

Nasafī. *Tafsīr*.
 Qurṭubī. *Tafsīr*.
 Rāghib. *Mufradāt*.
 Rāghib. *Tafsīr*.
 Samarqandī. *Bahr*.
 Ṭabarī. *Tafsīr*.
 Tirmidhī. *Sunan*.
 Zamakhsharī. *Kashshāf*.

See also: ADULTERY AND FORNICATION; BACKBITING; BEDOUBINS;
 CALUMNY; DISBELIEF AND DOUBT; ENORMITIES;
 FASTING; FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD; GENDER
 RELATIONS; GLAD TIDINGS AND WARNINGS; HYPOCRISY
 AND HYPOCRITES; IGNORANCE; INHERITANCE AND
 PATRIMONY; INJUSTICE; KINDRED; LAWFUL AND
 UNLAWFUL; LEGAL PUNISHMENTS; MARRIAGE AND
 DIVORCE; OBEDIENCE; REWARD AND PUNISHMENT;
 RIGHTS AND CLAIMS; SIN; THEFT AND ROBBERY.

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BOWING AND PROSTRATION

RUKŪʿ, SUJŪD

This article comprises the following sections: (i) Definitions and Usage; (ii) Bowing and Prostration as Worship and Submission Generally, and Ritual Prayer Specifically; (iii) The Prostration of the Angels to the Prophet Ādam, upon him and them peace; (iv) Satan’s Refusal to Prostrate to Ādam; (v) The Bowing and Prostration of Prophets, upon them peace; (vi) The Prostration of the Prophet Muḥammad, upon him blessings and peace; (vii) The Prostration of Believers and Human Beings Generally; (viii) Prostration of Yūsuf’s Parents and Brothers, Firʿawn’s Sorcerers, and the Israelites; (ix) The Prostration of Jinn; (x) The Prostration of All That Is in the Heavens and Earth; (xi) The Verses of Prostration; (xii) The Jāhiliyya Aversion to Bowing; (xiii) The Disbelievers’ Refusal to Bow or Prostrate; (xiv) The Pagans’ Prostration after the Prophet’s Recitation of Q 53; (xv) Bibliography.

Definitions and Usage

Bowing and prostration are integrals (*arkān*) of Muslim ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) (*q.v.*), without which prayer is invalid; they are among the most recognizable signs of a Muslim’s submission to Allah and the expression of a human being’s utter servanthood to his Creator (see SLAVES OF ALLAH). Bowing (*rukūʿ*) is defined as bending the upper body to a straight horizontal position so that the hands reach the knees and the torso is at

a right angle to the legs while *sujūd* is the prostration of the “seven bones” (*sabʿat aʿẓum*) of a person—the forehead (*jabha*), hands (palms down), knees, and toe-tips (*aṭrāf al-qadamayn*) (Bukhārī, Adhān, al-sujūd ‘alā al-anf; Muslim, Ṣalāt, aʿdāʾ al-sujūd) (see BONES)—flat on firm ground so that one’s chin is near the ground: *they fall to their chins, prostrate* (Q 17:107) (Sarakhsī, *Mabsūṭ* 1:19-22; Ḥiṣnī, *Kifāya*, Ṣalāt, arkān al-ṣalāt; Ibn ʿAbidīn, *Radd al-muḥtār* 1:481-482). These acts are mentioned 77 times in 48 passages in the Qurʾān, four of which mention bowing alone (Q 2:43;5:55, 38:24;77:48) and six both acts together (Q 2:125; 3:43; 9:112; 22:26, 77; 48:29). Prostration is mentioned alone almost ten times as frequently as bowing, which indicates its special significance. The act of placing one’s face—particularly the forehead and nose, which are the highest prominences of the body and symbolize honor and prestige—on the ground is an expression of absolute obedience to Allah; it is the very embodiment of humility and servanthood (Nawawī, Ṣalāt, faḍl al-sujūd wal-ḥathth ‘alayh; Rāzī, *sub* Q 9:35; 68:16).

Lexically, the root *r-k-ʿ* indicates any kind of bending down (*inḥināʿ*) (*Jawharī*, *Ṣiḥāḥ*) in a person or an object (Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs*), whether in worship or other than that (Rāghib, *Mufradāt*) as well as humility and submission (*al-khudūʿ*: Ibn Sīda, *Muḥkam*; *al-tadhallul*: Rāghib, *Mufradāt*). The act is called *rukūʿ* (as in the ritual prayer) and its doer a *rākīʿ* (pl. *rākīʿīn* and *rukkaʿ*), “anyone who lowers his head, whether his knees touch the ground or not” (Fārāhidī, *ʿAyn*; Azharī, *Tahdhīb*), “anyone who falls on his face (*habāʾ yakkūʿ alā wajhīh*), as in the *rukūʿ* of prayer” (Ibn Durayd, *Jamhara*; Saraquṣṭī, *Aʿāl*, 3:68).

The root *s-j-d* and its verb *sajada* indicate lowering oneself, showing humility and submission (*taṭāmun wa-dhull*, Ibn Fāris, *khadaʿa*, *Jawharī*), even figuratively, as in *sajadat al-nakhla* “the palm tree bent over” (Ibn Qutayba, 1:168, *alfāz al-ṣalāt*) or the pre-Islamic boast spoken by one of the overlords of Najd, the poet and warrior-Companion Zayd b. Muḥalhal al-Ṭāʿī, known as Zayd al-Khayl (Zayd of the Horses), whom the Prophet, upon him blessings and peace, renamed Zayd al-Khayr (Zayd of Goodness) (d. 9/631): “You could see the crags there prostrating (*sujjadan*) to the hooves (*al-ḥāwāfir*)” in reference to mounted riders who had no difficulty climbing even the steepest rocky slopes, as if they were trampling them underfoot (Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl*, p. 417; Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:58). Its infinitive noun *sujūd* means (i) literally, “to look down to the ground for a long time with one’s head