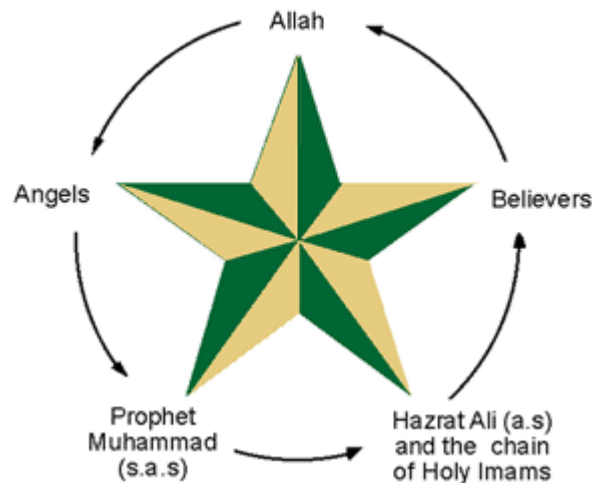


The Concept of Angelic Salwat and Conditions for Harnessing Its Full Potential

Noorallah G. Juma, Ph.D.

Q.1. What is an angelic salwat?

A. 1. In order to answer this question, let us first study the following diagram:



The salwat originates from the World of Command. Allah says 'Be' and the cycle of salwat gets initiated. The salwat descends from the World of Command into the World of Creation. The angels carry the blessing of the salwat to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s) and his successors. According to the Ismaili Muslim constitution, the successors of the Holy Prophet are the Imams who are his direct descendants through Hazrat Mawlana Ali Amiru-I-Mu'minin ('Alayhi-s-salam) and his daughter Hazrat Bibi Fatimat-az-Zahra, Khatun-i-Jannat ('Alayhi-s-salam). The salwat then reaches the believers.

When the believers recite the salwat with conviction, ardent love for the Holy Prophet his true successors (the Holy Imams), then it (the salwat) is propelled to the World of Command by them (the Holy Prophet and the True Imams). The status of salwat is increased and it then descends as an angelic salwat for the benefit of the whole creation. This includes all Muslims and all human beings. This concise statement clearly explains about the enormous power of the angelic salwat.

Please also note that Allah and His Angels send salwat on true believers only through the Holy Prophet and his true successors, the Holy Imams. This is consistent with the observation that every spiritual favor of God is received only through His treasures, namely the Holy Prophet and his true successor, NOOR Mowlana Murtaza Ali (a.s.). Therefore, according to the Ismaili Muslim tradition, our NOOR Mowlana Hazir Imam, the direct descendent of the Holy Prophet and Mowlana Ali (a.s.), is a vital link in this whole process.

Q. 2. Why are the Holy Quran and the Ahle-Bait Inseparable?

A. 2 In Lecture 11, The Meaning of the Mysterious Letters, from the book titled Life and Lectures of the Grand Missionary Al-Muayyad-Fid-Din Al-Shirazi (page 98), we have been taught that the Holy Quran and the Ahle-Bait are inseparable:

"...The Prophet has said, "I am leaving amongst you two weighty things. The one is the book of God and second is my 'ahle-bait. If you stick to them you will never be lost." He added to this by saying: "They will never part with each other until they return to me at the 'hauz-kahusar' ". He meant to say that the book of God and the 'ahle-bait' are inseparable. The one cannot exist without the other."

Q. 3. Why do we recite salwat?

A. 3. We recite salwat on many occasions because this is most practical way to demonstrate our love the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.) and his close relations and their descendants. This has been explained very clearly in the following excerpt from Lecture 10, The Love of the Imams is a Duty Imposed by God, from the book titled Life and Lectures of the Grand Missionary Al-Muayyad-Fid-Din Al-Shirazi (page 94):

"The 'Shia' learned divines maintain that God has enjoined on the followers of the Prophet to give him a return for lamp-posts of guidance which he has erected for them. The Holy Quran says, "Say, I do not ask you for a return except the love for the relatives". They say that once a group of people came to the Prophet saying, "O Prophet of God, you came to us at a time when we had lost the way. God guided is through you. We were poor, God made us rich through you. Our wealth is at your disposal. Take from it whatever you like." "It was on this occasion," say the learned divines from amongst the 'Shias' "that the above verse relating to the love of the relations was revealed." The Quranic expression, 'the love for the relations' according to them means 'the love of Ali, Fatima, Hasan, Husain and their descendants.' "

Q. 4. Why do we love the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.) and his close relations and their descendants?

A. 4. This has been explained very clearly in the following excerpt from Lecture 12, The Wilayat of Ali, from the book titled Life and Lectures of the Grand Missionary Al-Muayyad-Fid-Din Al-Shirazi (page 101):

"It must be borne in mind that after the death of the Prophet the belief in the welayat of the Imam from his progeny is as important a part of our religion as the belief in the wilyat of the Prophet in his life time. This is supported by the Tradition according to which the Prophet is reported to have said at 'Ghadeer Khum', "Am I not more precious to you than your own selves?" This is an echo of the Quranic verse which says, "The Prophet is more dear to the 'Momins' than their own selves to them." It is said, than in response to this question of the Prophet, when the 'Momins' said "Yes, you are dearer to us than our own selves", the Prophet said, "O God, be witness to their admission". After this he said, "Ali is master of one who acknowledges me as

his master. O God love those who love Ali. Help those who help Ali. Desert those who desert Ali. Let the truth accompany Ali wherever he goes." "

Q. 5. Who is the best pleader of our cause?

- A. 5.** This has been explained very clearly in the following excerpt from Lecture 19, He Who Knows Himself Knows God, from the book titled Life and Lectures of the Grand Missionary Al-Muayyad-Fid-Din Al-Shirazi (pages 126-127):

"O Momins, may God make you men of insight and confer upon you the last of His favours, the forgiveness of your sins. Praise be to God who is hidden from the knowledge of men and who is above imagination. Greetings be on His apostle, the best of mankind, Mohammed who dispelled the darkness by the light of Islam and who invited people to the abode of safety. Be the greetings on Ali, his 'wasee' the Lion of God, the Solver of our difficulties and the dispeller of our grief, Ali bin Abi-Talib, the master of Philosophy and may the greetings be on the Imams from his choice progeny forever. God is enough for us. He is the best pleader of our Cause."

Q. 6. How many salwats should one recite?

- A. 6.** The answer to this question is given in Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi of Imam NOOR Mowlana Shah Mustansir bi'l-laah II (a.s.). The Holy Imam has described methods which can bring sunshine in our hearts and have given guidance of the recitation of salwat as follows:

"The (real) believer is one whose words (iqrar wa qawl) are unshakeable and true (haqq), whose thoughts of the heart are true, whose promise, whose love and affection are true. From head to foot that slave of God must be sincere and true (haqq). He must be sweet-worded and mild, his soul (ruh) must be sincere. He must be continually preoccupied with the remembrance of God (dhikr), always remaining in meditation (bandagi) and dhikr and praise of God, lauding and recognising God the All-High (Shinakht-i Haqq ta'ala). His actions must be pious, his behaviour proper. He must carry out the commandments and injunctions of his Lord (Khudawand) and Pir. **He must keep on his tongue the mention of Five Holy Persons (Pan Tan), mentioning and glorifying God with great affection.** He recognizes his Master (Aqua), the Supreme Lord (Sahibu'l-amr), the Imam of the time, follows his path, always remaining obedient and listful (attentive) to him, delivering himself, his affairs, and everything that he possesses to that Lord (Mawla) who is the Imam of the time, and the Lord of the world and of all who inhabit it." (page 7)

Q.7. Who are the people who have lost enthusiasm and become tired of uttering the dhikr (salwat and other dhikr tasbis)?

A. 7. The answer to this question is given in (Pir) Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi of Imam NOOR Mowlana Shah Mustansir bi'l-laah II (a.s.) as follows:

Cause:

"Abstain from misappropriating anything so that your hearts may not be humiliated. Those whose hearts have lost enthusiasm and become tired of uttering the dhikr, either from indifference or laziness, come to this because of their misappropriation, of what is unlawful, or by not paying (submitting) their religious dues." (page 43)

Remedy:

"Therefore the real believer is the one who follows the Imam of his time and waits his order. Whatever the Lord of the time, who is the Master of religion, orders him, he listens and acts accordingly. He must pay (submit) the tithe (mal-i wajibat) in full. Every night he must reflect on his duty to pay (submit) something as the tithe, or whether he has paid (submitted it) in full. If it comes to his mind that a portion of tithe still remains with his own property, pending settlement, he should pay (submit) it quickly. Whenever you pay (submit) your tithe, you will be thanked, and then you may rejoice as if you have received Divine help in delivering the Imam's dues to him." (page 51)

* I prefer to use the word 'submit' rather than 'pay' because tithe is a trust (amanat) which has to be returned to its rightful owner. An act of submission creates humility in the heart. Therefore, please re-read the above paragraph with the word 'submit' and experience the feeling in your heart.

Q.8 What do we have to do first, recite the Holy Dua or recite the salwat?

A. 8. The answer is the Holy Dua has to be recited first because this is a compulsory prayer. A long form of salwat is incorporated in the first part of the Holy Dua. Then we should invoke angelic salwat for peace and spiritual advancement. The following excerpts emphasize the recitation of Holy Dua **at its proper time**, once in the morning and twice in the evening:

Teachings of Allah and His Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.s.):

"Ibn Mas'ud said: I asked the Prophet which action is dearest to God and he replied, "Prayer at its proper time." ¹

"Ibn Mas'ud said that a man kissed a woman and came and told the Prophet. Then God revealed, "And observe the prayer at the two ends of the day and the neighbouring parts of the night, for good deeds remove evil deeds." (Holy Qur'an 11:114). The man asked God's messenger whether this referred to him, and he replied, "It refers to everyone of my whole people." ²

"Abdallah b. 'Amr. b. al-'As said that the Prophet mentioned prayer one day saying, "If anyone keeps to it, it will be light, evidence and salvation for him on the day of resurrection." ³

Teaching of Hazrat (Noor) Mowlana (Shah) Murtaza Ali (a.s.):
"Optional prayers cannot attain the pleasures of God for you when compulsory daily prayers are left unattended." ⁴

Teaching of Noor Mowlana Shah Sultan Muhammad Shah (a.s.):
"The healthy human body is the temple in which the flame of the Holy Spirit burns, and thus it deserves the respect of scrupulous cleanliness and personal hygiene. Prayer is a daily necessity, a direct communication of the spark with the universal flame" ⁵

Q.9 Why should we obey and submit to the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams?

A.9. The answer to this question is given in the following excerpts from Majlis 10: Submission to the Decision of the Imam by Qazi Noaman [Source: Selections from Qazi Noaman's Kitab-ul-Himma fi Adabi Ataba-el-a'emma or Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam. pp. 64-73]:

"God says (in the Holy Quran), "Obey God, the Prophet and obey your spiritual leaders." (Surah 4, Ayat 59). "I swear by your Lord, they cannot become 'momins' unless they refer their disputes to you and are perfectly satisfied with your decision and they submit to the utmost limit." (Surah 4, Ayat 65).

Submission implies obedience to God externally and internally; and obedience to God is linked with the obedience of the Prophet and to the Imams. Accordingly it is the duty of every 'momin' to submit entirely to the Imams, He should act strictly according to their instructions. He should have implicit faith in them and should give expression to it openly and in secret. It matters little whether he finds their instructions agreeable to him or not, it matters little whether he understands their significance or not. He should persevere in carrying them out and disciplining his mind in this direction. The time is sure to come when he will find agreeable what looks disagreeable to him now, when the significance of what he fails to understand now will ultimately dawn on his mind."

Q. 10. Is it easy to submit and follow the Holy Imams?

A. 10. The answer to this question is given in the following excerpts from Majlis 10: Submission to the Decision of the Imam by Qazi Noaman [Source: Selections from Qazi Noaman's Kitab-ul-Himma fi Adabi Ataba-el-a'emma or Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam. pp. 64-73]:

"It is a hard task for the 'momins'. The more they progress in the pursuit in this course of submission, the more they rise in the estimation of God and the Imams. Imam Jafar, peace be on him, says "No one can understand the nature of our affairs excepting the angels who are within the closest proximity to God, the Prophets, ourselves or those devotees of God whose hearts have been illumined by Him."

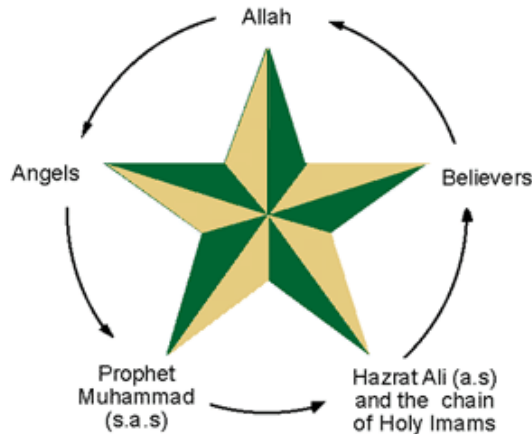
It is necessary for the followers of the Imams in particular and the people in general that they should discipline their minds and train themselves to act to the satisfaction of God. They should be devoted to Him, to the Prophet, and to the Imams from his progeny. They should be loyal to them and pay then the 'amanat' which God has deposited with us for them. This payment is a bounden duty on us. We should always be on our guard to see that we do not lower ourselves in the estimation of the Imams. We should never do anything which is disliked by them or is disagreeable to them."

Q. 11. How does a believer receive the barakat of salwat?

A. 11. The answer to this question is given in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"Of their goods, take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf. Verily thy prayers are a source of security for them: And God is One Who heareth and knoweth. " Holy Qu'ran 9:103 (Yusufali's translation)

It is clear from the above verse and the following diagram that the true Hazir (present and living) Imam purifies the believers and prays for them so that they may gain the benefits of the angelic salwat.



Q. 12. What else should a believer do to get the angelic salwat?

A. 12. The answer to this question is given in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

"O ye who believe! Celebrate the praises of God, and do this often; And glorify Him morning and evening. " Holy Qu'ran 33:41-42 (Yusufali's translation)

In order to get the barakat of angelic salwat it is necessary to do abundant dhikr and be regular in prayers in the morning and in the evening.

Q. 13. Is it easy to get angelic salwat?

A. 13. The answer to this question is given in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

"Be sure we shall test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, Who say, when afflicted with calamity: "To God We belong, and to Him is our return":- They are those on whom (Descend) blessings from God, and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance. " Holy Qu'ran 2:155-157 (Yusufali's translation)

Purification of a believer occurs when he/she is tested. Those who patiently persevere these tests are blessed with angelic salwat and receive guidance.

Q. 14. How many salwats can we say while reciting the Holy Dua?

A. 14. In order to answer this question let us first read article B from the preamble of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslim constitution:

"In accordance to the Shia doctrine, tradition, and interpretation of history, the Holy Prophet (S.A.S.) designated and appointed his cousin and son-in-law Hazrat Mawlana Ali Amiru-I-Mu'minin ('Alayhi-s-salam), to be the first Imam to continue the Ta'wil and Ta'lim of Allah's final message and to guide the murids, and proclaimed that the Imamatus should continue by heredity through Hazrat Mawlana Ali (A.S.) and his daughter Hazrat Bibi Fatimat-az-Zahra, Khatun-i-Jannat ('Alayha-s-salam)."

The words 'Alayhi-s-salam' mean 'Peace be upon him'. This is a short form of salwat and can only be used when the name of Panj tan Pak or Holy Imams is recited or mentioned. If one chooses, this principle can be used during the recitation of the Holy Du'a. It is a good idea to say 'Alayhi-s-salam' silently after each name is recited in the following sections of the Holy Dua:

1. In the sixth part of the Holy Dua when the names of Panj tan Pak (5 Holy Persons) and when the names of 48 Holy Imams are recited.
2. At the end of each of the six parts of Holy Du'a when the name of NOOR Mawlana Hazir Imam is recited.

There is an extended form of salwat in the third paragraph of the first part of the Holy Du'a. Therefore, a sensitive person can recite an equivalent of 60 salwats during the recitation of the Holy Du'a. This is an entirely optional activity but is a powerful application of basic Islamic principles. It is easy to do this when someone else is reciting the Holy Du'a for the congregation.

I hope that this resource will help you prepare for the Golden Jubilee Didar and Golden Noorani Didar.

Rakh Mowla te,
Noorallah Juma
September 9, 2006

Notes:

1. Robson, J., Book IV. Prayer. Chapter XVII. In: Mishkat al Masabih Vol. I (English translation with explanatory notes), 114-115.
2. Robson, J., Book IV. Prayer. Chapter XVII. In: Mishkat al Masabih Vol. I (English translation with explanatory notes), 114.
3. Robson, J., Book IV. Prayer. Chapter XVII. In: Mishkat al Masabih Vol. I (English translation with explanatory notes), 116.
4. Imam Hazrat (Noor) Mowlana (Shah) Murtaza Ali (a.s.). Nahjul Balagha: Sermons, letters and saying of Hazrat Ali (Translated by Jafery, Syed Mohammed Askari), Sayings of Hazrat Ali: 39, 277.
5. Aga Khan III (Noor Mowlana Shah Sultan Mohammed Shah), Memoirs of Aga Khan, 176.

References:

Aga Khan III. 1954. *Memoirs of Aga Khan*. Cassell, London.

Aga Khan IV. 1987. The constitution of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims. Islamic Publications Limited, London, England.

Muscatti, J., Moulvi, K.B. A. M. 1950. Qazi Noaman's Kitab-ul-Himma fi Adabi Ataba-el-a'emma or Code of Conduct for the Followers of Imam. Translated into English by Prof. Jawad Muscati (Ustad-Fil-Uloom-II-Arabbiya) and Khan Bahadur Prof. A. M. Moulvi, M.A. Published by The Shia Imami Ismailia Association for Africa.

Muscatti, J., Moulvi, K.B. A. M. 1966. Life and Lectures of the Grand Missionary Al-Muayyad-Fid-Din Al-Shirazi. Ismailia Association Pakistan, Karachi-2

Imam Noor Mowlana Shah Mustansir bi'l-laah II. Advices of Manliness (Pandiyat-i Jawanmardi). Translated from Persian to English by W. Ivanow. The Ismaili Society Series A No. 6.

Robson, J. *Mishkat al Masabih Vol. I (English translation with explanatory notes)*, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore, r1990.

Yusuf Ali, A. *The Holy Qur'an (translation and commentary)*. American Trust Publications, 1977.