

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYERS

1. *Prayers are a channel of communication between believers and Allah:*

Prayers contain the hidden pleasure of communion with the Creator. They are an expression of utmost submission of the devotees to Him. They offer a guarantee of success and bliss in this life and a key to the Paradise in the hereafter. Allah proclaims:

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ (١) الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ۝ (٢)﴾ المؤمنون: ١ - ٢

(Translation of meaning) “Surely success belongs to those who believe; those who are absorbed in their prayers” (*Al-Mominoon*: 1,2). Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ كَتَبَهُنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ، فَمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِنَّ لَمْ يُضَيَّعْ مِنْهُنَّ شَيْئًا اسْتِخْفَافًا بِحَقِّهِنَّ، كَانَ لَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يُدْخِلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَأْتِ بِهِنَّ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ، إِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ، وَإِنْ شَاءَ أَدْخَلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ»

Allah has ordained the obligation of offering five-time *salat* upon His slaves. Anybody who offers them with due care fulfilling the requirements will deserve from Allah his entry into the Paradise. But those who do not do so will have no pledge of Allah. He may punish them if he likes or pardon them and admit them into His Paradise.

2. *Prayers make for an atonement for wrongs and sins committed:* Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«الصَّلَوَاتُ الْخَمْسُ، وَالْجُمُعَةُ إِلَى الْجُمُعَةِ، وَرَمَضَانُ إِلَى رَمَضَانَ مُكَفِّرَاتٌ لِمَا بَيْنَهُنَّ مَا اجْتَنِبَتْ الْكَبَائِرُ»

Performing prayers five times daily as well as the Friday Prayer from one Friday till the next and from one Ramadan to the next Ramadan ensures atonement for all the minor sins committed provided that major sins are avoided during this period (*Muslim*). According to a narration, the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) once asked his companions:

"أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ أَنَّ نَهْرًا بِبَابِ أَحَدِكُمْ يَغْتَسِلُ فِيهِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسًا، مَا تَقُولُ: ذَلِكَ يُبْقِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ " قَالُوا: لَا يُبْقِي مِنْ دَرَنِهِ شَيْئًا، قَالَ: «فَذَلِكَ مِثْلُ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسِ، يَمْحُو اللَّهُ بِهِ الْخَطَايَا»

“What do you think? If water course was running through your doorsteps and you would take a bath in it five times a day, will any dirt be left upon your bodies?” The Companions replied that no dirt shall ever remain on the body. Then the Prophet (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said prayers of five times are like that. Allah washes all your sins in lieu of that (*Al-*

Bukhari and Muslim). Prayers are a source of inner contentment and bliss. Deliverance of Allah's slaves is implied in them. Allah proclaims:

﴿إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا ۚ إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا ۚ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا ۚ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ۚ﴾
المعارج: ١٩ - ٢٢

(Translation of meaning) “Verily, man has been created as an uneasy being. He becomes fretful if adversity befalls him; and becomes stingy if good fortune befalls him except those who perform their prayers. (*Al-Ma'arij*: 19-22).

3. Prayers are a gateway to Paradise: Allah's Messenger (*sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«خَمْسُ صَلَوَاتٍ افْتَرَضَهُنَّ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى مَنْ أَحْسَنَ وَضُوءَهُنَّ وَصَلَّاهُنَّ لَوْ قَتِلْنَ وَأَتَمَّ رُكُوعَهُنَّ وَخُشُوعَهُنَّ كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَهُ، وَمَنْ لَمْ يَفْعَلْ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ عَهْدٌ، إِنْ شَاءَ غَفَرَ لَهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَذَّبَهُ»

Allah has made prayers of five times obligatory for you. Whoever performs proper ablution, offers them at their proper time, carries out all the requisite parts properly and with due devotion then it's upon Allah to forgive him. If, however, anybody does not do so then Allah has no pledge for him. He may forgive him if He likes or punish him (*Abu Dawood*).

4. Prayers protect men from evil deeds and obscenity: Allah declares:

﴿إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۚ﴾
العنكبوت: ٤٥

(Translation of meaning) Verily, salat keeps you away from obscenity and evil deeds.” (*Al-Ankabut*: 45).

5. Prayers reinforce believers' integrity: Prayers add to the determination of believers by bestowing upon them serenity and self-esteem. Perseverance in prayers raises believers above the greed for material life and liberates them from its attractions. Allah says:

﴿وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ ۚ﴾
البقرة: ٤٥

(Translation of meaning) “Seek succour from forbearance (*sabr*) and prayers (*salat*). (*Al-Baqarah*: 45).

6. Prayers are a source of bliss and inner contentment:

«إِنَّمَا حُبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ دُنْيَاكُمْ النَّسَاءُ، وَالطَّيِّبُ، وَجُعِلَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ»

I have been made to love two things of this material life: women and perfume and the coolness of my eyes lies in *salat*” (Nasai, Ahmad, Ha’kim). Thus whenever the Prophet (sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam) was disturbed by any big problem He (sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam) asked Bilal «يَا بِلَالُ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ أَرِحْنَا بِهَا» “Call to prayers for my comfort”.

7. *Prayers train believers to conduct their life affairs in an orderly way:* Punctuality and adherence to schedules becomes a matter of habit for those who pray regularly.
8. *Prayers make believers sanguine, tolerant, patient, wise and enable them to contemplate and introspect.*
9. *Prayers train believers to obey and follow their leader:* By joining the payer in congregations believers become habitually used to follow their imam (the prayer leader).
10. *Prayers create a sense of community in believers:* Prayers inculcate in believers a sense of being part of a community and prepare them for collective action in practical life on the basis of unity of faith.
11. *Prayers signify and proclaim the essential equality of believers:* Congregational prayers are a training ground for promoting unity, solidarity and cooperation among the Muslim community.
12. *Prayers are the very hallmark of Islam:* The Prophet (sallAllahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said:
«مَنْ صَلَّى صَلَاتِنَا، وَاسْتَقْبَلَ قِبْلَتَنَا، وَأَكَلَ ذَبِيحَتَنَا فَذَاكَ الْمُسْلِمُ الَّذِي لَهُ ذِمَّةُ اللَّهِ وَذِمَّةُ رَسُولِهِ فَلَا تَخْفَرُوا اللَّهَ فِي ذِمَّتِهِ»
One who prays like us in the direction of Makkah and consumes meats of animals slaughtered in our way, he is a Muslim, taken under the trust of Allah and His Messenger. So never break the trust of Allah (Al- Bukhari and Muslim)
13. *Prayers help in mitigating believers' innumerable hardships:* Through prayers believers supplicate to Allah to overcome their difficulties and for rains whenever there is drought and entreat for the fulfilment of their

spiritual and material needs. They are the best means of presenting one's sufferings before Allah and seeking His succour.

In view of such importance accorded to prayers, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) in his last testament to the believers told them: "Keep up your prayers, keep up your prayers" (*Nasai, Ibn Maja*). The first matter that a man shall have to account for on the Day of Judgment shall be his prayers.

On Forsaking the *Salat*

Strict warnings have been issued to those who forsake their prayers and neglect them due to laxity. Allah says:

﴿خَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ عَذَابًا﴾ مريم: ٥٩

(Translation of meaning) "Then they were followed by such unworthy successors who forsook their prayers and followed the inclinations of the body. So they will soon meet the consequences of their deviation" (*Maryam: 59*). Allah's Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«إِنَّ بَيْنَ الرَّجُلِ وَبَيْنَ الشُّرْكِ وَالْكَفْرِ تَرْكُ الصَّلَاةِ» "forsaking the *salat* is the dividing line between belief and disbelief (*Muslim*). It's a ruling of the *Shariat* that one who deliberately denies the obligation of the prayers is unanimously declared a disbeliever and excluded from the bond of Islam. Those who neglect their prayers due to laxity or preoccupations are considered as defiantly disobedient and sinners. The head of the Muslim community ought to warn and frighten such people. If they amend themselves it is better, otherwise he should chastise them till they repent for their laxity and become regular performers of their prayers.

For Whom Prayers Are Obligatory?

Prayers are obligatory upon all sane and adult Muslims. In case of women, they must be free of the menstrual period and lochia (vaginal discharge during the postpartum period). Though prayers are not obligatory for children, it is advised that they should be taught to learn how to perform *salat* and make it their habit to deserve for the rewards of this world and the world hereafter. Allah's Messenger (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said:

«مُرُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ سَبْعِ سِنِينَ، وَاضْرِبُوهُمْ عَلَيْهَا، وَهُمْ أَبْنَاءُ عَشْرِ وَفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَهُمْ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ»

ask your children to perform prayers when they are seven year old. When they grow to ten years chastise them for non-performance of prayers and arrange for separate beds for them (*Ahmad, Abu Dawood, Ha'kim*).

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