb prayers) as shown below:

1. For each of the five daily prayers, the adhan is recited and in every adhan, "Allahu akbar" is repeated six times (30 times in all).
2. For each of the five daily prayers, the iqamah is recited and in every iqamah, "Allahu akbar" is

repeated four times (20 times in all).

3. Before the Takbirah al-Ihram in each of the five daily prayers, there are six mustahabb takbir and the seventh takbir constitutes that obligatory Takbirah al-Ihram (30 times in all).
4. The Takbirah al-Ihram at the beginning of prayers is repeated five times daily.
5. There is one takbir prior to every ruku' {bowing down} in the 17 rak'ahs {cycles} of the five daily prayers (17 times in all).
6. In each of the 17 rak'ahs of prayers we have two sujuds {prostrations} for each of which it is mustahabb to recite takbir - before and after the sujud (68 times in all).
7. Every prayer has a qunut prior to which there is a takbir (5 times in all).
8. At the end of each of the five daily prayers, there are three takbirs (15 times in all).
9. After every prayer, we recite takbir 34 times as part of the Tasbehat Hadrat Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) (170 times in all).

Yet, what a pity that throughout our lives, we have not recited "Allahu akbar" with attention; for, if every day a person would recite "Allah is greater" with faith and perfect attention more than .360 times, he will no longer be afraid of any power, superpower or conspiracy

Takbir in other prayers

In the 'Id al-Fitr and 'Id al-Qurban prayers, not only in the prayers but also before and after the prayers, takbir constitutes all the chants.

In the Salah al-Ayat {Prayer for Signs}, we have five ruku' and there is takbir for each ruku'. In the Salah al-Mayyit {Prayer for the Dead} also, five takbirs essentially constitute a pillar of .the prayer

How we should recite the takbir in prayer

Islam has explained the etiquette for every action. In the recital of "Allahu akbar" some rules must also be observed such as the following:

1. During the recital of takbir in prayer, we should raise both our hands parallel to our ears in such a manner that once both hands become parallel to the ears, the takbir has already been recited.

Imam ar-Rida ('a) said: "The movement of the hands during the recital of takbir is effective in focusing the attention and having complete devotion and sincerity in supplication to God."

2. The fingers of the hands during takbir should be stretched together upward.
3. The palms of the hands must be facing the qiblah.

The traditions have described the raising of the hands during takbir as the adornment of prayer.

The meaning of takbir

Allahu akbar implies that God is superior to all tangible and intangible, temporal and celestial beings.

Allahu akbar means that God is greater than that which one could describe

ای برتر از خیال و قیاس و گمان و وهم وز هرچه گفته ایم و شنیدیم و خوانده ایم
مجلس تمام گشت و به پایان رسید عمر ما همچنان در اوّل وصف تو مانده ایم

O He who is beyond imagination, analogy, illusion, and fancy! The gathering was finished and our lifespan came to an end. Yet, we are still at the beginning of describing You based on what we have said, heard and read.

Imam as-Sadiq ('a) says: "When you are reciting the takbir, everything must be insignificant in your sight except Him."

That a person would recite the takbir with his tongue while his heart is attached to something else is a lie and a deception, and because of this, God takes the sweetness of remembrance {dhikr} from him

Takbir in Islamic culture

The recital of "Allahu akbar" has been customary not only in prayer but rather in many affairs and situations. During the early period of Islam the Muslims used to recite the takbir both in times of prosperity and adversity. For example:

1. During the Battle of the Trench {khandaq}, the Muslims came across a firm rock while they were digging the trench. The pick was broken but not the rock. The Prophet (S) came and crushed the rock with a blow. The Muslims recited the takbir in unison and right there the Prophet (S) said: "I saw the fall of the Byzantine and the Persian castles in the sparks and sparkles of the rocks."
2. During the Battle of Siffin, 'Ali ('a) used to recite the takbir whenever he slew an enemy. By counting the number of takbirs, the Muslims would know the number of those whom he had sent to hellfire.
3. On the night when Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) was sent to the house of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) (after

- the wedding), 70 thousand angels came down to chant the takbir.
4. Our Holy Prophet (S) recited 40 takbirs over the body of Fatimah bint al-Asad (mother of Imam 'Ali ('a)) and 70 takbirs over the body of his uncle Hamzah.
 5. During the Hajj rituals, it is mustahabb to recite takbir with every stone that is thrown at the representations of Satan.
 6. In the Tasbihat Hadrat Fatimah az-Zahra ('a) whose reward is equivalent to a thousand rak'ahs of mustahabb prayers, 34 takbirs are included.
 7. When the Holy Prophet (S) was born, the first sentence he was able to utter was "Mubarakahu Allahu akbar" {Blessed is He; Allah is greater}.
 8. When Mecca fell into the hands of the Muslims, the Prophet (S) entered the Masjid al-Haram, pointed to the Hajar al-Aswad {Black Stone}, and recited the takbir. The Muslims also recited the same takbir which brought fear into the hearts of the polytheists.
 9. We read in the traditions: "Whenever a certain thing astonishes you, recite the takbir."
 10. During the Battle of Uhud, one of the leading warriors among the infidels asked for a challenger. Hadrat 'Ali ('a) came forward and he dealt the enemy such a heavy blow that the Prophet (S) and the Muslims recited the takbir with a loud voice.
 11. The Holy Prophet (S) said to Hadrat 'Ali ('a): "Whenever you look at the crescent {hilal} or the mirror, or you encounter a problem, say takbir three times."
 12. "Allahu akbar" was the slogan of Zayd, son of Imam as-Sajjad ('a), who revolted against the 'Umayyad rule.
 13. During the Battle of Badr, the Prophet (S) was awaiting the news of the death of Nawfal, one of the enemy chiefs. When he (S) was informed that Hadrat 'Ali ('a) had slain Nawfal, the Prophet (S) recited the takbir.
 14. When Hadrat 'Ali ('a) came to propose for Hadrat Zahra ('a), the Prophet (S) said: "You wait. I have to refer the matter to my daughter Fatimah. But when she was consulted, Hadrat Zahra ('a) remained silent and did not say anything. The Prophet said: "Allahu akbar! Sukutuha iqraruha" {Allah is greater! Her silence is her approval}.
 15. During the battle against the Khawarij (Kharijites), when their commander perished, Hadrat 'Ali ('a) recited takbir and performed prostration, and all the people recited takbir.
 16. A group of Jews embraced Islam and they said to the Prophet (S): "The previous prophets had successors. Who is the executor of your will {wasi}?" At this juncture, the following Verse :of Guardianship {ayah al-wilayah} was revealed

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

*Your guardian is only Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the“
zakat while bowing down.”*

The Prophet (S) said, “Let us go to the mosque.” When they arrived, they saw a beggar who was glad because Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) while in the state of ruku’ in prayer had given him his ring. At that moment the Prophet (S) recited takbir.

17. Recital of takbir at the time of entering into the holy shrines of the infallible Imams has been enjoined. Similarly, before reading Ziyarat Jami’ah, we recite 100 takbirs in three stages. According to the late Majlisi, the reason for all these takbirs is perhaps for us not to indulge in extremism {ghuluww} with regard to the Imams (‘a) as described in the sentences contained in the Ziyarat Jami’ah.

18. In his judgments, whenever Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) identified the criminal, he would recite takbir.

19. Maytham at-Tammar was hung at the order of ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyad and then attacked with spears for the crime of siding with Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a). At the moment of his martyrdom, he was reciting takbir while the blood flowed from his mouth.

20. During the ascension {mi’raj}, the Prophet recited takbir at every heaven he passed by.

21. Jibra’il (Archangel Gabriel) (‘a) was beside the Prophet (S) when Hadrat ‘Ali (‘a) came in. Jibra’il (‘a) said: “O Muhammad! By God who appointed you as the Prophet! Compared to the dwellers of the earth, the inhabitants of the heavens are better and more familiar with this ‘Ali.

Whenever he recites takbir in the battles, we angels recite it along with him.”

22. During the Battle of Khaybar, when the Muslims entered the fortress, they recited the takbir .so much that the Jews had to flee