



## **A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE JURIDICAL POSITION OF INTENTION IN PRAYER: AN ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF FIQH AL-HADITH**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The study of intention (*niyyah*) in prayer constitutes one of the pivotal discourses in Islamic law that has been continuously debated throughout the history of scholarly thought. Intention, as the essence of every act of worship, not only determines the validity of the act but also serves as a measure of its spiritual value before Allah (SWT). Divergent perspectives emerge when scholars situate intention within the framework of ritual jurisprudence, particularly regarding whether it constitutes a pillar (*rukṇ*) or merely a condition (*shart*) of prayer. The Shāfiʿī school maintains that intention is a pillar of prayer, viewing it as an intrinsic component of worship itself, whereas the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī schools classify it as a condition for the validity of prayer, arguing that intention accompanies prayer externally, similar to the role of purification (*tahārah*). This divergence in classification is rooted in the diversity of juristic methodologies (*istinbāt*) and principles of legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) employed in interpreting scriptural sources, particularly the well-known prophetic tradition, “*innamā al-aʿmāl bi al-niyyāt*” (“actions are only judged by intentions”). This research adopts a qualitative method with a library-based approach, drawing on both classical and contemporary literature in the fields of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *hadith*. The analysis employs a descriptive-analytical method, first outlining scholarly opinions and subsequently subjecting them to critical examination in order to ascertain the position of intention within the structure of prayer. The findings indicate that, despite differences in juristic classification, all schools unanimously agree that intention is an indispensable element of prayer. The distinction between its classification as a pillar or a condition is not contradictory; rather, it reflects the breadth of Islamic legal methodology, which ultimately enriches the intellectual tradition of *fiqh*. Consequently, intention retains its central role as the determinant of both the validity and the spiritual merit of worship, underscoring the importance of integrating both the outward and inward dimensions in the performance of prayer.

Key work: Hadith, prayer, *fiqh Al-hadis*

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian mengenai niat dalam shalat merupakan salah satu diskursus penting dalam hukum Islam yang terus dibahas sepanjang sejarah pemikiran ulama. Niat, sebagai inti dari setiap amal ibadah, tidak hanya menentukan sah atau tidaknya suatu amal, tetapi juga menjadi tolok ukur nilai spiritual di sisi Allah Swt. Perbedaan pandangan muncul ketika ulama menempatkan niat dalam kerangka fiqh ibadah, apakah ia berkedudukan sebagai rukun atau hanya sebagai syarat shalat. Mazhab Syafi'i berpendapat bahwa niat adalah rukun shalat karena dipandang sebagai bagian esensial dari ibadah itu sendiri, sedangkan mazhab Hanafi, Maliki, dan Hanbali menempatkannya sebagai syarat sah shalat, dengan alasan bahwa niat menyertai shalat dari luar, layaknya thaharah. Perbedaan klasifikasi ini berakar pada keragaman metodologi istinbat dan kaidah ushul fiqh yang digunakan dalam memahami dalil naqli, terutama hadis masyhur "innamā al-a'māl bi al-niyyāt" (segala amal bergantung pada niat). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kepustakaan (*library research*), memanfaatkan literatur klasik maupun kontemporer dalam bidang ushul fiqh dan hadis. Analisis dilakukan dengan metode deskriptif-analitis, yaitu mendeskripsikan pandangan ulama kemudian menganalisisnya secara kritis untuk menemukan posisi niat dalam struktur ibadah shalat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terjadi perbedaan pandangan mengenai status niat, semua mazhab sepakat bahwa niat merupakan elemen pokok yang tidak dapat dipisahkan dari ibadah shalat. Perbedaan klasifikasi antara rukun dan syarat tidak bersifat kontradiktif, melainkan mencerminkan keluasan metodologi hukum Islam yang justru memperkaya khazanah keilmuan fiqh. Dengan demikian, niat tetap menempati posisi sentral sebagai penentu sah dan bernilainya ibadah, sekaligus menegaskan pentingnya integrasi antara dimensi lahiriah dan batiniah dalam pelaksanaan shalat.

**Kata Kunci:** *Niat, Shalat, Rukun, Syarat, Hadis*

**A. Introduction**

In the Islamic tradition, every activity of a Muslim is grounded in intention (*niyyah*). Intention serves as the foundation that determines both the quality and the acceptability of an action. Without intention, a deed loses its direction and spiritual value. Thus, intention occupies a central position in both daily activities and religious observances. In particular, within the context of worship, intention assumes a highly strategic role. It functions as the motivating force of the heart, which is then manifested through bodily actions. Prayer (*ṣalāh*), as the second pillar of Islam, represents a form of



worship that requires not only the conformity of outward movements but also the sincerity of inward devotion, both of which originate from intention. Through intention, the ritual of prayer acquires its spiritual meaning as well as its juridical legitimacy. Consequently, the role of intention in prayer becomes a crucial subject of inquiry in Islamic studies, especially within the disciplines of hadith and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.<sup>1</sup>

The question of the juridical status of intention (*niyyah*) in acts of worship, particularly in prayer (*ṣalāh*), has long occupied the attention of Muslim scholars throughout history. The debate centers on whether intention should be regarded as an integral pillar (*rukṇ*) of prayer or merely as a prerequisite (*shart*) for its validity.<sup>2</sup> Some scholars affirm that intention (*niyyah*) constitutes an integral pillar inherently embedded in the performance of prayer, while others regard it as a prerequisite that must be established prior to the commencement of prayer. This divergence reflects the breadth of discourse within *uṣūl al-fiqh* and at the same time underscores the significance of intention in the legal discussion of worship. Nevertheless, the role of intention within the heart of a worshipper remains indispensable, for the essence of every act of devotion ultimately depends upon it. Accordingly, intention is a fundamental requirement in both obligatory ritual acts of worship (*‘ibādah maḥḍah*) and non-ritual or ancillary acts of worship (*‘ibādah ghayr maḥḍah*). Neither of these forms of worship can be separated from the intention of the individual who performs them.<sup>3</sup>

Against this backdrop, the present inquiry endeavors to interrogate the juridical locus of intention (*niyyah*) in the observance of prayer through the epistemological lens of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, with particular reference to the dialectic between *ḥukm waḍ‘ī* (constitutive law) and *ḥukm taklīfī* (prescriptive law). The investigation is structured around two cardinal questions: first, what constitutes the normative foundation of intention in prayer; and second, whether intention ought to be situated as a constitutive pillar (*rukṇ*) intrinsic to the act of prayer, or as a prerequisite condition (*shart*) antecedent to its validity, as articulated within the juristic discourse of *uṣūl*. By delineating these points of contention, the study aspires to yield a more profound apprehension of the ontological significance of intention in ritual devotion and its far-reaching implications within the hermeneutical architecture of *fiqh al-‘ibādah*.

The methodological framework of this study is qualitative in nature, employing a library-based research design. Data were collected through a

<sup>1</sup> Ali Hasballah, *Ushul Tasyri’ Al-Islam*, 6th edn (Darul Fikri al-Arabi, 1982), p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> Wahbah Zuhaily, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islamy Wa Adillatihu*, 4th edn (Dar-al-fikri al-Ma’shir, 1997), p. 771.

<sup>3</sup> Rinwanto and Shofiyullahul, ‘MEMAHAMI KONSEP NIAT DALAM BERIBADAH HINGGA ISTITHA’AH HAJI DALAM STUDI FIQH’, *Tadris*, 13.2 (2019), p. 11.



systematic examination of both classical and contemporary literature in the field of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, with particular emphasis on texts addressing *ḥukm waqʿī*, *ḥukm taklīfī*, and the juridical status of intention (*niyyah*) in the performance of prayer. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical approach, whereby the views of scholars were first delineated and subsequently subjected to critical evaluation in order to ascertain whether intention is to be construed as a pillar (*rukʿn*) or as a condition (*shart*) of prayer. This approach was adopted to ensure that the study does not merely remain within the bounds of normative exposition but also contributes theoretically to contemporary discourses in Islamic jurisprudence.

## **B. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Command to Perform Prayer**

Prayer (*ṣalāh*) constitutes an act of worship that occupies a fundamental position within Islam. The neglect of prayer renders a Muslim as having disregarded the most essential obligations of the faith. This underscores its status as the second pillar of Islam after the testimony of faith (*shahādah*), while simultaneously situating it as the principal foundation of a believer's spiritual edifice. The singular distinction of prayer is further accentuated by the fact that its injunction was conveyed directly to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) by Allah Himself during the miraculous event of the Isrā' and Mi'rāj, rather than through the mediation of the angel Jibrīl, as was the case with other forms of worship. This fact unequivocally demonstrates that prayer holds a profoundly strategic value and occupies an exalted position in the life of every Muslim.

The mandatory nature of prayer (*ṣalāh*) is affirmed in numerous Qur'ānic texts as well as in the Prophetic traditions. One such reference is found in Sūrat al-Nisā' (4:77): "*Establish the prayer and pay the alms*" (Q. 4:77). On the basis of this verse, the jurists (*fuqahā'*) unanimously concur that prayer is a compulsory duty (*wājib*) upon every Muslim who has reached maturity (*bāligh*) and possesses sound reason (*'āqil*), provided the prescribed conditions and pillars are fulfilled. Similarly, scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* ground the obligatoriness of prayer in the well-established legal maxim which states, "*The fundamental import of a command is to denote obligation*."<sup>4</sup> By reference to this principle, every form of *amr* (divine command) in the Shari'ah is to be understood as denoting obligation (*wujūb*), unless accompanied by a *qarīnah* (contextual indicator) that redirects its meaning to another legal ruling, such as recommendation (*sunnah*). In the case of prayer (*ṣalāh*), no such *qarīnah* exists to divert its signification; hence, the

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<sup>4</sup> A. Djazuli, *Ushul Fiqh, Metodologi Hukum Islam* (Raja Grafindo, 2000), p. 16.



command to establish prayer consistently and persistently is construed as unequivocally obligatory.

An accurate understanding of the Qur'ānic and Prophetic texts concerning prayer is imperative in order to avoid misjudgments in the derivation of legal rulings. Misinterpretation of these sources may yield juridical conclusions that deviate from the higher objectives of the Shari'ah (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). Conversely, a sound hermeneutical approach ensures that juristic determinations remain in harmony with the principles of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*). This corresponds with the overarching purpose of the Shari'ah, which was revealed as a mercy to all creation, as explicitly affirmed in Sūrat al-Anbiyā' (21:107): "And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

## 2. Conceptual Framework of Prayer: Definition, Pillars, and Conditions

Before advancing further, it is essential to briefly elucidate the concept of prayer (*ṣalāh*), as it constitutes the central act of worship underlying this study, particularly with respect to the examination of intention (*niyyah*) as either a pillar (*rukṇ*) or a condition (*shart*) of its performance. The subject becomes especially intriguing when considering the divergent scholarly positions that classify intention in these distinct categories. Numerous definitions of prayer have been proposed by scholars across both Arabic and Indonesian literatures. Nevertheless, a concise and accessible formulation may be found in the Arabic sources, as illustrated below.

الصلاة لغة وهي الدعاء

الصلاة شرعا: أقوال وأفعال مخصوصة مفتحة بالتكبير مختتمة بالتسليم

Meaning: **Linguistically**, *ṣalāh* denotes *supplication* (*du'ā'*).

**Legally (in the Shari'ah sense)**, *ṣalāh* is defined as a set of prescribed words and actions that begin with the pronouncement of *takbīr* (saying *Allāhu akbar*) and conclude with the salutation (*taslīm*).<sup>5</sup>

أركان الصلاة هي أجزاؤها التي تتركب منها حقيقتها

Meaning: The pillars of prayer (*arkān al-ṣalāh*) are the essential components that constitute its very reality and substance.

<sup>5</sup> Sayy id Al-Bakrī, *I'Natu Talibīn* (Toha Putra Semarang), p. 21.





As for the pillars of prayer (*arkān al-ṣalāh*), they are the constituent elements that form the very essence of the prayer itself. In other words, the pillars represent inseparable components of the act of worship, each of which is integral to its completion. These pillars extend from the commencement of prayer until its conclusion and must be performed in their entirety. Any omission, partial execution, or negligence in fulfilling them renders the prayer invalid<sup>6</sup>

**According to Sayyid al-Bakrī in *I'ānat al-Ṭālibīn*, vol. 1, within the framework of the Shāfi'ī school, the pillars of prayer (*arkān al-ṣalāh*) are enumerated as fourteen in number. These are: intention (*niyyah*), the opening declaration of sanctification (*takbīrat al-ihrām*), standing for those capable, the recitation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah in every unit (*rak'ah*), bowing (*rukū'*), standing upright (*i'tidāl*), two prostrations in each unit (*sujūd*), sitting between the two prostrations, composure (*ḥuma'nīnah*), the final testimony (*tashahhud al-ākhir*), invoking blessings upon the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), the recitation of the final testimony (*taḥiyyāt al-ākhirah*), the first salutation (*salām*), and maintaining proper sequence (*tartīb*) among the pillars.**

Other scholars, however, classify the pillars as thirteen, while some enumerate them differently. These discrepancies do not engender significant contention, as they merely arise from methodological differences in enumeration. For instance, certain scholars count *ḥuma'nīnah* as an independent pillar in every posture—such as during prostration, standing upright after bowing, and sitting between the two prostrations—while others do not, considering it inherent within each respective pillar. Hence, the numerical differences reflect varying methods of classification rather than substantive disagreement. Ultimately, the essence remains identical: the obligatory pillars must be executed in their entirety, whether in obligatory or supererogatory prayer. Ideally, the worshipper should not neglect any of the pillars, conditions, or even recommended acts (*sunan*), for together they constitute an integrated whole in the performance of prayer.

In addition to the pillars of prayer, another essential aspect that warrants careful attention is the set of prerequisites (*shurūṭ*). These prerequisites constitute integral elements that hold an equally significant position in the validity of prayer. Unlike the pillars, which are performed within the act of worship itself, the prerequisites must be fulfilled prior to, maintained during, and preserved until the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibrahim Al-Bajurī, *Khasiyah Al-Bajurī 'ala Ibnu Qasīm Al-Ghazzi* (Toha Putra Semarang), p. 144.



**completion of prayer. Their proper observance is therefore indispensable, beginning before the commencement of prayer, continuing throughout its performance, and extending until its conclusion. Failure to fulfill any of these prerequisites invalidates the act of worship, regardless of the precision with which the pillars are performed. Hence, the worshipper is obliged to ensure that all prerequisites are fully satisfied, as they provide the foundational conditions upon which the validity and acceptance of the prayer ultimately rest.**

“The prerequisite (*shart*) of prayer is that upon which the validity of prayer depends, which must be fulfilled prior to the commencement of prayer and maintained throughout its performance.”

الشرط الصلاة هو ما يتوفق عليه صحة الصلاة وما يجب تقديمه على الصلاة واستمراره فيها<sup>7</sup>

According to Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī, the author of *Ḥāshiyat al-Bājūrī ‘alā Ibn Qāsim al-Ghazzī*, vol. 1, and a prominent jurist of the Shāfi‘ī school, the prerequisites (*shurūṭ*) of prayer are classified into five categories. First, ritual purification of the body from minor and major impurities (*ḥadath*). Second, the proper covering of the ‘awrah (parts of the body that must be concealed). Third, ensuring that the place of prayer is ritually pure. Fourth, possessing certain knowledge that the prescribed time of prayer has commenced. Fifth, facing the qiblah, the direction of the Ka‘bah in Mecca.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, several other scholars advance positions that diverge slightly from al-Bājūrī’s, though not in any substantive way. Accordingly, this study does not expand upon the detailed enumeration of prerequisites or their exact tally. The analytic focus is instead directed to intention (*niyyah*) as treated by the jurists—whether it functions as a condition (*shart*) or as an integral pillar (*rukṇ*) of prayer. The study aims, by its conclusion, to elucidate in detail the juristic and methodological pathways by which intention has been classified in both ways, thereby clarifying the operative criteria and implications of each classification.

### **3. The Concept of Intention (*Niyyah*) in the Perspective of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh***

<sup>7</sup> Al-Bakrī, *I’NatuTalibīn*.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Bajurī, *Khāsiyyah Al-Bajurī ‘ala Ibnu Qasīm Al-Ghazzi*.



Within the intellectual heritage of Islamic studies, divergence of opinion is an inevitable phenomenon—arising in the processes of deriving evidence from the revealed sources, in the methodologies of juristic reasoning (*istinbāʿ*), and in the formulation of legal rulings. One salient issue that has elicited such juristic disagreement concerns the juridical status of intention in the performance of prayer. Some scholars classify intention as a prerequisite (*sharʿ*) for the validity of prayer, while others regard it as an essential pillar (*rukʿ*) of the act itself. This divergence reflects the plurality of methodological approaches among the jurists in interpreting and applying the sacred texts (*nuṣūṣ sharʿiyyah*).

To investigate this issue, the present study draws upon a number of seminal works, including *Uṣūl al-Fiqh al-Islāmī* and *al-Fiqh al-Islāmī wa Adillatuhu* by Wahbah al-Zuhaylī; *al-Uṣūl ilā Qawāʿid al-Uṣūl* by al-Ṭarṭūshī al-Ghazzī; *al-Burhān fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh* by al-Juwaynī; *Durūs fī ʿIlm al-Uṣūl* by Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr; and *Uṣūl al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī* by ʿAlī Ḥasballāh. These works were selected on account of their scholarly authority, the breadth of perspectives they represent, and their systematic as well as accessible presentation of legal-theoretical arguments.

Etymologically, the term *niyyah* denotes “intention” or “deliberate resolve.” Terminologically, however, it refers to an inner act of the heart that impels a person to perform a religious deed with the specific aim of seeking nearness to Allah, Exalted be He.<sup>9</sup> The majority of scholars representing the four Sunni schools of law concur that the locus of intention (*niyyah*) is the heart rather than the tongue.<sup>10</sup> The divergence of opinion that emerges concerns the *muqāranah*—the concurrence of intention (*niyyah*) with the *takbīrat al-ihrām*. Specifically, the question is whether the intention must coincide precisely with the utterance of the *takbīr*, whether it may legitimately precede it slightly, or whether it remains valid even if slightly delayed, provided it still falls within the scope of the *takbīrat al-ihrām*. From this discussion arise two principal views: first, that the intention must necessarily be actualized simultaneously with the *takbīrat al-ihrām*; and second, that such simultaneity is not required in an absolute sense.<sup>11</sup>

Scholars of *uṣūl al-fiqh* underscore the indispensability of intention through the maxim, **“There is no reward without intention.”** On the basis of this principle, jurists conclude that no human action is deemed either virtuous or blameworthy unless it is accompanied by intention. Accordingly, no deed merits divine reward unless it is consciously intended for goodness.

<sup>9</sup> Zuhaili, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islamy Wa Adillatihu*.

<sup>10</sup> Ibrahim Ramadan, *Fiqh Salat Ibnu Taimiyah* (Beirut), p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> Ramadan, *Fiqh Salat Ibnu Taimiyah*.





On this matter, there exists no juristic disagreement (*khilāf*) among the scholars.<sup>12</sup>

This maxim affirms that no deed attains the status of worship without being accompanied by intention. Consequently, intention serves as the decisive factor in determining whether an action is rendered virtuous, sinful, or entirely void of spiritual value. This principle is in perfect concord with the well-known ḥadīth narrated from ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه على المنبر قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نما لأعمال بالنيات ,  
ونما لكل امرئ ما نوى , فمن كانت هجرته إلى دنيا يصيبها أو إلى امرأة ينكحها , فهجرته إلى ما جريه (رواه  
البخاري)

*Meaning:* “Actions are but by intentions, and every person shall have only what he intended. Thus, whoever’s migration was for worldly gain to attain it, or for a woman to marry her, then his migration is for that for which he migrated.” (Reported by al-Bukhārī)<sup>13</sup>

Based on this ḥadīth, intention functions as the definitive criterion of a servant’s sincerity in worship. The outward physical motions performed in prayer do not necessarily reflect the true quality of the act; rather, it is the intention that determines its essential reality. For this reason, the juridical classification of intention as either a prerequisite (*sharṭ*) or a pillar (*rukn*) of prayer emerges as a crucial issue warranting further examination through the lens of *uṣūl al-fiqh*.

#### **4. The Juridical Status of Intention in Prayer: Pillar or Prerequisite?**

The debate concerning the juridical status of intention in prayer constitutes a significant and enduring issue. Scholars diverge in their assessment of whether intention (*niyyah*) is to be classified as an integral pillar (*rukn*) of prayer or merely as a prerequisite (*sharṭ*) for its validity. This divergence

<sup>12</sup> Hasballah, *Ushul Tasyri’ Al-Islam*.

<sup>13</sup> Imam Abi ‘Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismail al- Bukhārī Ja’fi, *Sahih Bukhārī* (Dar al-Salam, 1997), p. 1.



stems from methodological differences in legal reasoning (*istinbāʿ al-ḥukm*), both in the interpretation of scriptural evidence (*dalīl naqlī*) and in the application of *uṣūl al-fiqh* principles.

The Shāfiʿī school designates intention (*niyyah*) as a fundamental pillar (*rukʿn*) of prayer. The primary basis for this position is the divine command in Sūrat al-Nisāʾ (4:77): “Establish the prayer and pay the zakāt.” According to the Shāfiʿī jurists, every imperative verb (*al-amr*) in the revealed texts intrinsically signifies obligation, as codified in the well-known legal maxim:

الأمر للوجوب

(*al-amr lil-wujūb* — “A command denotes obligation”).

On the basis of this principle, the performance of prayer must necessarily be accompanied by intention, which is regarded as an inseparable component of the act of worship. In this context, *ḥukm taklīfī* stipulates that any divine injunction directed toward the legally responsible individual (*mukallaḥ*) entails an obligation either to perform or to refrain, or alternatively, to exercise a choice between acting and abstaining.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, *ḥukm waḍʿī* refers to the divine designation of a matter as a cause (*sabab*), a condition (*shart*), a preventive factor (*mānīʾ*), or as a determinant of the validity (*ṣiḥḥah*) or invalidity (*buṭlān*) of an act, as well as the basis for the dispensation (*rukhsah*).<sup>15</sup> By considering both categories of legal ruling—*ḥukm taklīfī* and *ḥukm waḍʿī*—the Shāfiʿī school concludes that prayer constitutes a binding obligation that must be performed without delay once its prescribed time has commenced.

On the basis of this legal framework, the jurists derived a foundational maxim of *uṣūl al-fiqh*:

الأمر بمقاصدها

(*al-umūr bi-maqāṣidihā* — “Matters are determined by their objectives”).

If we examine the discourse on intention (*niyyah*) in a wide range of works authored within the Shāfiʿī school, we consistently find detailed discussions that underscore the view that intention constitutes an intrinsic component (*juzʾ*) of the act of worship itself—be it prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, or other ritual obligations. For instance, in *Iʿānat al-Ṭālibīn* and al-Bājūrī’s

<sup>14</sup> Wahbat Zahily, *Ushul Fiqh Islamy*, 1st edn (Darul Fikri al-Arabi, 1986), p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> Zahily, *Ushul Fiqh Islamy*.



*Hāshiyah*, the distinction between prerequisites (*shurūṭ*) and pillars (*arkān*) is articulated with remarkable clarity.

In *I'ānat al-Ṭālibīn*, vol. 1, p. 126, which reflects the Shāfi'ī position, intention is defined as follows:

نية وهى القصد بالقلب لخبر : إنما الأعمال بالنيات  
فيجب فيها أى النية قصد فعلها أ الصلاة لئلا تنجز عن بقية الأفعال

*“Intention is the resolve of the heart, as affirmed by the report: ‘Verily actions are by intentions.’ Thus, intention must entail the resolve to perform the act—in this case, prayer—so that it may be distinguished from other forms of activity.”*

This teaching finds its strongest textual foundation in the well-known ḥadīth narrated by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), who said:

عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه على المنبر قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: إنما الأعمال بالنيات، وإنما لكل امرئ ما نوى، فمن كانت هجرته إلى دنيا يصيبها أو إلى امرأة ينكحها فهجرته إلى ما هاجر إليه (رواه البخاري)

*“I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say: ‘Actions are but by intentions, and each person shall have only what he intended. So, whoever’s migration was for worldly gain to attain it, or for a woman to marry her, then his migration is to that for which he migrated.’”* (Reported by al-Bukhārī).<sup>16</sup>

From this perspective, the Shāfi'ī scholars assert that intention (*niyyah*) constitutes the very essence of prayer (*ṣalāh*). Consequently, it is classified as an integral pillar (*rukn*) of the ritual, occupying the foremost position among the fourteen essential pillars of prayer. In the absence of intention, the prayer is deemed invalid and legally void.

In contrast to the Shāfi'ī school, the Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī, and a segment of the Mālikī jurists classify intention (*niyyah*) not as a pillar (*rukn*) but rather as a prerequisite (*sharṭ*) for the validity of prayer (*ṣalāh*). Imām Aḥmad, for instance, enumerates intention among the six essential prerequisites of prayer, alongside purification from ritual impurity (*ḥadath*), freedom from

<sup>16</sup> Ja'fi, *Sahih Bukhārī*.



physical defilement (*najāsa*), covering the body's nakedness (*'awrah*), the commencement of the prescribed time, and orientation toward the qiblah.<sup>17</sup>

According to Imām Aḥmad, the pillars (*arkān*) of prayer number fifteen. These include: standing; the opening declaration of consecration (*takbīrat al-īhrām*); the recitation of Sūrat al-Fātiḥah; bowing (*rukū'*); the obligatory stillness (*ṭuma'nīnah*); raising the head; standing upright (*ī'tidāl*); prostration (*sujūd*); the prescribed recitation during prostration; stillness therein; rising from prostration; the recitation during the sitting posture; the final sitting for the testimony of faith (*tashahhud*); its specific recitation; the concluding salutation (*salām*); and the proper sequential order (*tartīb*).<sup>18</sup>

Ibn Taymiyyah further argued that intention (*niyyah*) constitutes a prerequisite, since the aforementioned hadith does not explicitly state that every act is inherently bound by intention. According to him, intention may therefore also be understood as a condition (*sharṭ*), given that it must remain continuous from the commencement of prayer until its completion. Indeed, one of the factors that invalidates prayer is a change of intention. This indicates that intention is unbroken throughout the entire act of prayer, similar to the state of ritual purity, and as such, intention—being a condition—must logically precede the act of worship itself.<sup>19</sup>

There are also scholars who maintain that intention (*niyyah*) constitutes a condition (*sharṭ*), as it signifies the element of deliberate volition underlying the performance of prayer. Al-Ghazālī, in particular, classifies intention as one of the essential prerequisites for the validity of prayer. In support of this position, they invoke the well-known prophetic tradition narrated by 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (may Allah be pleased with him), who reported from the pulpit:

عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه على المنبر قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم إنما الأعمال بالنيات , وإنما لكل امرئ ما نوى , فمن كانت هجرته إلى دنيا يصيبها أو إلى امرأة ينكحها , فهجرته إلى ما جر إليه (رواه البخاري)

Meaning: *I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say: 'Indeed, actions are but by intentions, and every person shall have only that which he intended. Thus, whoever's migration was for worldly gain or for a woman to marry, his migration will be for that for which he migrated'* (al-Bukhārī).

<sup>17</sup> Syaikhul Islam Maufauquddin 'Abdullah bin Min Qada matus Maqdisy, *Al-Kafif Fiqih Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal*, 1st edn (Dar al-Kutub al- 'Ilmiyah, 1994), p. 241.

<sup>18</sup> Maqdisy, *Al-Kafif Fiqih Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal*.

<sup>19</sup> Ibnu Taimiyah, *Fiqh Salat, Tahzib Wa Ta'lik Oleh Syeh Ibrahim Ramadan* (Darul Fikri al-Arabi, 1997), p. 21.



The Ḥanbalī, Ḥanafī, and Mālikī schools likewise regard intention (*niyyah*) as one of the essential conditions for the validity of prayer. This opinion is considered the stronger view (*rājiḥ*), such that they classify intention both as an obligatory component (*farḍ*) of prayer and as one of its integral pillars (*rukn*). By contrast, al-Shāfiʿī and a segment of the Mālikī school maintain that intention is obligatory only at the commencement of prayer, rather than throughout its entirety. Consequently, they categorize intention as a *rukn*, akin to the opening *takbīr* or the act of bowing (*rukūʿ*).<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, within this group’s perspective, the intention of prayer (*niyyah*) holds the same status as ritual purification (*ṭahārah*), namely, as a prerequisite for the validity of prayer that necessarily precedes the act of worship itself.

This divergence of opinion arises from differing approaches to the juridical status of intention (*niyyah*) within the framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. The Shāfiʿī school underscores intention as a *rukn* on the grounds that it constitutes an intrinsic element of prayer, distinguishing it from ordinary activities. By contrast, scholars outside the Shāfiʿī tradition emphasize that intention functions merely as a prerequisite (*sharṭ*) accompanying the act of prayer, yet not as part of its structural pillars. With regard to the evidences cited, both groups base their arguments on the hadith “*innamā al-aʿmāl bi al-niyyāt*” (“Actions are but by intentions”) and the legal maxim “*al-umūr bi maqāṣidihā*” (“All matters are determined by their objectives”). However, divergences in *uṣūl al-fiqh* methodology, particularly in defining what constitutes “an intrinsic part of worship” versus “an external factor of worship,” have led to differing classifications of intention (*niyyah*).

### C. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be asserted that prayer (*ṣalāh*) constitutes a fundamental act of worship in Islam, whose status is established with certainty (*qaṭʿī*) through the Qurʾān, prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), and scholarly consensus (*ijmāʿ*). Its performance is accompanied by specific pillars (*arkān*) and conditions (*shurūṭ*) that distinguish between valid and invalid acts of worship. In this context, intention (*niyyah*) occupies a pivotal role, serving both as a determinant of the validity of prayer and as a measure of the worship’s worth in the sight of Allah (SWT). Differences among scholars regarding the status of intention in prayer—whether it constitutes a pillar (*rukn*) or a condition (*sharṭ*)—stem from variations in *istinbāt* methodology and the *uṣūl al-fiqh* framework employed. The Shāfiʿī school classifies intention as a *rukn*, considering it an essential component of prayer, whereas the Ḥanafī, Mālikī, and Ḥanbalī schools tend to regard it as a *sharṭ*, viewing it as accompanying the prayer externally. Despite these

<sup>20</sup> Zuhaily, *Al-Fiqh Al-Islamy Wa Adillatihu*.





classificatory differences, all agree that intention is indispensable for the validity of prayer and must not be neglected in its performance. Thus, this study underscores that the divergent views among scholars do not constitute a substantive contradiction, but rather reflect methodological diversity in interpreting shar'ī texts. Fundamentally, all schools recognize intention as a core element that determines the validity of prayer. These differences in classification enrich the corpus of Islamic knowledge, simultaneously demonstrating the flexibility of fiqh in accommodating interpretive plurality without diminishing the essential value of worship.

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